MEMORIA, MEMORABILIA, AND MEMOIRS: Notions of the Past in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of the First Millennium BCE

Reinhard G. Kratz
University of Göttingen

There is only little reference to the past to be found in West Semitic inscriptions from the first millennium BCE. Where such references do occur, there is no sense of what we call historical consciousness, no reflection on the past in and for itself. The inscriptions do not seem to contain the notion of history so familiar to us from Greek and Roman historiography or writings from the modern age. And despite many similarities, these inscriptions also bear no resemblance to the biblical way of recording history[1]. The history of the people of Israel from the creation of the world to the downfall of the two monarchies as recorded in Genesis to 2 Kings and, in a shorter version, in 1-2 Chronicles, the description of the Persian times in Ezra and Nehemiah, and the continuation of this history into the Hellenistic Age in 1 and 2 Maccabees has no parallel in the Ancient Near East. This is probably not due to the incompleteness of the records but to a different notion of history. Thus it would be wise to examine the preserved inscriptions in light of their own historical consciousness. In this article, I would like to present a few initial observations.[2]

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[1] For a short survey of the relevant material see van Seters, *In Search of History*, New Haven 1983 (Repr. Winona Lake 1997); for a rather general discussion see also: Momigliano, *Time in Ancient Historiography, in: History and the Concept of Time* (History and Theory. Studies in the Philosophy of History, Beiheft 6), Middletown, Conn. 1966, 1-23; *Histoire et conscience historique dans civilisations du Proche-Orient ancien. Actes du Colloque de Cartigny 1986* (Les Cahiers du Centre d'Etude du Proche-Orient Ancien 5), Leuven 1989; *Proche-Orient ancien temps vécu, temps pensé. Actes de la Table-Ronde du 15 novembre 1997 organisée par l'URA 1062 „Etudes Semitiques"* (Antiquités Sémitiques III), Paris 1998.

[2] They are based on the following editions (with extensive bibliography): Gibson (ed.), *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions I-III,* Oxford 1971-1982 (TSSI); Davies (ed.), *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, Cambridge 1991 (AHI); Donner/Röllig (eds.), *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften I-III*, Wiesbaden (1962-1964), I 5th ed. 2002, II 3rd ed. 1973 (KAI); Renz/Röllig (eds.), *Handbuch der Althebräischen Epigraphik I-III*, Darmstadt 1995-2003 (HAE); Prichard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, second edition, Princeton 1955 with Supplement, Princeton 1969 (ANET); Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture 1-3*, Leiden, 1997-2003 (COS); Kaiser (ed.), *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*, Gütersloh 1982-1997, Ergänzungslieferung 2001 (TUAT). For discussion and bibliography see Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions. Comparative Studies on Narratives in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible*, Oxford 1997.

1. Memoria

Death – which definitively concludes life, at least life on earth – is the most elementary experience of a concluded past. Thus it is not surprising that suggestions of historical thinking are found in mortuary inscriptions. Already the basic form of such inscriptions[3] contains a reference to the past: the name of the deceased, often introduced with the preposition *l*^{e}, which signifies to whom the tomb belongs and also the purpose of the inscription: the commemoration[4] of the deceased. This is usually followed by a patronymic or – as is common in the case of kings and other officials – by a list of additional ancestors. The genealogy lends the commemoration historical depth. At the same time, remembering the dead also creates a connection to future generations[5]. They are the addressees of the admonitions to protect the tomb. The magical effect of blessing and curse in connection with preserving and protecting the tomb extends the concluded past both into the present and into the future and remains effective in both.

Occasionally deviations from the usual pattern occur which illustrate the historical aspect of mortuary inscriptions even more clearly. One of the Hebrew inscriptions of Hirbet el-Qom, for instance, contains a brief biographical note about the deceased which is rather typical of votive inscriptions (as well as individual hymns in the biblical Psalter): 'Blessed was Uriyahu to Yhwh, and from his enemies (or: from his misery), by his Ashera, he saved him.[6] This note not only preserves the memory of the deceased but also preserves the memory of an event from his personal history[7].

The Phoenician inscription on the sarcophagus of Eshmunazar, the deceased king of Sidon, goes even further[8]. The date at the beginning of the inscription, following the years of the reign of the king[9], gives the moment of Eshmunazar's

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[3] See HAE II/1, 2f, and Röllig, 'Semitische Inschriften auf Grabdenkmälern Syriens und der Levante. Formale und inhaltliche Aspekte', in: Bol/Kreikenbom (ed.), *Sepulkral- und Votivdenkmäler östlicher Mittelmeergebiete (7. Jh. v.Chr. – 1. Jh. n.Chr.). Kulturbegegnungen im Spannungsfeld von Akzeptanz und Resistenz. Internationales Symposium Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, 1.-3. November 2001*, 2004, 23-32. The relevant inscriptions here are viewed in their entirety; differentiation according to language, era and geography is not productive in this context.

[4] See KAI 51,1; 123,4; 161,5; 165,6f; 273,1.

[5] See TSSI II.19 = KAI 226 (COS 2.59; TUAT II, 574), line 5f.

[6] AHI 25.003 = HAE I, 202-211 (COS 2.52; TUAT II, 557f).

[7] See also TSSI II.19 = KAI 226 (COS 2.59; TUAT II, 574), Z. 2–8; TUAT II, 575 Nr. 3.

[8] TSSI III.28 = KAI 14 (COS 2.57; TUAT II, 590-593).

[9] See also KAI 260 (TUAT II, 574 no. 2), dated according to the reign of the Persian king.

death as a historical setting from which he addresses future generations and looks back on the past. After the standardized form, i.e. the self-presentation and the admonitions to protect the tomb in lines 1-12a, in line 12b the text, by repeating line 2f, returns to the self-presentation and elaborates this in lines 12b-20a, before concluding in lines 20b-22 with portions of lines 4b-12a, i.e. with a repetition of the admonition to protect the tomb.

In the elaboration of the self-presentation, the deceased king gives a kind of report on three topics: First: a long version of the genealogy which, in addition to the father and direct predecessors (already mentioned in line 2) also mentions the grandfather and the mother, who is a daughter of the grandfather and a sister of the father and previously – both in the self-presentation at the beginning of the inscription (line 2f) and in the repetition of this beginning in line 13 – is only referred to as 'widow' (lines 12b-15a). Secondly: the construction of a number of shrines in Sidon and the surrounding area which is attributed to the king and his mother, a priestess of Astarte (lines 15b-18a). Thirdly: the acquisition of the fertile territories of Dor and Jaffa in the plain of Saron which the deceased king received from the 'King of Kings', i.e. from the Persian king, given to him, as is said, in gratitude for the 'great deeds' he accomplished, and which he incorporated into the dominion of Sidon.

