An Assyrian Loyalty-Oath Imposed on Ashdod in the Reign of Tiglath-pileser III?

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This article examines the evidence from SAA 19 text 28, which apparently mentions Ashdod, as well as several towns in the surrounding region, on which Tiglath-pileser III imposed a loyalty oath[1]. It discusses the Assyrian practice of imposing loyalty oaths, and their use in the Assyrian West in the period of Tiglath-pileser III. Furthermore, the towns mentioned in this text are identified, and the implications of an Assyrian loyalty oath being imposed on a polity bordering Judah are explored in the period of Tiglath-pileser III.

1. Use of Assyrian Loyalty Oaths in the West

Assyrian loyalty oaths were used in the Assyrian west as a means of binding polities subject to Assyria to the Assyrian Empire, and these were formalized in written documents called *adê* in Akkadian[2]. The most famous of these is known as the "Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon" (SAA 2 text 6, a copy of which was discovered in 2009 in Tell Tayinat). Such *adê* were imposed both on provinces (as at Tayinat) and on vassal polities (as in the case of SAA 2 text 6).

Below, I survey what we know regarding such treaties or oaths in the west before the time of Esarhaddon, and then explore how SAA 19 text 28 can add to our understanding of this phenomenon in this period.

From the period before Tiglath-pileser III, we have SAA 2 text 2, which is a treaty with Arpad dating from the reign of Aššur-nerari V (754-745), as well the Sefire treaties[3].

From the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, we have a brief mention in his royal inscriptions concerning Ashkelon. In a wall slab detailing his conquest

[2] On whether these should properly be called treaties or oaths, see Jacob Lauinger, "The Neo-Assyrian *adê*: Treaty, Oath, or Something Else", *ZABR* 19 (2013) 99-115.
[3] On which see Parpola – Watanabe, SAA 2, xxvii.

of the Galilee, four broken lines refer to Ashkelon and specifically to the "loyalty oath" (*adê*) of its king[4]. Completed by comparison with another slab[5], they describe the revolt of Mittinti, king of Ashkelon, who is said to have neglected his loyalty oath and rebelled, despite having seen the defeat of Rezin of Damascus. Mittinti "became afraid" and he was replaced by a king chosen by the Assyrians, Rukibti[6]. The mention of the loyalty oath in the inscription serves as a justification for his removal.

An additional mention of an *adê* in the west in this period appears in Sennacherib's inscriptions, which claim that an *adê* existed between Assyria and Ekron (RINAP 3/1, Senn. 4: 42). We have no information as to whether this oath (or that of Tiglath-pileser III on Ashkelon) was ceremonially imposed (and if so, on what swath of the population), and whether a formal document was written.

Questions about the ceremony involved in *adê* documents, and about the extent of the population exposed to these documents are important for understanding how populations in the Assyrian west were exposed to Assyrian imperial ideology. Understanding the extent of such exposure is of great interest to historians of ancient Israel and Philistia, and to biblicists, as I discuss in the conclusion.

From the period of Esarhaddon, we know that *adê* were imposed on a broad swath of the local elites, including but not limited to the vassal king or governor. The Tayinat tablet states that the oath was imposed on many members of the local elite, including village managers, military officials, and craftsmen, besides the provincial governor[7]. Assurbanipal describes Esarhaddon's oaths as having been imposed on "the people of Assyria, great and small"[8]. *Adê*

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[4] RINAP 1 Tigl. III 22: 8'-12', which parallel Hayim Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria* (Jerusalem 1994) 82-83, annal 18.

[5] RINAP 1 Tigl. III 21: 12'-15', which parallel Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III,* 82-83, annal 24.

[6] The simplest historical reconstruction seems to be that at some point shortly after the 733-732 BCE campaign against the Southern Levant, in which Rezin was defeated, Mittinti failed to pay tribute, and the army of Tiglath-pileser III removed this disloyal vassal. The revolt of Mittinti clearly post-dates the campaign in which Rezin was defeated, since the defeat of Rezin is described as an event Mittinti witnessed before his revolt. Nadav Na'aman, "Two Notes on the History of Ashkelon and Ekron in the Late Eighth-Seventh Centuries", *Tel Aviv* 25 (1998) 219-227, here 222, argued that Rukibti removed Mittinti and that the mention of the violation of the loyalty oath is simply a justification for the Assyrian approval of Mittinti's replacement by the rebel Rukibti. While this reconstruction is possible, I prefer the one I suggest above, for the following reason. Since we know that Mittinti paid tribute in 734 BCE (RINAP 1, Tigl. III 47), and Assyria campaigned in the region in 733-732 BCE, it seems difficult to understand how Rukibti could have replaced Mittinti in those years. For earlier discussions of this episode, see Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III,* 268; and Carl S. Ehrlich, *The Philistines in Transition: A History from ca. 1000-730 BCE* (Leiden 1996) 98-108 and 176-180.

[7] Jacob Lauinger, "Esarhaddon's succession treaty at Tell Tayinat: text and commentary", *JCS* 64 (2012) 87-123, here 112.

[8] Simo Parpola – Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (SAA 2; Helsinki 1988) xxix; see further discussion in Frederick Mario Fales, "After Taʻyinat: The New

were intended to expand the extent of the population exposed to Assyrian ideology beyond the immediate circle of the provincial governor or king[9].

