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Transit Corridors and Assyrian Strategy: Case Studies from the 8th-7th Century BCE Southern Levant

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Fessler, Heidi

Publication Date
2016

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Transit Corridors and Assyrian Strategy:
Case Studies from the 8th-7th Century BCE Southern Levant

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philisophy
in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

by

Heidi Michelle Fessler

2016
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Transit Corridors and Assyrian Strategy:
Case Studies from the 8th–7th Century BCE Southern Levant

by

Heidi Michelle Fessler
Doctor of Philisophy in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
University of California, Los Angeles, 2016
Professor Aaron Alexander Burke, Chair

Several modern studies and the Assyrians themselves have claimed not only the extreme military measures but also substantial geo-political impact of Assyrian conquest in the southern Levant; however, examples of Assyrian violence and control are actually underrepresented in the archaeological record. The few scholars that have pointed out this dearth of corroborative data have attributed it to an apathetic attitude adopted by Assyria toward the region during both conquest and political control. I argue in this dissertation that the archaeological record reflects Assyrian military strategy rather than indifference. Data from three case studies, Megiddo, Ashdod, and the Western Negev, suggest that the small number of sites with evidence of destruction and even fewer sites with evidence of Assyrian imperial control are a product of a strategy that allowed Assyria to annex the region with less investment than their annals claim.
Furthermore, Assyria’s network of imperial outposts monitored international highways in a manner that allowed a small local and foreign population to participate in trade and defense opportunities that ultimately benefited the Assyrian core.
The dissertation of Heidi Michelle Fessler is approved.

Elizabeth F. Carter

Sarah P. Morris

Aaron Alexander Burke, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016
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Acknowledgements

I am indebted to several mentors, colleagues and friends for their support during my time in grad school. My dissertation committee provided ample assistance through this process. Sarah Morris took the time to offer thorough edits, helpful comments, and enthusiasm for my research. Liz Carter also gave me helpful critiques and directed me to important publications. I am thankful for her teaching and encouragement over the years. Bill Schniedewind has always given helpful advice and instruction. I would like to thank my advisor Aaron Burke for his key critiques on early drafts of the dissertation, putting up with my typos, and giving me freedom to write on a rather unorthodox dissertation topic. His seminar on ancient warfare was where I began to develop the ideas that would turn into this dissertation.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge professors that have imparted key insights about the Ancient Near East, archaeology, and life during my academic career. R. Bryan Widbin and Chris Dost’s enthusiasm about the ANE encouraged me to pursue further study. I would not have a grasp on the importance of geography in the ANE without Paul Wright’s courses at JUC. Amy Kalmanofsky and David Marcus instilled a strong foundation in the study of Hebrew Bible as well as a wonderful educational environment at JTS. I first became interested in ANE Empires during Marc Van de Mieroop’s seminar on the topic. Much of what we discussed in that class is the foundation for this current dissertation. Hilary Gopnik’s willingness to engage in long phone conversations about my dissertation topic propelled me early on in this process.

I would also like to acknowledge my wonderful classmates who have become friends over the years. Julie Deluty, Hannah Lau, Chelsey Fleming, Kevin Hill, Brett Kaufman, Lisa Cleath, Sara Brumfield and Jared Wolfe have at times been my roommates, dig mates, and cheerleaders. This journey through grad school would have been much less pleasant without
them. Nathanael Shelley has read several drafts of this dissertation as well as everything else I have ever written for grad school. I appreciate his helpful comments, critiques, and most of all his friendship. My dear friends Catherine Pratt, Charles Stocking, and Hillary Pietricola have steadfastly encouraged and supported since the beginning of my time at UCLA.

My huge family and especially my parents, Rod and Mindy Dodgen, have always believed in me and supported me.

Finally, I would like to thank my best friend and husband Steve Fessler. I do not have words to express how much I appreciate your love, support, and kindness. Your German fluency also came in handy quite a few times. I would not have been able to accomplish this without you and Morgan.
Vita

2003  
B.A. Sociology, minor in Biblical Studies, 2003  
Nyack College  
Nyack, NY

2007  
M.A. Old Testament  
Alliance Theological Seminary  
Nyack, NY

2009  
M.A. Hebrew Bible and Semitic Languages  
The Jewish Theological Seminary of America  
New York, NY

2009  
Adjunct Instructor  
Nyack College  
New York, NY

2010-2012  
Graduate Student Researcher  
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures  
University of California, Los Angeles

2012-2015  
Teaching Associate  
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures  
University of California, Los Angeles

2016-2016  
Teaching Fellow  
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures  
University of California, Los Angeles