Whereas the genealogy is a traditional feature of mortuary inscriptions, the other two topics, the building activities and the political events, which one would more readily expect in royal inscriptions, clearly exceed the normal bounds. They add to the genealogy the works and deeds of the deceased king whose personal history also represents political history.

Close to the mortuary inscriptions are the building and votive inscriptions. In their simple form they only marginally – perhaps even less so than the mortuary inscriptions – reveal an historical consciousness. Apart from the name of the builder or donor who is to be commemorated and perhaps his genealogy, it is only the object which the building or votive inscription refers to in combination with the inscription itself which tells us of an event in the past, an event which, from the perspective of the observer, has stood the test of time into the present. The inscription only gains an historical dimension when it stems from a king and is written in the style of the royal inscriptions.

This is more or less the case with the Phoenician inscription of King YHWMLK (Yehaumilk 'Milk enlivens', or in Accadian: Yahimilk 'long live the king') of Byblos[10]. The inscription was found in the court of the Temple of the 'Mistress of Byblos' and refers to the extension of this complex by the king. As

[10] TSSI III.25 = KAI 10 (COS 2.32; TUAT II, 586-588).

appropriate for the occasion and the genre, the donations are listed one by one in lines 3b-6 together with the wish for blessings and a long life for the donor who is described as a just king and with the hope that he might find favour in the eyes of the gods and the people of the land (lines 8-11a)[11].

But unlike comparable inscriptions[12], the text does not immediately commence with a reference to the donations but with a self-presentation of the king. This explains the use of the first person in lines 1-8a and again in lines 11b-16. Only in the blessings in lines 8b-11 is the third person, which is characteristic of the older building and votive inscriptions from Byblos, used. The self-presentation, in addition to the name and the genealogy, also mentions the installation of the king by the 'Mistress of Byblos' (lines 1-2a). This is followed by a brief episode (lines 2b-3a) which, following a list of the donated works, is once again repeated (lines 7b-8a). This episode is probably the reason for the donation: the goddess had heard the king's prayer and had done something good for him. We do not learn just what this consisted of but most probably it refers to political peace, perhaps the repulsion of enemies, for which the king had prayed to his 'Lady, the Mistress of Byblos'.

The conclusion (lines 11b-16) likewise goes beyond the usual patterns of building and votive inscriptions. As was common in commemorative inscriptions for gods and men, it contains instructions concerning the protection of the stela upon which the king is depicted and on which his name is inscribed. Future generations, 'all kings and every man' are admonished, under threat of a curse, not to remove the name of the king in later constructional changes but to place his name next to theirs and not to remove the stela.

Naturally all of this is not an historical record as we are used to and would like to have in order to satisfy our historical curiosity. Nevertheless, in mortuary, building, and votive inscriptions there is a suggestion of an awareness that the present proceeds from the past and that both have a future. The inscription as such already has an historical dimension: it serves to remind the observer of the past, and the past determines the present and – by the use of the magical power of blessing and curse – also affects the future. The mortuary, building, and votive inscriptions mainly refer to individuals and their individual histories. The remembrance of the dead and the commemoration of the builders and donors of buildings and other objects serve to direct the thoughts to the past. When the inscriptions refer to kings, then their personal histories gain historical signi-

[11] At the transition from line 10 to 11 the text is corrupt. See KAI II, p. 15 and COS 2.32 notes 15 and 16 respectively.

[12] See TSSI III.6-9 = KAI 4-7 as well as the examples from Sidon KAI 12; 15-19 and Ekron COS 2.42 = TUAT Ergänzungslieferung, 189f.

ficance. The genealogy and the individual works and deeds as well as the individual experiences of the king always reflect the history of his kingdom. With the focus on the royal dynasty, the genealogical and biographical details become a historiographical principle.

2. Memorabilia

The king and his dynasty are, of course, also the main focus of the royal inscriptions. The transitions between building and votive inscriptions of a king and royal inscriptions are quite fluid. Depending on the occasion and the location, the West Semitic royal inscriptions sometimes also refer to a building or other objects[13] and are consecrated to a god[14]; but not all of them have a particular purpose or the purpose can no longer be identified owing to the bad condition of the inscription[15]. The royal inscriptions often include historical details which are invaluable in pinpointing the era. But only a few include historical reminiscences which reflect on an event of the past. These retrospective views are either of a very general nature and present a general overview of a reign[16] or refer to specific events.

The events they refer to are, as a rule, individual episodes from the reign of the king. A perfect example of this is the Aramaic inscription of King Zakkur of Hamat.[17] The stela upon which a human figure is depicted is dedicated to the god Ilu-Wer (A1; B 13f.20). The inscription begins with a heading in the style of votive inscriptions and then proceeds to the self-presentation and the first person report of the king. On the stela, as the king himself says, 'the work of my hands (the hands of Zakkur)' (איתּ אשר ידי/ידי זכר) is recorded (B 14f.16f). The self-presentation begins with the election of Zakkur, the אש ענה[18], as king by Baalshamayn, the 'Lord of the Heavens' who is the god of the monarchy, and, in the first part, describes the defence of the kingdom against enemy attacks (A 2-

[13] TSSI III.15 = KAI 26 (COS 2.31; TUAT I, 640-645); TSSI II.15 = KAI 216 (COS 2.38; TUAT I, 630f); TSSI I,71-83 = KAI 181 (COS 2.23; TUAT I 646-650).

[14] Tel Fecherije (COS 2.34; TUAT I, 634-637); TSSI II.1 = KAI 201 (COS 2.33; TUAT I, 625); TSSI II.5 = KAI 202 (COS 2.35; TUAT I, 626-628); TSSI II.13 = KAI 214 (COS 2.36); consecrated to the deceased father is TSSI II.14 = KAI 215 (COS 2.37; TUAT I, 628-630).

[15] TSSI III.13 = KAI 24 (COS 2.30; TUAT I, 638-640); TSSI II.16 = KAI 217 (TUAT I, 631f); Tel Dan (COS 2.39; TUAT Erg. 176-179).

[16] Tell Fecherije (COS 2.34; TUAT I, 634-637); TSSI II.15 = KAI 216 (COS 2.38; TUAT I, 630f).

[17] TSSI II.5 = KAI 202 (COS 2.35; TUAT I, 626-628); see Parker, *Stories* (1997) 106-112.

[18] On the meaning of this strange expression see KAI II, p. 206 and COS 2.35 note 6 respectively; Parker, *Stories* (1997) 107.109 with note 14 goes with KAI.