2. Ashdod under Tiglath-pileser III

More detailed evidence about *adê* in the west in the eighth century, and how they were imposed, comes from SAA 19 text 28. This text appears to mention Ashdod, as well as several towns in the surrounding region, on which Tiglath-pileser III appears to have imposed a loyalty oath.

Before examining this text, which will form the centerpiece of our discussion, we explore what is known about Ashdod in the time of Tiglath-pileser III, both from the Assyrian textual corpus and from other sources.

Ashdod is mentioned nowhere in the Assyrian royal inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III. This places it in contrast to many other kingdoms of the southern Levant mentioned in RINAP 1, Tigl. III 47 (Judah, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Ashkelon, Gaza) all of which submitted in 734[10]. The relevant part of this inscription (lines 10'-12') are broken, and the absence of Ashdod from the legible portion of the text therefore proves nothing. Perhaps because of the paucity of textual data about Ashdod during his reign, its fate in this period is not frequently discussed in scholarship[11].

Ashdod is mentioned once in an administrative letter that clearly dates to the reign of Tiglath-pileser III. The letter, published as SAA 19 text 8, was sent by Ullulayu, the son of Tiglath-pileser III, who later reigned as Shalmaneser

Status of Esarhaddon's adê for Assyrian Political History", *RA* 106 (2012) 133-158, here 148; and Kazuko Watanabe, "Esarhaddon's Succession Oath Documents Reconsidered in Light of the Tayinat Version", *Orient* 49 (2014) 145-170, here 146-147 and in Simonetta Ponchia, "The Neo-Assyrian adê Protocol and the Administration of the Empire," in: Salvatore Gaspa et al eds., *From Source to History: Studies on Ancient Near Eastern Worlds and Beyond Dedicated to Giovanni Battista Lanfranchi on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, (AOAT 412; Münster 2014) 501-25, especially 513-516.

[9] On a related point, Lauinger argued that *adê* documents took the political loyalty that Assyria demanded of the local leaders and transformed that loyalty into a divine requirement. This has clear implications for the diffusion of Assyrian ideology to the wider population. Jacob Lauinger, "Neo-Assyrian Scribes, 'Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty', and the Dynamics of Textual Mass Production", in: Paul Delnero – Jacob Lauinger (eds.), *Texts and Contexts: The Circulation and Transmission of Cuneiform Texts in Social Space* (SANER 9; Boston/Berlin 2015) 285-314, here 286.

[10] On the date of 734 BCE for the submission of the kingdoms mentioned in this text, see Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III,* 268.

[11] Examples of this are the "Historical Survey" in Moshe Dothan – David Noel Freedman, "Ashdod I: The First Season of Excavations", *Atiqot* 7 (1967) 8-13; the "Introduction" in Moshe Dothan, "Ashdod II–III The second and third seasons of excavations, 1963, 1965", *Atiqot* 9-10 (1971) 17-23; the "Chronology and Historical Conclusions", in Moshe Dothan – Yehoshua Porath, "Ashdod IV: The Excavation of Area M, the fortifications of the lower city", *Atiqot* 15 (1982) 52-58; and Moshe Dothan, "Ashdod", *NEAHL* 1 (1993) 93-102.

V. The text mentions that the emissaries of Ashdod, Moab, and kingdoms in Syria passed through Gozan on their way to the Assyrian capital. This text clearly refers to the organized trip of tribute-bearing ambassadors of kingdoms on their way to their annual visit to the Assyrian palace, and it shows that Ashdod was tributary to Tiglath-pileser III. It is quite likely that this text is not earlier than 734 BCE, since that is the earliest date at which we find other kings of Philistine cities bringing tribute to Assyria (RINAP 1 Tigl. III 47 r. 11'-12').

3. The Ashdod letter of Qurdi-Aššur-lamur?

The only other text from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III that appears to mention Ashdod is SAA 19 text 28 (ND 2662, IM 64100). The word "Ashdod" does not appear in full in the text; only its final syllables appear. The word was restored as "Arwad" by Yamada[12]. However, it was restored as "Ashdod" by Luukko in SAA 19; as I show below, the other towns mentioned in the text can be identified in the area around Ashdod, but no such identification has been suggested for the region surrounding Arwad[13].

For ease of reference, I present the first five lines of the text below:[14]

1	[a-na LUGAL E]N-ia ARAD-ka ᵐqur-di-aš-šu[r-IGI]	[To the king], my [lo]rd: your servant Qurdi-Aššu[r-lamur]
2	[URU.as-du]-da-a-a ina UGU-ḫi-ia i-sa-par	The [Ashdo]dite (king) has sent to me:
3	[ma-a T]A* URU.qa-da-ʳruʳ-a URU.li-i-du	"With (the city) Qadarua, (the city) Lidu
4	[URU.ḫ]a-di-du[15] LUGAL [i]na ŠÀ a-de-e i-s[a]-kan	(and) [H]adidu in the treaty the king contracted.
5	[x x] x-par? ma a-na L[UG]AL at-ta-ḫa-ra	I have [se]nt [...] and appealed to the k[in]g.

