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Although the present tendency is to move the date of the initial composition of Israelite tribal boundary lists to the period of the Monarchy, I believe that the subject should be reevaluated from the perspective of several matters that have come to light regarding the literature of Joshua and the archaeology of the Late Bronze-Early Iron age transition.

1. Na'aman's doctoral thesis, studying the fourteenth-century B.C. Canaan of the Amarna letters, has been followed by careful studies examining the boundaries of the Canaanite city-states that comprised Canaan at that time. Although the Amarna letters do not provide detailed boundary descriptions such as those found in the book of Joshua, it is possible to reconstruct some city-state boundaries by studying the places mentioned, the claims made by rulers of various city-states, and the topography of the land. Again, it was Alt who first suggested this approach, using as an example from the Amarna letters the ruler Labaya of Shechem, who controlled a territory occupied by Ephraim and Manasseh. Na'aman agrees with this approach and goes on to equate other Late Bronze Age city-states with tribal territories. Some of his more intriguing identifications include correspondences between the city-state of Gezer and Dan's territory, between Hazor's territory and that of Naphtali and between Shim(r)on and the allotment of Zebulon. Na'aman discusses the territory comprising the allotment of Issachar, though this is more complicated since Issachar's boundary list was not preserved in Joshua. in fact, all of the Cisjordanian tribes with boundary lists are mentioned, with the exception of Judah and Asher. The border of Judah is problematic for a number of reasons. There is evidence that there were nomadic groups in the Judean hills, but scholars continue to dispute the borders of various city-states, especially Hebron and Jerusalem. Asher's boundary was perhaps a composite of several important city-states along the Mediterranean Coast. of course Na'aman points out differences in detail between the boundaries described in the two groups of texts. Most evident is the obvious fact that there are more city-states listed than there are tribal territories. Thus, the correspondences are approximate, not precise. Nevertheless, it is significant that at no other time in the history of Old Testament Israel were regions demarcated in a way that so closely resembles the tribal allotments in Joshua. If one were to date Joshua 13-19 solely on the basis of the period in which the known political-geographical divisions most closely correspond to the boundary descriptions, the closest correspondence would be with the Late Bronze Age world of the Amarna correspondence. Thus, the borders outlined in Joshua appear at least in part to reflect traditions extending back in time to the Late Bronze Age citystates of Canaan. Attempts to date the boundary descriptions to the time of the Monarchy must reckon with geographical realities that precede the period of the Monarchy. in this light it is appropriate to question Na'aman's dating of the boundary descriptions. His concern was with the written documents themselves rather than the principles of division of the land. His question was less historical (whether there were tribes occupying the land allotted to them in the Monarchy) than literary (whether the tribes possessed a document that defined their boundaries in a way similar to the description in Joshua 13-19 His negative answer to the question of the possession of the document brings me back to the probl em of the reason for such a document.

2. M. Weinfeld has demonstrated that the literary position of Joshua 13-19, immediately following the conquest account of chaps. 1-12, is not unique to the Hebrew tradition. It is found in other literary sources, especially classical sources. The examples that he cites demonstrate that the chapters in Joshua concerned with allocation of the land were not inserted at random but describe the logical and necessary consequences of the occupation of a new land by a group of people. This analysis determines nothing about the date of the boundary descriptions or any of the narratives to which Weinfeld refers, but it does show that the distribution of land was considered the next step after conquest in cultures throughout the Mediterranean. Consequently, allocation and boundary descriptions had a purpose and significance, one that was tied closely to the initial occupation of the land. Apparently, a rationale existed for preserving such materials in the initial accounts of Israel's appearance in the land. As I will yet demonstrate, the origins of this tradition hark back to second millennium B.C. treaty structure.