17); in the second part the king briefly lists his territorial gains and his numerous building activities which culminated in the completion and erection of the stela (B 1-15). The inscription concludes with threats of curses should the stela be desecrated (B 16-28) and blessings for the king and his house (C 1f)[19].

Thus the retrospective view refers to the entire reign of the king from its beginnings in Hazrak up to the erection of the inscription where Zakkur is called 'King of Hamat and Lu'ash'[20]. However, the works and deeds of the king are not all listed in the same manner[21]. The second part is in the form of a list: the territorial gains and the diverse buildings are enumerated in the first person: 'I built, I added, I established'. The style converges with the brief self-presentation at the beginning and is typical of West Semitic royal inscriptions. The only striking feature is the lack of a genealogy which leads one to conclude that Zakkur was either a usurper or the founder of a dynasty[22]. But even without the genealogy, it is the biography of the king and not of the individual Zakkur which provides the historical context and which is to be recorded for future generations.

The first part of the inscription (A 4-17) deviates markedly from this pattern. It refers to a particular event in the reign of the king, immediately following his installation as king (both are told with w-qatal): the threat to his kingdom by the attack of a hostile coalition of Aramaean princes under the leadership of Barhadad, son of Hazael, the King of Aram (Damascus). For our topic – the notion of history in West Semitic inscriptions – this passage is, in several significant respects, of eminent importance.

Already the manner of representation is remarkable[23]. Instead of simply listing some individual deeds of the king, there is a complex narrative structure, underlined by the change of tense (form w-qatal to w-yiqtol) in line 11. With Barhadad and his allies, new subjects of the action are introduced – subjects who pursue their own plans and intentions: they unite against Zakkur and lay siege to

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[19] For the combination of the two genres, the votive and the memorial style, see already Noth, 'La'asch und Hazrak' (1929), in: idem, *Aufsätze zur biblischen Landes- und Altertumskunde 2*, ed. Wolff, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1971, 135-147, 135f; recently Parker, *Stories* (1997) 107f with reference to Miller, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 1974, 9ff. Parker, ibid., 108 suggests 'that in this or a similar form the text had been used previously as a memorial inscription and then adapted for this particular occasion – the dedication to Ilu-Wer – by the addition of the clause in A1 and the blessings at the end' as well as the reference to Apish and the inscription itself in B 10-15.

[20] On the historical setting see Noth, *Aufsätze* (1971) 135-147.

[21] Parker, *Stories* (1997) 109 concludes that the siege narrative 'would first have been composed and told independently' before the memorial inscription was erected and extended by adding 'the more common accounts of military victories and building activities'.

[22] See Noth, *Aufsätze* (1971) 138 note 13.

[23] See Parker, *Stories* (1997) 109-112.

Hazrak. Their actions in turn lead Zakkur to pray to his personal god, Baalshamayn, who is also the god of his kingdom. With him and with the prophets who speak for him, an additional element comes into play. The tension thus created is resolved with an ordinary oracle of salvation, in which Baalshamayn – through the prophets and fortune-tellers – refers to the selection of the king already mentioned in the inscription, and assures the king of his support and promises him the victory over the enemy coalition. Thus the representation of the historical event is marked by the heightened complexity of both, the actors and the event.

Moreover, the relationship of the representation of the events to the actual events also deserves a closer look. There is much which indicates that Zakkur was a loyal vassal of the Assyrians[24] and that he owes his liberation from the hostile (anti-Assyrian) coalition to the help of the Assyrians in the wake of the westward expansion of Assur under Adadnirari III (811-783 BCE). Perhaps the siege of Hazrak by the Aramaean coalition had to be abandoned due to one of the four (Assyrian) campaigns between 805-796 BCE (805, 804, 802, and 796) mentioned in the eponym canon[25] or perhaps Zakkur asked the Assyrian king for help and received direct assistance from him. This, however, finds no mention in the inscription. It attributes Zakkur's victory over his enemies solely to the help and assistance of Baalshamayn, the imperial god, in answer to the king's prayer. Thus the historical event is not recounted in detail and with great precision as it actually occurred, but rather from the perspective of the king. The account uses the common pattern of the prophetic salvation oracle (usually addressed to the king) and thus proves to be, in several respects, a literary construction.

The episode in the Zakkur inscription has a biblical parallel in 2 Kings 13,3-5. Here Jehoahaz of Samaria is delivered into the hands of Hazael and Ben-Hadad of Aram. He beseeches his Lord and his prayer is heard. Yhwh, as in the time of the Judges, sends a saviour who frees Israel from Aram. Unlike the Zakkur inscription, in this episode of the Book of Kings, the oppression by the Aramaeans is also attributed to the will of Yhwh who is punishing Israel for

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[24] See Noth, *Aufsätze* (1971) 139 (with reference to Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik III*, Gießen 1915, 8f); Parker, *Stories* (1997) 112 (with reference to Hawkins, CAH ed. 2. Vol. 3, Part 1, Cambridge 1982, 400.403-404; RLA 7/1-2, 158, as well as Na'aman in: *Scripta Hierosolymita* 33, Jerusalem 1991, 80-98). This does not contradict the fact that Hatarikka which presumably is the Hazrak of our text later rebelled against Assur and was the target of Assyrian campaigns several times (722, 765, and 755) until, under Tiglatpileser after 738, it was annexed and became an Assyrian province.

[25] See Lamprichs, *Die Westexpansion des neuassyrischen Reiches. Eine Strukturanalyse* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 239), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1995, 97-105, in particular 101f. Zakkur of Hamat is mentioned by name on the Antakya stela (COS 2.114A).

worshiping false gods. While the biblical version uses the same narrative pattern as the Zakkur inscription, it offers a new theological interpretation. This does not mean that the inscription is closer to the historical facts than the biblical account. Both are literary constructions. It is only that the degree of theological reflection in the biblical account is greater than that in the inscription and the interpretation of the historical event takes a different and opposite direction. That is also clear in the anonymous figure of the 'saviour'. Research has concentrated on who this saviour was: the dying Elisha, or the successors of Jehoahaz – Jehoash (2 Kings 13,25) and Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14,27) respectively – or Adadnirari III[26]. But apparently the identity of this figure is not the issue. The decisive factor is that help comes from outside and – this is also significantly different from the Zakkur inscription – without one of the kings, here the kings of Samaria, being involved.