[12] Shiego Yamada, "Qurdi-Assur-lamur: His Letters and Career", in: Mordechai Cogan – Dan'el Kahn (eds.), *Treasures on Camels' Humps: Historical and Literary Studies from the Ancient Near East Presented to Israel Eph'al* (Jerusalem 2008) 296-311, here 302 and 309. In support of Yamada's reconstruction, we should note that Arwad appears among the tribute-bearing kingdoms in 734 BCE in RINAP 1 Tigl. III 47. However, since SAA 19 text 8 informs us that Ashdod was also tributary in this period, this is not a decisive point in favor of Arwad.

[13] The text is discussed in neither Ariel M. Bagg, *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der neuassyrischen Zeit* Teil I: *Die Levante* (RGTC 7/1) (Wiesbaden 2007) nor in Bagg, *Die Assyrer und das Westland* (Leuven 2011).

[14] Except for the point noted in note 15, the text is taken from SAA 19, and the translation is based on Luukko's translation there. The quotation marks are left open to indicate the uncertainty of where the quotation ends. I believe it ends at the end of line 5, as I discuss below.

[15] SAA 19 transcribes here: [x x]x-di-du. However, the drawing of the text by Saggs, available in CDLI, allows us to read [URU.ḫ]a-di-du at the beginning of line 4, and [x URU.ḫ]a-di-d[u at the beginning of line 6, by comparison with the intact ḫa sign in line 5. I am grateful to Mikko Luukko for kindly commenting on this point.

It is beyond question that the text refers to the establishment of an *adê*, apparently formalized by a document, which included the cities mentioned in the text. These cities appear to belong to the king mentioned in line 2. The phrase *adê šakānu*, which appears in line 4, is generally used to describe contracting a loyalty oath. It is used in SAA 2 text 6: 12, 41-42, 105 and 154 to designate contracting an oath or treaty, and in line 390 of the same text to designate the wholehearted participation of the weaker party in the same oath or treaty.

In SAA text 28: 4, the subject of the verb *issakan* is clear: the reference to "the king" in line 4 refers to the king of Assyria, who "placed" (or, more idiomatically, "contracted") the oath. As in SAA 2 text 6: 12, 41-42, 105 and 154, the king of Assyria is the subject of the phrase *adê issakan*. Since such *adê* arrangements were made between kings, it appears most reasonable that the writer reports here that the Assyrian king had established a treaty with the [Ashdo]dite mentioned in line 2, and that this [Ashdo]dite was a king. He specifically emphasizes that this treaty included the cities mentioned in lines 3 and 4. The fact that these cities are participants in the treaty is clearly of great importance to the [Ashdo]dite's complaint, a point whose significance is discussed below.

The quote containing the [Ashdo]dite's complaint clearly begins in line 3, and might also include the appeal to the king mentioned in line 5[16]. Alternatively, the quote might end at the end of line 4, and line 5 would report that the writer, Qurdi-Aššur-lamur, appealed to the king in regard to the complaint. In either case, the inclusion of the three cities mentioned in the treaty established by Assyria was important in the complaint. These cities appear to be part of the domain of the [Ashdo]dite, and their inclusion in the treaty might reflect the Assyrian practice attested in SAA 2 text 6, and in the Tayinat document of including a range of local elites in loyalty oaths, as discussed above.

The specific mention of these three cities by the writer appears to have an additional purpose. During the expansion of the Assyrian Empire in the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, the submission of kings of city-states in different parts of the empire was motivated partially by the desire of those kings to obtain Assyrian confirmation for their rule[17]. Such confirmation included both their right to rule and confirmation of the geographical extent of their domain. The king of Assyria became the final arbiter in disputes among tributary kings

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[16] Mikko Luukko noted "It is not certain where the quotation from line 3 ends" (SAA 19 [Helsinki 2012], 35, notes).

[17] See discussion in Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III*, 171, with reference to Tyre, Tabal and Samaria, and in Na'aman, *Tel Aviv* 25 (1998), 222, with reference to Ashkelon.

over territory: this is clear from SAA 19 text 29, which relates to a territorial dispute between Qedar and Moab. The dispute was reported to Qurdi-Aššur-lamur, who sent it to the king of Assyria for adjudication. Additionally, disloyal vassal or client states risked having their boundaries "adjusted" by the Assyrian king in favor of more pliant local rulers[18]. Therefore, a loyal vassal who felt that his territory had been attacked or encroached upon might reasonably expect the king of Assyria to rectify matters. The [Ashdo]dite mentioned in line 2 evokes the participation of the cities mentioned in lines 3-4 with the goal of emphasizing that the Assyrian king included these specific cities in an *adê* arrangement made between the king of Assyria and the [Ashdo]dite. This *adê* arrangement therefore serves, from the [Ashdo]dite's point of view, as confirming his control of these cities.

It appears that the king of a polity adjacent to that of the [Ashdo]dite mentioned in line 2 encroached (or was thought to have done so) on the territory of the [Ashdo]dite, threatening the latter's control of one or more of the cities mentioned in lines 3 and 4. The [Ashdo]dite ruler therefore appealed to Qurdi-Aššur-lamur (who then forwarded the appeal to the Assyrian king), reminding him that these three cities were included as part of the loyalty oath that he concluded with Assyria, in which the extent of his territorial control was confirmed. Such appeals from local rulers arguing whether towns belong to their polity or to another are fairly common in the Assyrian administrative correspondence; SAA 19 text 29 is another example, as is SAA 19 text 42.