3. I. Finkelstein's work has been used a great deal in recent discussions on Israel's appeareance in Canaan. Finkelstein collected evidence from surveys throughout the area of what was once ancient Canaan. He summarizes the results of this intensive and extensive canvassing of the land, and his conclusions suggest that the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age (ca. 1200 B.C.) was marked by the sudden appearance of many new village sites throughout Canaan, especially in the central hill country. in the century or two following that, numerous additional sites began to appear in the Galilee region to the north. The only region to experience a significant increase in the number of settlements after the Monarchy, however, was the region of Judah to the south. An interesting correlation may be made between this evidence and the earliest extrabiblical reference to Israel, at the end of the thirteenth century B.C. in the stele of Merneptah There Israel is described, not as a city-state, but as a separate ethnic group. No single population center sufficed to give Israel an identity, for the people were spread across the hill country and beyond, inhabiting numerous small villages. The Song of Deborah in Judges 5 also avoids describing Israel other than as a collection of tribes. 21 Could it then be that Joshua 13-19 also preserves an ancient record of the people of Israel? Perhaps the passage portrays a time when the various tribes in Israel could not yet be identified by the one or two cities that served as administrative centers, such as was true in the time of Solomon, as described in 1 Kgs 4:7-19. Could not Joshua 13-19 describe a time when tribal identity was preeminently important and when the topography of this identity, especially in the hill country, could be described only by means of natural landmarks and villages?

4. Research in the agriculture of highland Canaan in the second and first millennia B.C., as well as studies devoted to the importance of kinship patterns and lineages in the biblical genealogies of early Israel, have demonstrated that "Israelite" groups would have needed increased stability once they began to settle in the highlands. The nature of terrace farming, for example, suggests a need for a stable population to provide large and long-term investments of labor in order to build and sustain terraces. Furthermore, large families were needed to provide the labor for clearing uncultivated land and rendering it productive, and thus long-term residence in and maintenance of the territory of one's family became a major concern. The labor-intensive nature of sowing, harvesting, and other seasonal activities required the cooperation not only of the extended family but also of entire villages. This in turn provided the economic basis for intervillage cooperation and, finally, the need for agreements about boundaries between families and tribal groups. These boundaries surely served to minimize intertribal strife and to maximize cooperation necessary for economic well-being. Thus, strong motivation for boundaries developed during the period of settlement.

5. in his study, Alt also observed similarities between biblical border descriptions and those from other cultures, citing examples from Greece, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. However, discoveries since his time have brought to light the existence of West-Semitic lists of towns that were created for census purposes. Documents discovered at Ugarit, Mari and Alalakh list place-names and define administrative duties. Many such documents in the West-Semitic world come from the Late Bronze Age. Although this may simply be an accident of archaeological discovery, it appears more likely that the existence of such documentation for the Late Bronze Age (including the Mycenean world of Greece), documentation that exceeds anything that has been preserved from succeeding centuries in the West-Semitic world , is evidence for a widespread cultural interest. Perhaps the Israelites encountered this administrative system throughout the city-states of Canaan. The Canaanite scribal tradition was of some antiquity, and Israel's adaptation of the system for its own purposes would have been natural and expected. Israelite use of Late Bronze Age Canaanite wisdom traditions has already been suggested for the premonarchic period, and there is evidence of a similarity in rhetorical forms between the Amarna texts from Jerusalem and the Psalms. Therefore, the borrowing and adapting of other scribal conventions would not have been without precedent during the period of the Judges. Noth's theory that boundary descriptions were originally lists of names with connecting phrases added later derives from awareness of such lists. The distinction of the boundary lists is the presence of connecting phrases. They demonstrate a genre that appears in other biblical passages outlining borders. Descriptions of this type are not unique to the Bible in the West Semitic world . Examples of border descriptions in cuneiform texts of the Late Bronze Age also have been found. Among other places, they appear in documents describing agreements between leaders of separate nations or city-states. M.E.J. Richardson has identified a series of Akkadian documents from Ugarit that represent a boundary agreement originally made between Niqmadu, king of Ugarit and Suppiluliuma of Carche-mish This agreement was renewed by later kings. Richardson examined the tradition of the boundary description preserved from generation to generation by these documents and observed similarities in these boundary descriptions, despite minor variations. For instance there are small changes in the spelling of specific place-names that may be compared to the differences between some of the names in the Masoretic Text and their spelling in the Septuagint. He also found that additional place-names were inserted in later lists. These names may have been used to delineate further the boundary or to reflect the emergence of new towns and population centers from one generation to the next. Richardson also noted that the appearance of connecting prepositions between the town names could not be predicted. This was frequently true for the use of the preposition a-du (more commonly Akkadian adi), which is regularly translated in connection with place-names as 'up to' or 'as far as'. Richardson argued that this demonstrates that boundary descriptions with prepositions may already have existed in the Late Bronze Age. This theory renders unnecessary Noth's hypothesis that the boundary descriptions of Joshua were originally town lists to which connecting phrases were added later. Another boundary description is found in the Hittite treaty between Tudhaliyas IV, ruler of the Hittites, and Ulmi-Teshub of Dattasa. Lines 15-32 (recto) recount a lengthy border description of the land that Tudhaliyas allotted to Ulmi-Teshub. in this case also there are connecting phrases that join a variety of landmarks and place-names. Thus, there is evidence of boundary descriptions resembling those in Joshua in the international relations of the Hittites and the Syrian city-states of Carchemish and Ugarit. More important is the context in which these boundary descriptions occur, in treaty documents (or renewals of earlier treaties) between a variety of national and city-state powers. The treaty context of Joshua 19 is clearly suggested by Joshua 24, a fact already noted by scholars such as Aharoni. Chapters 13-19 could have formed part of an early Israelite covenant with God. The allotment of land in ancient Near Eastern treaty texts served to guarantee land to those on either side of the border. It provided a legal document to which appeal could be made in disputes involving ownership of towns or pieces of land. It also defined the area for which a ruler was responsible. And it was of sufficient importance to be renewed whenever new rulers appeared on the throne. The biblical memory of a divinely appointed allotment administered by tribal and family leaders (Josh 14:1-2) suggests that territorial division was of critical importance to Israel and that it had divine sanction. As with the Late Bronze Age Syrian and Anatolian texts, it could guarantee the integrity of the people's land and define the areas in which they had responsibility. Like the Ugaritic text, it was subject to renewal with the appearance of a new generation. However, Israel was not yet an established state. If the Late Bronze Age parallels suggest anything, it is in terms of a formal similarity. Surely, to date these texts before the Monarchy creates the problem of the unreality of these descriptions, a problem stated with clarity by Kallai and Na'aman Much of the land did not belong to the tribes inhabiting only the hill country; the answer to this problem is that the portrayal is idealistic Why is this the case? Two of the arguments already considered hint at possible explanations. Perhaps Israel took over the broad "map" of Late Bronze Age Canaan as suggested by Na'aman's analysis of the Amarna texts and their implicit city-state divisions. Also, the promotion of high-land agriculture, along with a rapidly expanding population, could easily have led to a desire for an extended border system. Although ideahstic at the time, anticipation of continued prosperity and growth as experienced by the early generations of settlers would naturally lead to the extension of borders.