Finally it must be noted that the Zakkur inscription merely singles out one fundamental episode in the history of the kingdom and describes it in detail. In this way too the account in the inscription differs from the biblical parallel which, with its theological interpretation, places the episode within the greater context of the history of Israel, i.e. the history of God's people. The inscription has no such pretensions. It is only interested in the fate of the king and his house, the continued existence of the royal dynasty. This and this alone determines the account of the episode as well as the retrospective view of the entire reign and the future commemoration of the event evoked by the inscription.

Similar patterns can be seen in other royal inscriptions, for example in the Aramaic Tel Dan inscription[27], a parallel to 2 Kings 9-10. As the beginning and the end of the inscription have not been preserved, little can be said of the genre and composition of the complete text. However, it seems to focus on the murders of Joram of Israel from the house of Omri and Ahaziah of Judah from the house of David. The biblical tradition attributes these murders to Jehu (2 Kings 9,15ff; 2 Chr 22,7-9), the Tel Dan inscription attributes them to the Aramaean king, Hazael of Damascus. Perhaps the contradiction results from the wounding of Ahaziah by the Aramaeans (2 Kings 8,28; 9,15; 2 Chr 22,5f) which

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[26] See Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige. 1.Kön 17 - 2.Kön 25* (Das Alte Testament Deutsch 11,2), Göttingen 1984, 362 note 10; Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 11), New York 1988, 143; COS 2, p. 272.

[27] KAI Ergänzung, 310; COS 2.39; TUAT Ergänzungslieferung, 176-179. See also Parker, *Stories* (1997) 58 who analyses this inscription together with the Mesha and the Sfire inscriptions within the narratological category of the 'Stories of Military Campaigns' and compares the inscriptions with 2 Kings 13-14; Joshua 10; 2 Samuel 8 and 10.

ended in the death of both kings in Jezreel. It proves that in both cases representation is based on literary construction.

The description of the events in the Tel Dan inscription is embedded in a retrospective view of the chequered relationship between the kings of Aram and Israel which goes back two or more generations (see 1 Kings 15,18-20; 20,1-34; 22; 2 Kings 8,7-15). After the death of 'Ben-Hadad' (Hadadezer) this conflict culminates under his successor Hazael in the attack on Aram by the Israelite-Judaic coalition under Joram and Ahaziah (2 Kings 8,28f; 9,14; 2 Chr 22,5). The severity of the conflict which the Aramaean king here too – as in the case of the Zakkur inscription – resolves with the help of the imperial god, Hadad, who had chosen the king and raised him to the throne, can be explained by what had preceded this. It seems to have been the first crucial test in which the usurper, the 'son of a nobody' as Hazael is called in the basalt inscription of Salmanassars III[28], had to prove himself a legitimate ruler. This may also be why Hazael calls his predecessor Hadadezer (the 'Ben-Hadad' of 2 Kings 8,7-15) his 'father'. Once again it is the history of the kingdom which dominates the account of the events and the commemoration of the past on the inscription.

Such commemorations have also entered biblical scriptures and it is no coincidence that the Tel Dan inscription comes closest to the annalistic notes in 2 Kings 8,28f (9,14f). They are the point of departure for the original account in 2 Kings 9f which describes the same episode included in the Tel Dan inscription but elaborated in a much broader literary manner. In the original Israelite account, the episode served to illustrate the cruelty of the Israelite usurper. Within the framework of the Deuteronomistic Redaction of the books of Kings, the account was interpreted theologically and placed within the history of the downfall of the monarchy. Here it became the crowning conclusion of the Elijah/Elisha cycle in 1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 10 which does not tell any more the history of the dynasty but the history of the First Commandment.

But to return to inscriptions which do not tell long stories but rather short episodes – this is not only the case for royal inscriptions. Brief episodes and anecdotes from the past also occur in other genres and seem to be part of the basic repertoire of West Semitic narrative culture. The most prominent example of this is the Hebrew Siloam inscription from Jerusalem[29], the oldest preserved Old Hebrew narrative outside the Old Testament. This is not an official, royal building inscription but a genre of its own. The process of breaking through a

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[28] See COS 2.113G (TUAT I, 365).

[29] AHI 4.116 = KAI 189; HAE I, 178-189 (COS 2.28; TUAT II, 555f). See also Younger, *The Siloam Tunnel Inscription: An Integrated Reading* (*Ugarit-Forschungen* 26, 1994, 543-556); Parker, *Stories* (1997) 36-42.

tunnel, an impressive architectural accomplishment, is described in best Old Hebrew prose. The beginning – הנקבה [ואה] [This is?] the breach' and וזה היה דבר הנקבה 'And this was the story of the breach' – unlike building and votive inscriptions refers not to an object but to the process which is reported in what follows. Temporal expressions, subordinate clauses and a genuine *consecutio temporum*[30] structure the narrative and create the necessary tension. The individual events are told consecutively and, simultaneously, the circumstances of the process are described. Despite its brevity the narrative is highly creative and tightly constructed[31]. Although it might appear to be quite profane and detailed, it too does not give a fully authentic and complete account of the event. The story is not the minutes of the tunnel building project but rather the condensation of a complex process by concentrating on one particular moment.

The Siloam inscription reminds us that the Old Hebrew narrative culture was not limited to subjects of the royal court. In this inscription it is the decisive final phase of a particular architectural enterprise which is acknowledged not as a building project of the king but as a curious event in and for itself. Moreover, in the West Semitic area of the first millennium BCE just like in the rest of the Ancient Near East there must have been also religious myths, wisdom tales, fables and anecdotes as well as heroic legends of famous founder figures (kings, tribal chiefs or family heads). In the epigraphic witnesses we know, however, only few are preserved. Occasionally brief events of daily or political life of a more recent or more distant past are mentioned in letters[32]. As for the wisdom tales, the Achiqar from Elephantine is an example[33], and as for the heroic legends, one may think of the dissemination of the Gilgamesh material in the West Semitic territory[34]. But otherwise one is dependent on the biblical scriptures and on the reconstruction of the older sources, tales or narrative cycles, upon which the biblical narratives are based[35]. These sources, too, are usually based on a single episode which is the point of departure for expanding

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[30] בעוד + participle or infinitive – perfect; ביום + perfect – imperfect consecutivum = narrative.

[31] The Siloam inscription is, incidentally, recommended to all those who reject the literary critical reconstruction of original texts in the Bible arguing that they are much too short and thus unconceivable.

[32] Significant examples are the Mesad Hashavyahu (Yavne Yam) ostracon (COS 3.41; see Parker, *Stories* (1997) 15-18), the Lachish ostraca (COS 3.42), and the letters from the Jedaniah Archive from Elephantine, particularly the request for a letter of recommendation concerning the reconstruction of the temple (COS 3.51).