4. Ashdodite or Arwadite?

The foregoing emphasizes the need for identifying the local ruler mentioned in line 2. The ending "-*da-a-a*" in line 2 could certainly be restored as "Ashdodite", as Luukko proposed. Such a restoration reflects the writing KUR. *si-du-da-a-a* in SAA 19 text 8: 12 (cited above), the writing KUR.*sa-du-da-a-a* in SAA 1 text 29 r. 22 (a letter sent by Sennacherib in the reign of Sargon),

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[18] Such boundary adjustments are recorded in RINAP 3/1 Senn. 4: 52-54. In this and many other texts of Sennacherib, we are told that after the 701 BCE campaign Sennacherib took territory from Judah and awarded it to Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza. Another famous example of the Assyrian king's role as boundary enforcer appears in the letter to the gods of Sargon II regarding his eighth campaign. There, Sargon tells how he began his campaign in order to punish Rusa of Urartu for violating the boundary of Sargon's vassal Ullusunu the Mannaean. On this incident, see lines 123-124 in Walter Mayer, *Assyrien und Urartu* I. *Der Achte Feldzug Sargon II. im Jahr 714 v. Chr.* (AOAT 395/1; Münster 2013). On the self-portrayal of Sargon II as boundary enforcer, see Marc Van de Mieroop, "A Study in Contrast: Sargon of Assyria and Rusa of Urartu", in: Sarah Melville – Alice Slotsky (eds.), *Opening the Tablet Box: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Benjamin R. Foster* (Leiden 2010) 417-434, especially 419-420.

as well as the writing KUR.⌜áš⌝-du-da-a-a in a much-discussed text from the reign of Sargon detailing the bringing of tribute by emissaries from several kingdoms in the southern Levant (published as SAA 1 text 110 and on-line as SAA 19 text 159). The ending could also reflect Arwad, but there is no reason, based on the preserved signs "-da-a-a", to prefer Arwad over Ashdod.

The only reason for preferring the restoration "Arwadite" over "Ashdodite" is the geographical proximity of Arwad to Ṣimirra, the city in which Qurdi-Aššur-lamur is known to have been governor. Yamada notes, in support of his restoration, the responsibility of Qurdi-Aššur-lamur for the administration of the northern Phoenician coast[19]. But Yamada's suggestion that Qurdi-Aššur-lamur was *rab kāri*, "chief of trade", at the same time as he was governor, "could partly explain his mobility along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean and inland"[20]. SAA 19 text 29, sent by Qurdi-Aššur to the Assyrian palace, relates to a dispute between Qedar and Moab, as noted above, and may attest to the geographic range of Qurdi-Aššur-lamur's activity[21]. It does not seem that the proximity of Arwad to Ṣimirra is a decisive point in favor of restoring "Arwadite" in line 2.

In contrast, the geographic names mentioned in lines 3 and **4** of the letter may be decisive in identifying the geographic adjective in line 2. Yamada notes (p. 310) "It is difficult to associate these town names with the Arab tribe of Qedar and the Aramaean Lit'au". The reading Qedar for URU.*qa-da-*⌜*ru*⌝-*a* in SAA 19 text 28: 3 is particularly difficult. Elsewhere in the Assyrian administrative corpus, Qedar is referred to as URU.*qi-id-*[*ri*] in SAA 2 text 10: 1); and the gentilic LÚ.*qi-dar-ra-a-a* in SAA 18 text 143: 8 also refers to the Qedarites, as does a similar writing in SAA 18 text 145: 7. As noted above, no locations proximate to Arwad for these toponyms have been proposed, nor has my perusal of historical and modern atlases, as well as internet-based maps, yielded any suitable locations.

5. Lod, Gedera, Hadid in SAA 19 text 28 and on a 19th century CE Road

In contrast, these three toponyms can be identified fairly easily near Ashdod. Ashdod was the northernmost of the three maritime Philistine city-

[19] Eph'al AV, 302-303. Yamada also discusses (p. 310) the possibility that one individual, named Qurdi-Aššur-lamur, was responsible for coastal matters, while another, named Qurdi-Aššur, was responsible for inland Syria. Luukko (SAA 19, XLVIII) notes that they are "generally assumed to be the same person."

[20] Yamada discusses this point in Eph'al AV, 310; the citation is from Luukko, SAA 19, IL.

[21] It is possible that SAA 19 text 29 was written by an official named Qurdi-Aššur, while SAA 19 text 28 may possibly have been written by a different official named Qurdi-Aššur-lamur (the full name is broken), but as noted above (n.19), Luukko does not accept this possibility.

states, and its territory bordered that of Ekron to its east, and probably that of Israel to its north. Each of the Philistine city-states controlled territory beyond the city that gave each kingdom its name. Since these territories were relatively small, and there are no natural borders in the region, it is reasonable to expect some disputes over which territory could be exploited by which city-state, or, to use modern language, where the border ran. With the arrival of the Assyrians as overlords, around 734, it is reasonable to expect that these territorial disputes would be re-awakened, for two related reasons. First, the local kings' jockeying for power was now overseen by Assyria, and they expected that their new overlord might impose new territorial dispositions. This expectation, present even before the 734-732 campaigns, certainly increased after those campaigns weakened certain polities in the region, especially the kingdom of Israel. Second, the arrival of the Assyrians changed economic and therefore demographic patterns, and this changed the relative importance of different sub-regions in the southern Levant. One example of such changes (and the example that primarily concerns us here) is the increased importance of the area around Aphek and Hadid, a previously-marginal region that became important partly due to increased Assyrian traffic on the main international highway, which ran through this area[22]. Therefore, the level of interest of rulers in including certain territories in their kingdoms' borders changed.