6. A final consideration is the tribal nature of early "Israelite" groups in the highlands. As studies of West-Semitic tribes of second-millennium B.C . Mari have shown, tribal groups sometimes fluctuated between a sedentary and nonsedentary existence. Such movements were not easily susceptible to control by a central authority. They also threatened the existence of other settled groups. of course, tribal and family movements are well known from the Bible in the early Israelite period. The most famous was the migration of the tribe of Dan. Migrations of this kind were of great concern to the authorities whose traditions were preserved in the biblical text. For that reason a major migration, such as the one by the tribe of Dan, was carefully described (and so justified) as corresponding to the "Israelite Conquest," though on the smaller scale of a single tribe. Such concern illustrates the potential for problems encountered by various tribes living side by side. This is evident from the continual strife of the Israelites during the period of the Judges with their external enemies. But of special interest is the intertribal conflict found in the narratives of Judges 19-21 and suggested by recent work demonstrating the inevitable competition for the relatively scarce resources of the Canaanite highlands. There was a need from the beginning of the settlement to delineate tribal occupation areas. That this potential for conflict was eventually resolved by the formation of the Monarchy does not alter the fact that the premonarchical society faced these problems. An agreement that defined territorial allotments and was backed by the force and witness of divinely recognized authority would have served as a useful instrument in the early stages of occupation and development. As a political tool it would have discouraged competition between various groups by appealing to divinely ordained divisions, just as the treaty curses provided sanctions for violations. As time went by, later generations would have continued to the allotments important and useful. They served to apportion the land as it was gradually occupied. It was just as important that they also functioned to provide all of the people with two types of identity: an affiliation with one tribe and an affiliation with a unity of various tribes. As the incidents in Judges 4-5 and 19-21 demonstrate, the ideal of unity was not always realized. However, this fact in no way diminishes the perceived need for such a document.

These observations argue for a reconsideration of the hypothesis that the period preceding the Monarchy was formative, both for the creation of the territorial divisions that became the boundary descriptions of Joshua 13-19 and for the literary production of something not unlike these descriptions. on the basis of the present evidence, Alt's attempt to trace the origins of this material to the premonarchic period cannot be ruled out of consideration.