Academic Publications and Presentations

*Fortified Sites in the Iron IIC Western Negev: A Comparative Approach.* Productive Geographies Conference University of California, Santa Barbara, May 2012

*A Preliminary Report on Bronze Age Objects from Godin Tepe, Iran.* ASOR National Conference November 2012

ASOR National Conference November 2012

*“You Have Entered Joppa”: Research and Excavation at Jaffa, 2011* presented with Pierce, George A., Krystal Lords Pierce, Brett Kaufman, Amy Karoll, Edward Maher, and Martin Peilstöcker  
ASOR National Conference November 2011

*The Presentation of Geography in Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions and Historiographic Texts: The Southern Levant as a Case Study.* Productive Geographies Graduate Student Conference University of California, Santa Barbara, May 2011

*Tracking the Assyrian Empire through text and archaeology: the southern Levant as a case study.* UCLA History Plus Graduate Student Conference, October 2011
Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

The Assyrian military accrued centuries of experience in expanding into frontier zones before its celebrated conquest of the southern Levant. The territorial state of Assyria, based in northern Mesopotamia, began their quest to conquer Western Asia in the early 9th century BCE in order to reacquire territories it had lost during the collapse of the Late Bronze Age. Once those “lost” territories had been recovered, the military was fueled by a desire to expand, with a specific goal of reaching the Mediterranean coast (Postgate 1979:194; Postgate 1992; Van de Mieroop 2007:240). We are fortunate to have Assyrian records documenting encounters with southern Levantine rulers as early as the mid-9th century BCE, with Assyria’s intensive military venture into the region beginning with King Tiglath-pileser III in the second half of the 8th century BCE. Assyria gradually overtook the southern Levant and eventually Egypt during the 8th and 7th centuries, only to relinquish control with the collapse of their empire a century after Tiglath-pileser III’s campaigns. Although scholars acknowledge Assyrian occupation in the southern Levant, reaching an agreement on the nature of the occupation is a multifaceted endeavor.

Several works have explored the extent of Assyrian political, military and economic impact on the southern Levant, often with conflicting results. For some, Assyrian occupation drastically encompassed all aspects of local Levantine life, beginning with military campaigns that destroyed most cities as well as villages, followed by political reconfiguration, several building projects, and even construction of industrial centers (Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958; Gitin 1987; Stern 2001:3-7; Ben-Shlomo 2014). Others reject notions of strong Assyrian control and suggest that while the population decreased during Assyrian campaigns, they did not work to incorporate the region into their empire in any meaningful way (Bagg 2013). This dissertation
reevaluates the extent of destruction and construction attributed to Assyria from case studies in northern Palestine, Philistia, and the western Negev in order to reveal the nuances of Assyrian occupation often taken for granted in current scholarship on this topic.

2. Background of the Problem

The descriptive language of the Assyrian annals depicts extreme military measures taken to conquer peripheral regions, including the southern Levant. In northern Palestine, Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III boasts that he “leveled to the ground” the districts of House of Omri (Tadmor 1994:80.18:3’). According to Sargon II, he “besieged and captured Samaria, carrying off 27,290 people… and imposed on them … tribute” (Luckenbill 1968:55). In campaigns directed toward southern Palestine, Sennacherib claims that he conquered “fortified cities, fortresses and (smaller) settlements… without number” (Grayson and Novotny 2014:143). These accounts of violence and devastation exemplify a rhetoric espoused in Assyrian accounts. Examples of violence and control are also memorialized in artwork depicting the destruction of the cities of Lachish and Ekron, as well as the loyalty of the kingdom of Israel. The Siege of Lachish and Ekron portray epic sieges of a fortified city: battering rams breach city walls, fiery arrows target local fighters, siege engines catapult rocks into the domestic quarters of the city, heads of rebels are displayed on city gates and of course captives are led as prisoners away from their homes (Amin 1943; Ussishkin 1980; Cf., Winter 1981 ). The consequences of warfare are reflected in the Black obelisk, in which a contrite king Jehu pledges his loyalty by kissing the feet of the Assyrian king (Smith 1977). Assyrian artwork and texts leave us with distinct events within the advancement of Assyrian relations with peoples in southern Levant.

The reality is probably that these works reflect a far more subtle progression along a timeline that would eventually result in either subjugation or annihilation. In the case of King
Jehu, a defeat in battle, though far from Samaria, resulted in the payment of tribute to Assyria early on in its expansion. On the other hand, while the battles of Ekron and Lachish are depicted instead of the presentation of tribute, it is presumed that these cities did at some point pay tribute, then defaulted, resulting in the utter devastation of their respective cities. Archaeologists are left with the task of interpreting these accounts and deciphering how they are reflected in the archaeological record.