We now move to examine each of the toponyms mentioned in the text. The first toponym mentioned, URU.*qa-da-*⌈*ru*⌉*-a,* may well refer to a site known as Tel Qatra. It is located approximately 10 km east of Tel Mor (ancient Ashdod), just south of the streambed known as Nahal Sorek, the proximate portion of which is called Wady Katrah in the PEF 1880 map. Fischer, Taxel, and Amit[23] discuss the archaeological evidence for settlement at Tel Qatra, which extends from the Middle Bronze Age down to the Byzantine period and beyond[24]. In Kaplan's survey[25], quantities of Iron Age sherds were found at the site and a "settlement layer from the Iron Age" can be discerned in the exposed portion of the hillside, under an additional settlement layer from the Persian period. Albright also mentions Iron Age remains[26]. Recent excavations by the Israel

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[22] Shawn Zelig Aster – Avraham Faust, "Administrative Texts, Royal Inscriptions and Neo-Assyrian Administration in the Southern Levant: The View from the Aphek-Gezer Region", *Or* 84 (2015) 293-308.

[23] Moshe Fischer – Itamar Taxel – David Amit, "Rural settlement in the vicinity of Yavneh in the Byzantine period: A religio-archaeological perspective", *BASOR* 350 (2008) 7-35, here 28-29.

[24] They also discuss the possible identification of this site with Gedor/Gidirtha in the Madaba map, a question that lies outside the scope of the present discussion.

[25] Jacob Kaplan, "An Archaeological Survey of the Gadera-el-Mughar Area" (Heb.), *BIES* 17 (1953) 138-143, here 140 and 142.

[26] William Foxwell Albright, "Researches of the School in Western Judaea", *BASOR* 15 (1924) 2-11, here 8.

Antiquities Authority at a site adjoining the tel have uncovered unusually large quantities of holemouth jars from the late eighth and seventh centuries BCE[27].

The site was connected to Ashdod by a road that existed both in the Iron Age and in the 19th century CE, as it is today by the modern Highway 7[28]. The name Katrah/Qatra refers to a large town that existed at the site until 1948, and is recorded on the PEF 1880 map, among others. (This town name served as the impetus for naming the Jewish town "Gedera", established in 1884 on land south of Katrah purchased from its inhabitants. The Biblical "Gederah" refers to the name of a town in the northern Shephelah district of Judah in Josh. 15:36, and must necessarily lie further east[29]).

But the name Katrah/Qatra long pre-dates the Ottoman period. The tel on which the town stood is identified with Gedrus mentioned by Eusebius in the 4th century CE[30]. It is referred to as Qidron/Kedron, mentioned in 1 Mac 15:39-41 and 16:9. In their discussion of the events narrated in the first book of the Maccabees, Rainey and Notley note the position of Kedron between Azotus (Ashdod), which was a Hellenistic city at the time, and the Hasmonean forces at Adida, northeast of Lydda[31]. (These locations' importance to SAA 19 text 28 is discussed below.)

Although I know of no pre-Hellenistic extra-Biblical texts mentioning this site, the name Gedrus or Qidron/Kedron is clearly West Semitic in origin, deriving from the root גדר (or less likely, קדר). West Semitic toponyms of sites occupied in the Iron Age can be presumed to pre-date the Hellenistic period. The Hellenistic-period sources cited Gedrus and Qidron/Kedron, thus attesting to a Hebrew name such as גדרות or קדרון[32], and both Gedrus and Qidron/Kedron are similar to the Akkadian *qa-da-⸢ru⸣-a*, with the same three consonants and a final [o/u] vowel.

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[27] Many thanks to Alla Nagorsky, who directed the very recent (2017) IAA excavations, for discussing the results with me.

[28] For the Iron Age road, see Kaplan, "An Archaeological of the Gadera-el-Mughar Area", 142 and for the Ottoman-era one, see David A. Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel* (Baltimore 1991) 64.

[29] See Anson F. Rainey – R. Steven Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem 2008) 12; an identification of Biblical Gederah with Kh. Judraya, near Beit-Nattif, has been proposed in Shmuel Vargon, "Gedud: A Place-Name in the Shephelah of Judah", *VT* 42 (1992) 557-564.

[30] Eusebius refers to Gedrus as "a very large village 10 milestones away from Diaspolis [i.e., Lod] on the way to Eleutheropolis". He identifies it with Gedor of Josh 15:58; this identification is obviously impossible since the Gedor of that verse lies near Beth-zur and Halhul in the Judean highlands. But the settlement of Gedrus 10 milestones south of Lod is a historical reality.

[31] *The Sacred Bridge* 327.

[32] The Hebrew name of the site may have been Gederoth, based on 2 Chr 28:18, which I discuss below.