[33] See Porten and Yardeni (ed.), *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, Vol. 3, Jerusalem 1993, C 1.1.

[34] See TUAT III, 668f.670.

[35] See Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament*, London/New York 2005.

the account in a literary manner. These episodes include memorable events or curious matters in the past which are fundamental for the present or important for present and future behaviour and therefore are commemorated in a story. Of course, the episode from the past does not always correspond to the real events. It is always told from the perspective and in accordance with the knowledge and the interests of the narrator and his times.

3. Memoirs

It is the commemoration of the deceased and the story of their lives, the works and deeds of kings as well as memorable events which constitute the essential aspects of the historical reminiscences in West Semitic inscriptions of the first millennium BCE. They commemorate names, things, and events of the past which continue (or which are meant to continue) into the present and the future. The commemoration concentrates for the main part on the individual: individual people, individual buildings, individual political or religious accomplishments, curious events. There seems to be no historical or archaeological interest. The focus is on what should remain and how it should influence the commemoration by future generations.

In general, there was no great interest in a larger historical context or continuity. However, as we have seen, a historical continuity can be derived from the histories and genealogies of the persons commemorated in the inscriptions and, in the case of kings, this coincides with the political history of the particular reign. There are a few examples among the preserved inscriptions where this biographical and genealogical continuity has been somewhat elaborated in a historiographical manner[36]. They cannot be assigned to any specific genre and do not differ in their historical awareness from the more or less contemporaneous inscriptions already mentioned. The difference is rather one of quantity. The constellation of persons is somewhat more complex, the chain of single events is denser, and occasionally there are new narrative strategies. But these more detailed historical retrospectives are also not a West Semitic innovation. Like the other genres, they too are based on the older

[36] The relevant texts: TSSI III.15 = KAI 26 (COS 2.21 and 2.31; TUAT I, 640-645); TSSI III.13 = KAI 24 (COS 2.30; TUAT I, 638-640); TSSI II.13-14 = KAI 214-215 (COS 2.36-37; TUAT I, 628-630); TSSI 1,71-83 = KAI 181 (COS 2.23; TUAT I, 646-650). For a comparison see Miller, 'The Moabite Stone as a Memorial Stela', *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 106, 1974, 9-18.

Ancient Near East (especially the Hittite and Neo Assyrian) literature of the second and first millennium BCE[37].

Nevertheless, it is worth taking a closer look at this group of inscriptions. They can be used to study and observe *in nuce* how individual events are linked and what constitutes the historical continuity and coherence. As the texts in question are all, without exception, royal monumental inscriptions[38], obviously they tell the story of individual rulers and their dynasties. The kingdom is the focus of the history and determines the representation of the course of this history.

The historiographical means of representation, however, are different. Thus in the Phoenician-Hieroglyphic Luwian bilingual inscription of Azitawada[39], a building inscription (II, 9f) found at Karatepe, a pattern of representation occurs that I would like to call the salvation history ('Heilsgeschichte') pattern. In this inscription, Azitawada, who was either the subordinate ruler of Awarku, the king of the Danunians, or the usurper to the throne of Awarku[40] boasts that, thanks to the help of his god Baal, he has become the 'father and mother' of the Danunians. Azitawada effusively praises the prosperity in the land, his good deeds for the ruling dynasty (or the dynasty he deposed, i.e. the dynasty of Awarku) and his prominence among the kings of other countries, his building activities and territorial gains. This all culminates in the occasion of the inscription, the building of the city which bears his name and in which he had his personal god take up residence. The text concludes with blessings on the king, the city, and its residents as well as the usual regulations and threats of curses for the protection of the inscription. They are to guarantee that 'the name of Azitawada be forever like the name of Shamash and of Jarich (the sun and the

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[37] See COS 2; TUAT I/3-5 (Historisch-Chronologische Texte I-III).

[38] Parker, *Stories* (1997) 136 correctly underlines the fact that 'we have no example of a Northwest Semitic chronicle'.

[39] TSSI III.15 = KAI 26 (COS 2.21 and 2.31; TUAT I, 640-645).

[40] The relationship of Azitawada to Awarku is not easy to determine and depends on the interpretation of I,9-12. According to KAI II, 39 Azitawada was 'first installed as a subordinate ruler (see אדר) but then became independent'; the translation of I,9-11 is accordingly: 'Und ich errichtete das Haus meiner Herrschaft (בת אדני) auf Freundlichkeit und machte Güte zur Wurzel meiner Herrschaft (לשרש אדני). Und ich setzte mich auf den Thron meines Vaters (וישב אנכ על כסא אבי) ...' Müller in TUAT I,641f sees this differently; he believes that the inscription is intended 'to gloss over an usurpation on the part of Azitawada' (641 note 2a; 642 notes 10c and 11a) and translates I,9-11: 'Und ich richtete auf das Haus meines Herrn (בת ארני) durch Güte; und ich tat dem Nachkommen meines Herrn (לשרש ארני) wohl. Und ich setzte ihn auf den Thron *seines* Vaters ...' Likewise COS 2.21 §14-16 (Hieroglyphic Luwian version) and 2.31: 'And I established the house of my lord in goodness; and I did good to the root of my lord. And I caused him to reign upon the throne of *his* father.' Here one shares the opinion of Hawkins who said that Azitawada 'was apparently a subordinate ruler subject to the royal house of Adana' (COS 2.21, p. 124).

moon)' (IV,2f). The historiographical means of representation in this inscription is the contrast between earlier times (I,8f.14-16.19; II,4-6) and the time of the reigning king (I,5; II,1.5.15-17). Consequently the description of the paradisaical circumstances is not ordered chronologically but according to subject; an era of salvation replaces a darker time.

The salvation history pattern can also be found in the large corpus of inscriptions of Ja'udi/Sam'al[41]. However, in this corpus the concrete political situation becomes more and more important historiographically. Thus the oldest preserved inscription, that of King Kilamuwa[42], is dominated by the contradiction between past and present, in this case being related to the dynasty. Unlike all of his predecessors, the forefathers, and other members of the House of Gabar who are called by name and clearly described as failures, Kilamuwa claims to have created stable conditions both at home and abroad. However, it attracts attention that he does not claim to have been helped in this by the imperial god or by those gods to which, in the relief, his left hand points. Only in the concluding curses for the protection of the inscription are different manifestations of the god Baal, all of them gods of the royal house, mentioned. The representation of the transition from bad times to good times looks like an absolutely profane history. Kilamuwa claims that, as to foreign affairs, he has committed (literally: 'hired' rkw) the King of Assyria. Whereas his father Haja, as a member of an anti-Assyrian coalition, waged war against Salmanassar III and lost, thus becoming liable to pay tribute[43], Kilamuwa seems to have changed fronts and inaugurated a pro-Assyrian policy which guaranteed the survival of his house. In this way the theme which in the inscriptions of his successor Barrakib became a major historiographical *topos*[44] is introduced.