Analyses often echo presentations of an Assyrian military force that essentially destroyed everything in its path with impunity; in their recounting of Assyrian events, hamlets, villages, and cities were all victims to Assyrian destruction (e.g., Na’aman 1991:49; Cline 2000:85; Stern 2001:7; Faust 2015:263). Indeed Broshi and Finkelstein (1992:55) write that “signs of destruction are discernible in almost every site excavated in the area of the former Kingdom of Israel”. Site reports and settlement surveys are thought to correspond with the violent depictions in Assyrian annals, confirming the devastating nature of the Assyrian military (Na’aman 1991:49; Gal 1998a; Stern 2001:7, 9). Others, however, have questioned the extent of Assyrian destruction of specific sites and regions otherwise thought to have been destroyed by Assyria. Reevaluations of the dates assigned to data present at individual sites have caused some to negate the original notion that a certain site exhibits any evidence of Assyrian destruction. According to findings from archaeologists such as Kaplan (1969:147-149), Barako (2007:33-34), Fantalkin and Tal (2009:194, 200) sites either lack evidence of destruction cited in older publications, or sites with destruction have undergone changes in the dating of the destruction level from the original excavations. At the regional level, settlement surveys only provide limited data on the date of

1 Brief History of Scholarship in chapters 2 and 3 for full bibliography.

2 See Destructions Associated with Assyrian Campaigns sections in chapters 2 and 3 for a full list of sites associated with this dissertation that lack evidence of destruction.
pottery sherds (for this study Iron II, Iron III, and Persian periods) found leaving it difficult to discern if a site was destroyed, let alone applying the destruction to a specific enemy. The lack of consensus regarding the extent of damage caused by Assyrian campaigns is carried over to understanding of Assyrian political control.

The vividness with which Assyrian annals describe military campaigns is in contrast to the brevity of references to political configuration of the southern Levant following conquest. The Eponym Lists include three Assyrian governors attached to the cities of Megiddo, Ashdod, and Samaria (SAA 2 669, 679, 690). According to scholarship on Neo-Assyrian political configuration, governors were presumably stationed in a capital city over a larger territory known as a “Province” or “District” from the Akkadian term ḫalzu (Postgate 1995:1-2). Several scholarly works identify strong evidence of structured political control instituted by Assyria over the southern Levant following the campaigns based on these very brief references to governors (Na’aman 1995). It is their understanding from these limited texts that Assyria introduced the institution of provinces that possessed capital cities and demarcated boundaries (Otzen 1979; Na’aman 2001). According to other scholars, during this time Assyria built outposts and fortresses to monitor their newly configured territories that answered to the provincial capitals (Fantalkin and Tal 2009; Oren 1990; Stern 2001). In addition, scholars such as Gitin (1989) and Eitam (1996) argue that the Assyrians encouraged staggering industrial growth, specifically at the city of Ekron, in order to benefit the Assyrian core. In essence, these claims suggest Assyria instituted a highly organized system of control over the southern Levant that affected all aspects of local life.

The belief that Assyria imposed a governmental system on the southern Levant is influenced by scholarship from the last century that sought to define Assyrian provincial
organization in its territories. Forrer’s (1920) seminal work from 1920 defined Assyrian provincial boundaries primarily based on textual sources from Tiglath-pileser III’s campaigns, Assyrian town lists and Biblical reference to geographical features (e.g., Isaiah 8:23/9:1) (Figure 1). Jirku (1928:250, 252) criticized Forrer early on, stating that though there is mention of provinces in Assyrian texts, the boundaries and location of the provinces is not at all explicit enough to describe them to the extent that Forrer did. Further, Jirku pointed out that some city names that Forrer inferred as provinces carry no indication in Assyrian texts as being provincial capitals. While Jirku was correct in observing a lack of evidence, Alt (1929) defended Forrer’s configuration of boundaries, citing that the biblical narrative and geographical contours of the region can indeed lead to understanding the boundaries of the Assyrian provincial system. With the blessing of Alt, Forrer’s configuration of provinces is still a model for scholars today despite Jirku’s concerns about the lack of information available. While more knowledge of the archaeological record and of Assyrian political configuration has come to light since Forrer’s work, Otzen’s map of Assyrian territories resembles Forrer’s configuration (Figure 2; Otzen 1979). Na’aman (2001:431, 432) also entertained the idea of a provincial system put forth by Forrer and Otzen, but modifies the boundaries of Assyria’s Levantine provinces by incorporating more topography with his textual analysis. These new boundaries proposed by Na’aman are far less geometric in shape than Forrer and Otzen proposed in their works and they take into account some of the Assyrianized cities in the region and assume that they were the bases of control, but they are still inspired by the idea that Assyria demarcated space in the southern Levant (Na’aman 1995). Despite the lack of definitive evidence regarding the Assyrian provincial configuration in