The second toponym mentioned, *li-i-du*, seems to refer to Lydda/Lod. The earliest reference to this city is in the toponymic list of Thutmose III, from the early 15th century BCE, in which the 64th entry, *lú-t-n,* is rendered as "Lod" by Rainey[33]. *Lú-t-n* is part of a series of entries (numbers 57-68) that are clearly organized in a south-north geographical sequence, proceeding along the coastal road from the area of Raphiah to Yaḥam (modern Yamma, about 5 km south of Baq'a al-Gharbiya). Lod is mentioned after Yafo (Jaffa) and Gath (referring to Gath-rimmon, mentioned in Josh 19:45) and before Ono and Aphek. Lod does not appear in any pre-exilic Biblical text, but appears in Ezr 2:33, Neh 7:37 and 11:35, 1 Chr 8:12, each time together with Ono. The association with Ono in both texts shows that the reference is to a town in the region of modern and Hellenistic Lod/Lydda.

The archaeological (ceramic) remains for Iron Age Lod are surveyed by Yannai, and these clearly show settlement from the beginning of the Iron Age at least until the eighth century[34].

Although the Hebrew and Arabic names for Lod, as well as the Egyptian reference cited, use an [o/u] vowel between the two consonants, and the Akkadian *li-i-du* clearly attests an [i] vowel, the Assyrian inscriptional corpus shows that vocalic variation is not unusual for names in the region. Thus, Ashdod is rendered both as KUR.*si-du-da-a-a* in SAA 19 text 8: 12, and as KUR.*sa-du-da-a-a* in SAA 1 text 29 r. 22. Furthermore, the vowel [i] occurs elsewhere in the Neo-Assyrian corpus in place of the expected vowel [u][35].

The third toponym mentioned is broken, but can readily be identified based on the foregoing. The fully preserved signs are *di-du,* with a partially preserved sign that can be read as *ḫa* before them. Based on the concatenation with Katrah/Qatra and with Lod/Lydda, this should be restored as *ḫa-di-du,* referring to the town of Hadid. Like Lod; this town name is well-attested from many periods. It is mentioned in two of the post-exilic passages noted above (Ezr 2:33 and Neh 7:37), together with Lod, and also in Neh 11:34, and was identified by Esthori HaParhi at al-Ḥaditha, approximately 3 km east-north-east of Lod[36]. (The name Ḥadiṯa appears in the list of Thutmose III at number 76 but does not necessarily refer to this site)[37].

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[33] *The Sacred Bridge* 73.

[34] Eli Yannai, "Archaeological finds from the Biblical periods at Lod (Bronze Age, Iron Age and Persian period)", in 1 האלוהים עיר - דיוספוליס ,לוד Conference Volume, 69-99, here 88-91 (Hebrew).

[35] Mikko Luukko, *Grammatical Variation in Neo-Assyrian*, SAAS 16 (Helsinki 2004) 87-88.

[36] *The Sacred Bridge* 179.

[37] The numbers follow Rainey and Notley, *ibid.* Shmuel Ahituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* (Jerusalem 1984) 109 places it "most probably in the Beqaʿ'".

Most significant for our purposes are the excavations at a site very close to the modern Tel Hadid (near the site of the town of al-Haditha), begun in 1995. On the gentle slopes east of the tel, bounded by a wide terrace, Iron III remains were located[38]. The most famous result of these excavations was the discovery of two cuneiform tablets, the first dated to 698 BCE, and the second to 664 BCE[39].

Since these tablets clearly point to a connection between the site and the Assyrian administration, and since the site is close to the main road, I suggested that this site was an Assyrian *bīt mardīte*, a "roadside provisioning center" starting already in the early seventh century BCE[40]. The interpretation proposed here for SAA 19 text 28 suggests that in the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, it was in the domain of the king of Ashdod. Only after the revolts of Ashdod in the reign of Sargon II, and the subsequent transformation of Ashdod into a province after 712 BCE, did the site (along with other parts of the kingdom of Ashdod) come under direct Assyrian control. Although Ashdod was re-established as a kingdom in the period between the end of Sargon's reign in 705 BCE and the 701 BCE campaign of Sennacherib (as attested by the submission of Mittinti the king of Ashdod in RINAP 3/1 Senn. 4), strategic areas along the main road, such as Hadid, may have remained under direct Assyrian control after 701. In any case, it appears that by 669, the kingdom of Ashdod itself came under direct Assyrian control, since an Assyrian governor of *as-du-*[ ] was the eponym for that year; *as-du-* is usually completed as *as-du-da*, which is the way Ashdod is frequently mentioned in the inscriptions of Sennacherib[41].

It should be clearly emphasized that the connection between Katrah/Qatra, Lod/Lydda, and Hadid appears in geographical data unrelated to SAA 19 text 28. A nineteenth century road joins these sites, and they were connected to Ashdod[42]. The reasons for this road are clear; it ensures a direct connection between Ashdod and traffic along the main north-south international highway, which passes by Hadid. The mention of Katrah/Qatra and Hadid in discussions of the conflict between the Hasmoneans and Azotus also attests to the importance of this artery[43]. The fact that these towns are elsewhere mentioned

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[38] Esther Brand, *Exploratory Excavations on the Margins of Tel Hadid: Preliminary Report* (Tel-Aviv 1996) 2 (Hebrew). In 2018, excavations were renewed under the co-direction of Ido Koch of Tel-Aviv University, Eli Yannai, and Dan Warner of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

[39] Nadav Na'aman and Ran Zadok, "Assyrian deportations to the province of Samerina in the light of two cuneiform tablets from Tel Hadid", *Tel Aviv* 27 (2000) 159-188.