Around the mid-8th century, between Kilamuwa in the 9th century and Barrakib at the end of the 8th century BCE, Panamuwa I (son of QRL) and Panamuwa II (son of Barsur and the father of Barrakib) were the rulers of Ja'udi/Sam'al. There is a statue erected by Panamuwa I with a votive inscription to the god Hadad[45]. The first part of the inscription reflects on his ascension to the throne and the good times that followed, and then the text moves on to the statue itself and its impo rtance for the cult of Hadad and for Panamuwa's death

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[41] The most recent edition is Tropper, *Die Inschriften aus Zincirli. Neue Edition und vergleichende Grammatik des phönizischen, sam'alischen und aramäischen Textkorpus* (Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syriens-Palästinas 6), Münster 1993.
[42] TSSI III.13 = KAI 24 (COS 2.30; TUAT I, 638-640). See Parker, *Stories* (1997) 78-83.
[43] See COS 2.113A (I, 42.53; II, 83).
[44] TSSI II.14-16 = KAI 215-217 (COS 2.37-38; TUAT I, 628-632).
[45] TSSI II.13 = KAI 214 (COS 2.36).

cult. The inscription, partly due to its bad state of preservation, does not provide much new information on the history of the kingdom and the notion of history. But it is worth mentioning for the fact that the salvation history pattern justifies why the king should be commemorated by future generations and elaborates this in detail. The use of direct speech lends the stereotypical description of the cult activities connected with the statue a certain liveliness.

Dating to two generations later, the votive inscription which Barrakib had erected in memory of his father Panamuwa II[46] was also concerned with the commemoration of the king by future generations. Following the warnings of Panamuwa I, in this inscription Barrakib applies the salvation history pattern to the deceased predecessors and to his father. But it goes into more detail about the history of the kingdom and the historical role that Assur played in this history.

The complicated literary structure, in which Barrakib speaks simultaneously for himself as well as about his deceased father, his father's ancestors, friends, and enemies, is quite artfully integrated into a complex narrative. It begins in the present: Barrakib first presents the object, i.e. the statue, then himself as the donator and then his father Panamuwa (II) with patronymic and title as the beneficiary of the statue (line 1). Following this, the narrative turns to the father's past. The narrative anticipates the end of his personal history which is also the political history of his country and with this it presents the *leitmotiv* of the inscription: Owing to the 'justice' (צדק), i.e. the loyalty of the kings of Ja'udi/Sam'al to the Assyrian king (lines 11.19), the gods of Ja'udi preserved Panamuwa's royal house from destruction (lines 1f). Only in this way was it possible for Barrakib too to become king. After that we are told the history of the rise of Panamuwa to kingship which begins with a palace revolt in the house of his father Barsur[47] and the resulting domestic and economic chaos (lines 3-6a) and ends with his ascension to the throne and resulting turn for the better (lines 6b-10a). Following a brief description of the conditions 'in the days' of Panamuwa, the retrospective ends with the moving and detailed description of his death and returns to the present, the days of Barrakib (lines 10b-19a). From these times, only the regulation governing the succession to the throne is described (lines 19b-20a); then the beginning of the text is repeated and the statue the inscription is written upon is mentioned (lines 20b-23).

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[46] TSSI II.14 = KAI 215 (COS 2.37; TUAT I, 628-630). See Parker, *Stories* (1997) 83-89.

[47] According to line 3 it was incited by a son of Barsur, thus by a brother of Panamuwa who is probably identical with the 'stone of destruction from the house of his father' in line 7.

The historical retrospective in this inscription reveals a number of peculiarities. It not only contrasts bad times and good times but also goes into historical detail. It includes a chronology of the events, whereby the focus is clearly on the politically delicate and dangerous transitions at the beginning and the end of the reign, transitions which are important for the stability of the world and, by the way, make the narrative more interesting. The representation seems to be relatively realistic. Nevertheless, one shouldn't be deceived. It is still highly stylized. Thus the theme of the killing of the father and 70 members of the royal house (line 3) is probably a representation of a well-known *topos* in the narrative of palace revolts (see Judges 9,5; 2 Kings 10,1-11).

Just as in the inscription of Kilamuwa, the king of Assur, in this case even mentioned by name as Tiglatpileser (III), plays the decisive role. He helps Panamuwa II to the throne, grants him territorial gains from the Assyrian campaigns and at the end weeps for his death. Barrakib legitimized the dependence on Assyria which was beneficial for the kingdom of Ja'udi/Sam'al with the history of his father. What was already suggested in the Kilamuwa inscription, appears here as well as on some of Barrakib's other inscriptions in a more mature form: the profane vassal relationship has become a historiographical *topos*. The relationship is one of 'lord' (מרא) to servant (lines 11-17.19) and is circumscribed with the term 'justice' (צדקה/צדק) which appears in all central points at the beginning (line 1), in the middle (line 11) and at the end of the text (line 19). Superficially, this term simply describes the unquestioned loyalty of the vassal to his 'lord', but the semantic field includes the resulting prosperity of the kingdom. Unlike the Kilamuwa inscription, in this inscription the gods of Ja'udi also expressly give their blessing to this (line 2; cf. line 22). Thus here one is confronted with the idea of a political theology, which characterizes the representation and is concentrated in the term „justice'. As this term includes both the profane and the sacred character of the relationship of the vassal to the Assyrian king, as legitimated by the gods, it was, of course, eminently suited for the theological career which followed in the biblical literature. But this does not at all mean that the inscription 'anticipates the work of the Deuteronomistic historian'[48]. On the contrary, in the biblical literature the vassal loyalty (צדקה) is transferred to the relationship between the God Yhwh and the chosen people of Israel.

In addition to the salvation history pattern in the Azitawada inscription and the propaganda of vassal loyalty in the inscriptions of Ja'udi/Sam'al, there is yet another historiographical pattern to be found in the inscription of King Mesha of

[48] Parker, *Stories* (1997) 88.

Moab[49]: that of the holy war. The *topos*, already encountered in the Zakkur inscription, has to do with the genre of the inscription, a votive inscription for Kemosh, the god of the Moabite dynasty. This *topos* is introduced right at the beginning of the inscription in the king's self-presentation. Following the thirty-year long reign of his father, Mesha has become king and has erected a sacred shrine (במה) for Kemosh. This is in gratitude for the fact that Kemosh had saved him and enabled him to look down on his enemies or 'haters' (lines 1-4). The story which follows is designed to illustrate this.

Here too, the historical retrospective is marked by the contrast between the past and the present. However, unlike in the Azitawada or in the Kilamuwa inscription the contrast is not a cliché about a bad past and a good present but is rather one of concrete political events. The retrospective begins with the days of Mesha's father and his father's enemy, King Omri of Israel, who had oppressed Moab for many years. It then moves on to the days of Mesha who has to contend with Ahab of Israel, the son of Omri. Here Mesha boasts that he has driven Ahab out and freed Moab from Israelite domination. The representation is not structured chronologically but geographically[50]. After a brief summary which describes the conditions in the past and in the present in general terms (lines 4-7a), a detailed list of place names follows and the change in sovereignty is noted. A list of four towns or districts in the North (lines 7b-21a) is followed by a list of localities where only building activities are mentioned (lines 21b-31a), before the fragmentary text returns to the original style of a war report and continues with the South of the country (lines 31b-34).

The historical notes themselves mention names and political facts whose historicity is in principle authentic. They correspond in this aspect to the profane historical style of the Aramaean texts of Ja'udi/Sam'al, Tel Dan, and others, above all to the Neo Assyrian inscriptions. Like these, of course, the wording of the Mesha inscription is highly formalized and full of historiographical *topoi*. The claim that Israel was devastatingly defeated and 'forever destroyed' (line 7) is as false here as it is in the oldest known mention of Israel on the stela of the Pharaoh Merenptah[51]. The assertion that Mesha 'looked down' on King Ahab of Israel 'and his house', i.e. that he even experienced the fall of the dynasty of

[49] TSSI 1,71-83 = KAI 181 (COS 2.23; TUAT I, 646-650). See Parker, *Stories* (1997) 44-58, and furthermore Smelik, 'King Mesha's Inscription. Between History and Fiction', in: idem, *Converting the Past. Studies in Ancient Israelite and Moabite Historiography* (OTS 28), Leiden 1992, 59-92; Müller, 'König Mêšaʿ von Moab und der Gott der Geschichte', *Ugarit-Forschungen* 26, 1994, 373-395.

[50] Parker, *Stories* (1997) 56 denies also any geographical order and states: 'The order seems rather to be determined by elements in the stories.'

[51] COS 2.6; TUAT I, 544-552.

Omri and the fall of the Israelite royal house respectively, comes close to the language of the Psalms and is probably completely exaggerated. The numbers too, the 30-year long reign of his father and the 40 years of oppression by Israel are probably just as imprecise as the statement that Omri had ruled in Moab (Madeba) 'in his (Omri's) time and for half the time of his son(s)' (line 8). This is difficult to reconcile with the preceding statement that Mesha had freed Moab under Ahab, the son and follower of Omri[52]. Likewise the comment concerning the complete annihilation of the enemy population, the number of dead being rounded to 7000 (line 18) and that of the Moab army of 200 soldiers (line 20) is probably figurative. It is not possible to verify whether those battles mentioned in the inscription actually took place in all the localities mentioned or whether all the places where battles occurred are enumerated fully.

But for the inscription the historical accuracy is unimportant. This can be seen by comparing it with the Old Testament. Here Mesha's liberation from Israel is placed in the time of Joram, Ahab's successor (2 Kings 1,1; 3,4-6). Unlike the Mesha inscription, the biblical account claims that the decisive battles did not take place in the North, but in the South. Despite many attempts at harmonization[53], time and place do not correspond. Probably the two reports do not even refer to the same battles, although both deal with Moab's liberation from Israel. The liberation or expansion[54] of Moab and the annexation of formerly foreign (Israelite or Gadite and perhaps even Judahite[55]) territories was probably, in fact, a longer process. The inscription itself knows about a number of military confrontations which were fought at different places and consequently at different times[56]. Listing the battle sites place by place serves to create the impression of a single unified campaign. The summary at the beginning (lines 4b-7a) enhances this impression. In the biblical account, this, in the end, becomes a unique event in the history of Israel and Judah (2 Kings 3,7)

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[52] For a possible solution (or harmonization) see Parker, *Stories* (1997) 48 who (with Lemaire) stresses the fact that the chronological data in line 7b-8 only regard Madeba and that the data of line 4-7 'simply indicate that resistance to Israel began with the frustration of the intentions of Omri's son and ended with the obliteration of Israel – which could be as late as the reign of Jehu's son, Jehoahaz'. However, Parker himself also considers the data to be 'illusory' and 'imprecise' (ibid., 48f).

[53] See KAI II, p. 170.173f; TUAT I, 647 notes 7a.b.8b.

[54] See Parker, *Stories* (1997) 57f.

[55] In lines 31-32 the reading *bt[d]wd* 'house of David' has recently been proposed by Puech and Lemaire. See Parker, *Stories* (1997) 46 with note 13.

[56] See TUAT I, 649 note 19b. Parker, *Stories* (1997) 53-55 finds indications for a double edition of the inscription and suggests that 'stories of these campaigns presumably circulated in the court over the years, until finally the present synopses or reported stories were committed to writing in this inscription' (p. 57).

which took place under Joram after the death of Ahab. According to this account, the initiative was taken by Israel. All of this shows that in both cases, the representation of matters dealing with profane history likewise is not focused on archaeology but on the ideological viewpoint of the observer. In the Mesha inscription, the individual battles are enumerated and stylized in the past-present pattern in order to draw attention to the attainment of the political independence of the Moabite dynasty, irrespective of how it was achieved.

But the dynasty is not the only element of the story. In this inscription, the notion that not (only) the kings but also the gods of Moab and Israel are at war is highly significant. The entire scenario is presented as though directed by Kemosh, the god of the Moabite dynasty, to whom the inscription and the holy shrine Mesha had built for him, as mentioned in the inscription, are dedicated. In lines 5f, already the oppression by Israel is attributed to the will of the god Kemosh who is angry at his land (כי יאנף כמש בארצה). Thus he is also responsible for the fact that foreign gods have established themselves in the land: Dod of the Gadites in Ataroth (lines 12f) and Yhwh of Israel in Nebo (lines 17f).

Kemosh's fury closely resembles the interpretation of the fall of Israel and Judah in the Old Testament prophets and the Deuteronomistic literature. Here, too, their own god is furious and brings about the catastrophe. However, in contrast to the god of the prophets and the Deuteronomists in the Old Testament, the fury of the Moabite god, like all the other gods of the Ancient Near East, is not directed at giving up the king, the people, and the land and establishing a new relationship between God and his chosen people but at restoring the old relationship between God and his king. The anger is not directed at destroying the close connection between theocracy and monarchy but at reconciling them.