[40] "An Assyrian *bīt mardīte* Near Tel Hadid?" *JNES* 74.2 (2015) 281-288.

[41] For the eponym list text, see A. Millard, *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire* (SAAS 2; Helsinki 1994) 52; for an example of Ashdod written *as-du-di*, see RINAP 3/1 Senn. 4: 53.

[42] Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel,* 64.

[43] *The Sacred Bridge* 327.

in the context of conflicts between Ashdod and the inland regions, the fact that a road joined them in later periods, and the frequent mention of Lod and Hadid together in Biblical texts strongly suggests that the appearance of *qa-da-ˤruˤ-a, li-i-du* and [*ḫ*]*a-di-du* together in SAA 19 text 28 refers to these three towns.

6. Reconstructing the Historical Background to the Ashdodite King's Complaint

In explaining the background to SAA 19 text 28, I would propose as follows: the king of Ashdod complained to the king of Assyria (via Qurdi-Aššur-lamur) that his rule over the cities Katrah/Qatra (then probably known as Gederoth, discussed below), Lydda/Lod, and Hadid was being challenged. He reminded the Assyrian that the treaty confirmed the Ashdodite king's rule over these cities, not only his loyalty to Assyria. These cities were important to the Ashdodite king because they constituted the most direct link available to him to the international north-south route. By travelling along this route from Ashdod, travelers and traders could link to the international route at Hadid. Thus, if the Ashdodite king controlled this road, he could tax valuable convoys of goods travelling overland to and from Ashdod to and from the international route. If others challenged his control over any point on the route, they could instead demand tax, thus cutting into the king of Ashdod's profits.

7. Speculation on the Historical Background to the Ashdodite King's Complaint

Who was the challenger who challenged the Ashdodite king's control? This question moves us into the realm of rank speculation. The site of Katrah/Qatra is only eight or nine kilometers away from Tell el-Muqenneh (Ekron), raising the possibility that the king of Ekron, who may not have been an Assyrian vassal, challenged the authority of the king of Ashdod. Ekron is mentioned nowhere in the extant inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III or in the administrative correspondence of his period, and we consequently lack information about its status in this period. It is possible that Ekron did not submit to Assyria (if so, it would be the only kingdom of the southern Levant not to have done so).

Another possibility is that Ahaz of Judah, after his submission to Assyria, thought that this submission might buy him additional territory, perhaps at the expense of Ekron, and allow him to extend his zone of control westwards

along Nahal Sorek. In this attempt he was pre-empted by Ashdod's king, whose claim on the territory was approved by Assyria's king.

As a side note, we suggest that this might be the background for the statement of 2 Chr 28:18 that in the reign of Ahaz, the Philistines took over Beth-shemesh, Ayyalon, the Gederoth, Socoh, Timnah, and Gimzu and their surrounding villages, and settled there. We are then told in 28:20 that Tiglath-pileser "acted as enemy towards Ahaz and did not support him". This may reflect Ahaz making a claim for towns along Nahal Sorek (including Beth-shemesh and Timnah), thus leading to conflict with Ekron, located further west along the same wadi. Still further west is Katrah/Qatra. Given the Hellenistic period names of Gedrus and Qidron/Kedron, it is probable that "the Gederoth" in this verse refers to Katrah/Qatra. The mention of Gimzu in the same verse suggests that the conflict also included the area near Lod and Hadid; Gimzu is located about 4 km east of Lod and an equal distance south of Hadid. Thus, regardless of SAA 19 text 28, the statement in 2 Chr 28:20 refers to conflict between Judah and Philistine kingdoms in the coastal plain, both around Lod/Hadid and further south near Nahal Sorek. It is plausible that both texts refer to the identical historical events, in which Ahaz attempted to extend his control westward at the expense of Ekron, but the competing claims of the king of Ashdod for this territory were supported by Tiglath-pileser III.

8. Conclusion: Treaties on Judah's Borders

This reading of SAA 19 text 28 has interesting implications for understanding the broader historical picture. Firstly, the text fills in our knowledge of how Assyria's relations with Ashdod developed. Clearly, from the outset of the Assyrian expansion into the southern Levant, Assyria placed emphasis on Ashdod's loyalty. Ashdod, in return, expected support from Assyria. Assyria's emphasis on Ashdod's loyalty already in the reign of Tiglath-pileser III helps explain Assyria's insistence, in the reign of Sargon II, on repeated military actions against disloyal elements in Ashdod. These actions began with the removal of one disloyal king (Azuri), and replacing him with an Assyrian appointee (Aḥimiti), and ended with the destruction of the city and turning it into a province, after the local people removed Aḥimiti and their new king, Yamani, rebelled[44]. These repeated rebellions of the Ashdodites suggest a deep dissatisfaction with the terms of their "bargain" with Assyria. The roots of this

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[44] A discussion of the relevant texts and a historical reconstruction appears in Andreas Fuchs, *Die Annalen des Jahres 711 v. Chr. nach Prismenfragmenten aus Ninive und Assur* (SAAS 8; Helsinki 1998) 124-131.

dissatisfaction may be attested in SAA 19 text 28, which shows that Ashdod expected something in return for its loyalty to Assyria.