This is even true for the original narrative of the event which the Old Testament version in 2 Kings 3 is based upon and where no god is mentioned[57]. Here the fury (קצף) descends on Israel after Mesha has turned to his last resort and sacrificed his first born son, the crown prince, in order to repel the attack of the coalition of Israel and Judah under the leadership of Joram. This fury forces Israel to retreat and return to its own land. This is evidently an attempt to provide an explanation for the embarrassing historic defeat of Israel, as documented in the Mesha inscription. Whether it is Yhwh or Kemosh who

[57] 2 Kings 3,4-7.21-27 (without the „king of Edom" in v. 26 and the respective additions in vv. 8f.20). See Schmitt, *Elisa. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur vorklassischen nordisraelitischen Prophetie*, Gütersloh 1972, 32-37; Würthwein, Das Alte Testament Deutsch 11,2, 279ff. Both Schmitt and Würthwein, suggest that VV. 8-9a.20 also belong to the original version of the account, but there is a difference in the function of the water between vv. 9.20 and vv. 22f.

relents in view of this act of desperation and becomes angry is not mentioned. In this way the legend – from sheer necessity in view of the defeat – makes use of an artificial device which respects the dynastic principle and the claim of sovereignty of both royal houses (and their gods) by attributing the effect of the sacrifice and the outcome of the war to an anonymous magical power. Only in the later literary layers of the narrative, in the framework of the Deuteronomistic redaction in 2 Kings 3,1-3 and the prophetic legend in 3,8-20, does Yhwh and his relationship to the kingdom come into play. However, the differences between the biblical account and the Mesha inscription are evident: in the biblical account the King of Israel is and remains a sinner in the eyes of Yhwh (v. 1-3). He is – in contrary to the actual distribution of power (v. 7) – only preserved for the sake of Jehoshaphat (v. 14), and achieves a partial victory (v. 24f) which in fact is foreseen by a prophet (v. 18f). But here Jehoshaphat, a member of the house of David, as in 1 Kings 22,5ff does not represent the kingdom of Judah but rather the pious person who, in all of life's vicissitudes, turns to Yhwh and asks for his word.

Mesha, too, might have asked his prophets for advice when Kemosh grew angry against his own dynasty and his land. But he would not have been concerned about the word of god but rather about what he should do to pacify Kemosh and to move him to intervene on his behalf. Whatever the case, according to the Mesha inscription, Kemosh intervened on behalf of the king and delivered his enemies to him. Now Mesha again ruled where once Omri (and his god) had ruled. The individual battle scenes describe how this came about. They see Kemosh participating in the battle (lines 9.12f.14.17f.19.31b–33a) and, in two cases, follow the classical pattern of the holy war (lines 14b-18a and lines 31b-33a). This pattern is particularly evident in the battle for the city of Nebo (lines 14b-18a): At the order of the god, the king goes to war. After half a day of battle, he conquers the city, kills all the inhabitants and consecrates the city to (Ashtar-)Kemosh. As a sign of superiority the king takes the vessels of Yhwh and deposits them in front of Kemosh (cf. line 12f). God and king are once again inseparable and work hand in hand. The historical commemoration of this is intended to lend this relationship and, with it, the royal house and the Moabite monarchy stability and duration.

4. Conclusion

The past in the West Semitic inscriptions of the first millennium BCE is primarily the history of the kingdom and the ruling dynasty. Particularly

concerning the beginning and the end of a reign legends are woven and recorded in mortuary, building and royal inscriptions. Such inscriptions mark the beginnings of both a political and theological historiography. Above all, it is changes in power which evoke the retrospective into the past and, for the sake of the future, the comparison to the present. This retrospective view takes many forms – from the commemoration of the deceased king to individual memorabilia to recapitulations of the entire reign, from the ascension of the king to the throne up to his death.

The different genres and types of historical retrospectives cannot be attributed to a certain time, a certain region or a certain people within of the Syrian-Palestine world of small kingdoms during the first millennium BCE. They are not phases of an historiographical development but appear at about the same time in the first half of the first millennium at different places in the same cultural area. They are not restricted to royal inscriptions. Mortuary, building, and votive inscriptions were also commissioned by individuals who, as a rule, were of higher social status but not members of the royal house itself. However, in such instances, there are no retrospective views of history, only the individual story is recorded. Moreover, myths about gods, legends of heroes, wisdom tales, and other material which, with the exception of the Siloam inscription, are not found in inscriptions and – like the stories about the kings in 2 Kings 3 or 2 Kings 9-10 – were recorded in short episodes or in narratives must also be taken into account.

The purpose of the historical retrospective is not archaeological in nature but rather the commemoration of memorable individuals (names) and events of the past which are adjudged to be important for the present and the future. Thus the retrospective view is, to a great extent, an ideologically, usually theologically directed (re)construction from the present and for the present. This does not differ – *mutatis mutandis* – from the biblical accounts whose literary and theological aspects are much more developed; nor does it differ from the historiographically much more sophisticated Greco-Roman tradition nor from the much more precisely developed modern historiography. But the standards and the ideological guidelines are completely different[58]. In the West Semitic

[58] For comparison with the biblical narratives see Parker, *Stories* (1997) 131-142. Whereas Parker is doubtless right in his conclusion that 'Israelite prose narratives of several genres preserved in the Bible are not monotheistic and, indeed, are in no sense theological or religious' and that the roles of Chemosh, Hadad, and Yahweh are essentially alike in the Moabite, Aramaic, and Hebrew narratives of successful military campaigns (p. 139f), he fails with his overall conclusion: 'In sum, a contrast between monotheistic Hebrew narrative and the polytheistic narratives of its neighbors is misleading' (p. 141). One has to differentiate the literary layers within the biblical literature: Indeed, 'monotheism is often quite irrelevant' (ibid. 141), but only in the original and earlier

inscriptions of the first millennium BCE, it is, as was common in the Ancient Near East and thus also in many of the old sources upon which the biblical historical narrative is based, clearly the political and theological legitimation of the kingdom and the ruling dynasty which dictates the retrospective view of the past and how it is presented. Unlike the biblical accounts, it is not a question of overcoming the *status quo* but of guaranteeing and stabilizing it.

versions of the Hebrew narratives preserved in the Bible as in the inscriptions of the Israelite and their neighbours; but monotheism, in fact, is very important and relevant in the final form of the Hebrew narratives as they are presented in the Bible. See Kratz, *Composition* (2005) 309-322.