This interaction exposes the expectation of different polities in the region that Assyria would act as arbiter of borders among them. In seeking to understand the "signs of prosperity (that) can be recognized throughout Philistia, in Judah (including the Negev and Judean Deserts), and even in Edom", in the Assyrian period, despite the patent lack of Assyrian investment in the region, Faust pointed to Assyria's "pacifying of the region" as one possible cause of this prosperity[45]. Along with SAA 19 text 29 (mentioned above), SAA 19 text 28 attests to the mechanisms of this pacification. The king of Ashdod essentially expected that Assyria would fight his battles for him; instead of going to war for the territory of Qatra, Lod, and Hadid, he asked Assyria to order their return to him. Whatever the outcome of his appeal, it shows that in the Assyrian period, war was not always the first resort of local polities in cases of territorial dispute. These polities felt that they could appeal to the Assyrian overlord for redress of grievances, and this may have reduced the incidence of local wars.

A further implication relates specifically to the Hebrew kingdoms and to the reaction to Assyrian domination among the Biblical prophets. SAA 19 text 28 provides clear evidence that in the southern Levant, submission to Assyria (at least in some cases) also involved a loyalty oath, as early as the reign of Tiglath-pileser III. 2 Kgs 16:7 narrates a declaration of loyalty that accompanied Ahaz' tribute, and the texts mentioning *adê* show both the historicity of such declarations and that they were part of a formalized process.

The proposed reading of SAA 19 text 28 strengthens the possibility that such loyalty oaths may have been imposed on Judah and Israel as well, in the reign of Tiglath-pileser III[46]. But even if no such oath was imposed on them, it is fairly clear that the *adê* binding Ashdod to Assyria was known to Judah, and probably in Israel as well[47]. The royal courts in these kingdoms therefore understood that what was demanded of Ashdod might also be demanded of them.

We know little about the formal procedure involved in contracting *adê* in the eighth century. From SAA 15 text 90, we learn that local governors could

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[45] Avraham Faust, "Settlement, Economy, and Demography under Assyrian Rule in the West: The Territories of the Former Kingdom of Israel as a Test Case", *JAOS* 13 (2015) 765-789, here 782.

[46] Steymans has argued that such texts reached Jerusalem, but his argument relates to the period of Esarhaddon, two generations later (Hans U. Steymans, Deuteronomy 28 and Tell Tayinat, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34.2 (2013) Art. #870, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v34i2.870.

[47] We know from the "Yamani episode" of the years before 711 BCE that Judah and Ashdod maintained frequent diplomatic contacts, and it is very likely that such contacts existed earlier, in the period of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, when the kingdoms of the southern Levant were trying to coordinate their response to Assyria's advances.

contract such *adê* with leaders of polities geographically proximate to their provinces. Furthermore, it is possible, perhaps even probable, that procedures similar to those mentioned a few generations later in the Tell Tayinat text were employed. Nevertheless, the knowledge that the payment Ahaz made to Assyria (mentioned both in 2 Kgs 16:7 and in RINAP 1 Tigl. III 47) involved or was likely to involve a formal oath of loyalty helps explain the opposition of prophetic circles to such arrangements. Hosea chapters 4-14 are suffused with contrasts between loyalty to Assyria and loyalty to YHWH; such contrasts include Hos 5:13-15, 9:2-5, 10:3-6 (with oath imagery), and 14:2-5. Warnings about the implications of Ahaz' submission to Assyria are found throughout Isaiah chapters 7 and 8 (especially 7:17 and 8:6-8)[48]. Submission to Assyria involved the formal acceptance of Assyria as sovereign, as 2 Kgs 16:7 implies[49]. Prophets such as Hosea and Isaiah of Jerusalem saw Israel's covenant relationship with YHWH as incompatible with such submission[50]. The existence of formal vassal oaths to Assyria as early as the reign of Tiglath-pileser III adds to our understanding of this opposition.

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[48] For a summary of the debates on the dates of composition of these passages, see Jimmy Jack McBee Roberts, *First Isaiah,* Hermeneia (Minneapolis 2016) *ad loc.*, and my *Reflections of Empire in Isaiah 1-39: Responses to Assyrian Ideology* (SBL ANEM; Atlanta 2017) 95-114.

[49] The extensive discussion of whether the treaty forms in Deuteronomy respond to Assyrian*adê*-arrangements is surveyed in Carly L. Crouch, *Israel and the Assyrians: Deuteronomy, the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon, and the Nature of Subversion* (SBL ANEM; Atlanta 2014).

[50] The opposition to Assyria in Isaiah is explored by Peter Machinist, "Ah Assyria... (Isaiah 10:5ff). Isaiah's Assyrian Polemic Revisited", in: G. Bartolini – M. G. Biga (eds.), *Not Only History: Proceedings of the Conference in Honor of Mario Liverani Held in Sapienza - Università di Roma, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità, 20–21 April 2009* (Winona Lake, IN, 2016) 183-218 and by Baruch A. Levine, "Assyrian Ideology and Israelite Monotheism", *Iraq* 67 (2005) 411-427, among others.