3 See Forrer 1920:56-70 for information on Assyrian provinces.

4 In this new configuration, Na’aman (2001) argues that the list of Solomonic districts from I Kings 4 is actually reflective of an 8th-century reality that should have correlations with the Assyrian provincial boundaries.
the southern Levant, atlases and history books still perpetuate Forrer’s notions of a geometrically concise territory (Miller and Hayes 2006:379, Map 30; Van de Mieroop 2007:249, Map 13.1). The presentation of a structured provincial system in turn influences the interpretation of site reports and regional surveys in the southern Levant.
On the micro-level, many interpret data from certain sites with the presupposition that Assyria instituted a governmental structure on the region. Remnants of what is considered to be Assyrian-style architecture at certain sites in the southern Levant is a marker of Assyrian control according to several reports (e.g., Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958; Peersmann 2000; Bloom 1988; Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2001). The Mesopotamian courtyard building is the main type of building associated with Assyrian presence and five sites are considered to possess this type of building in the southern Levant (Bloom 1988). This type of building has been identified at Megiddo and Ashdod, two places recorded as having Assyrian governors in Assyrian texts, which further bolsters the opinion that they represent Assyrian political control (Peersmann 2000; Kogan-Zehavi 2005). Other sites identified to have courtyard buildings such as Kinneret, Hazor, and Ayyelet HaShahar are neither mentioned in texts nor seem to have the clout associated with the provincial capitals, but still possess these architectural features (Yadin 1972; Reich 1975; Fritz 1993). Because of the Assyrianized architecture at these sites, they are thought to have possessed a certain political status within the Assyrian provincial system (Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958:32; Na’aman 1995:110). Other sites not necessarily within the realm of the Assyrian provincial system such as Haror, Tel Qudadi, and Tel Sera’ are also thought to have buildings that were commissioned by Assyria (Oren 1974; Fantalkin and Tal 2009; Oren, Morrison, and Gilead 1986; Oren 1997). While these fortresses don’t necessarily exhibit any Mesopotamian style, some assume that they also were part of the Assyrian building program and reflect Assyria’s political and military control over the region (Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958:32; Stern 2001; Alexander Fantalkin and Tal 2009). Identifying both Mesopotamian-style architecture and local architecture with an Assyrian building program confuses our understanding of Assyrian impact on the southern Levant.
Some have pointed out these discrepancies in data assigned to Assyrian control. Local elements present in Mesopotamian-style buildings suggest local and imperial cooperation in the midst of Assyrian control (Bloom 1988:96). While some buildings do possess characteristics of Mesopotamian-style architecture, the excavations of the sites did not uncover enough of the building or material culture to make a sufficient judgement as to the nature of the building (Kletter and Zwickel 2006:171-172, 178). Finally, some buildings assigned to the Assyrian program lack any architecture or material culture that could be associated with Mesopotamia (Kletter and Zwickel 2006:169). While none of these problems negates Assyrian sovereignty, it does call into question the extent or the type of control they instituted on the southern Levant.

In addition to military and political control, indicators of economic development under the auspices of Assyria are also claimed to be visible in the southern Levant, especially in Philistia at the olive oil industry at Ekron. Tel Miqne-Ekron yielded over 200 olive oil presses in Stratum IC and the excavators date the presses to the period of Assyrian expansion and argue that it is a direct result of Assyrian control (Gitin 1995:69). In contrast to the opinions of the excavators, other studies on Ekron’s remains reached different conclusions. Some suggest that the olive oil industry reflects local or Phoenician influence rather than an Assyrian agenda, or that it built under Egyptian influence after the collapse of the Assyrian empire (Schloen 2001:141-142, 147; Master 2003:50-51; Faust 2011:73). The presence of a force other than Assyria behind the olive oil industry or the redating of Ekron IC to a time following Assyrian control challenges the notion put forth by some that Assyria was involved in the economic prosperity of Philistia.

Those, such as Bagg (2013), Faust (2011), and Master (2003), notice the discrepancies in data have rejected the notion that Assyria exhibited a high degree over control on the region. Few scholars, such as Bagg, reject the idea that Assyria used excessive brutality and imposed a
strict political structure on the Levant. Bagg (2013:4-7) calls for a reevaluation of the type of control Assyria imposed on the southern Levant. Further studies on specific sites suggest local autonomy or Phoenician influence rather than Assyrian control. Master (2003:60-61) and Faust (2011:78) argue against the idea that Assyria Philistia economically, but that it was under the auspices of local and Phoenician populations. Studies like these challenge aspects of the otherwise accepted notion of an all-encompassing Assyrian occupation that sought to develop the economy and political structure of the southern Levant. This dissertation seeks to bring to light more conflicting data that encourages reconsideration of the character of the Assyrian Empire in the southern Levant.

3. Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

A closer analysis of Iron Age southern Levantine material culture shows that the Assyrian Empire did not institute a policy of total destruction, followed by reorganization into a tightly controlled territory. The fragmented information negates the impact of Assyrian control. Regional analyses, presented below, can be used to evaluate the various mechanisms of Assyrian control. Although some works have brought attention to the lack of data to support extreme military and political policies in the southern Levant, these works attribute Assyrian policies to an indifferent attitude on the part of the empire (Kletter and Zwickel 2006:169, 171-172; Bagg 2013:9-10). Both viewpoints, one of total destruction, the other of indifference, reveal a misunderstanding of Assyrian occupation in the southern Levant present in current scholarship that fails to consider that the Assyrains designed and imposed a strategic plan in their occupation of the southern Levant.

The purpose of this study is to understand better the nature of Assyrian expansion into the southern Levant through a reevaluation of the material culture linked to the Assyrian conquest. A
reevaluation of this material will lead to a clearer understanding of the processes involved in ancient imperial expansion into this region. Findings from this study challenge preexisting notions that misinterpret the nature of Assyrian expansion and call for a reinterpretation of the data.

A reevaluation and reinterpretation of the material culture associated with Assyrian expansion in the southern Levant informs Levantine studies as well as the broader field of empire studies in the Ancient Near East. The southern Levant offers a robust data set of text and material culture unparalleled with any other region in the field. Data from this study can serve as a comparative example to Assyrian expansion in other regions and further our understanding of the relationship between the empire and its frontier territories. Within the context of the Levant, this study seeks to replace the notion of an all-consuming Assyrian Empire with one that allows for a more nuanced understanding of the varied nature of imperial control. Viewing Assyria as a more strategic and calculated force calls for a reevaluation of the relationship between Assyria and the local population detected in the material culture and Biblical texts.

4. Primary Research Question

The primary research questions that this dissertation pursues include the following: based on evidence from the archaeological record, what type of control did Assyria impose on the region? Is the degree of force used in campaigns detected in the region in contrast to the degree of political control detected in the region? Instead of extreme destruction and palpable political reconfiguration, did Assyria institute a strategic foreign policy in the Levant that was low-cost, but high-impact?
5. Research Design

This dissertation addresses the degree to which the Assyrian Empire impacted the southern Levant. In order to do this, reports on specific sites that claim evidence of Assyrian destruction within the scope of this dissertation are noted and evaluated (Figure 3). If there is evidence of destruction that does indeed date to the late-8th or early 7th-centuries BCE, further analysis of the nature of destruction brings about new questions regarding warfare strategy: was the entire site destroyed? Or, were only key buildings and/or fortifications destroyed? Is there any material culture or textual accounts that could definitively identify Assyria as the perpetrator? If a site does not reveal evidence of destruction despite what is claimed in publications, it still requires further consideration: a population increase or decrease at a site under Assyrian control is still helpful information in understanding the changes in settlement that took place and perhaps the warfare strategy used in the southern Levant.
Figure 3 Destruction inquiry flowchart
Sites with publications that claim to have evidence of Assyrian constructions also undergo a reevaluation. In order to do this, reports on specific sites that claim evidence of Assyrian construction within the scope of this dissertation are noted and evaluated. If the site does have elements of Mesopotamian style in its construction, the type of Mesopotamian architecture will be categorized. For instance, a courtyard-style building will be in a category separate from a building with a vaulted infrastructure also found in Mesopotamia (Figure 4). The extent of the building that has been uncovered will also be taken into consideration. In addition, any local elements present at the building will be noted. An evaluation of artifacts found at the site or within the building also contributes to the evaluation of the site. If the site does not have Assyrian-style architecture, this will be noted as well, along with whether or not Assyrian-style artifacts were present at the site. Sites with Mesopotamian architecture will then be plotted on a map to ascertain any geographical connections that they may have.

Figure 4 Courtyard Building at Hazor III (after Yadin 1958 pl. 177)

Changes in settlement patterns across landscapes are also an important in evaluating Assyrian occupation. Data for this dissertation is based on several settlement surveys in the regions of Megiddo and Philistia, which supply information on the periods of sites based mainly on ceramic
material (Ronen and Olami 1978; Z. Gal 1991; Kochavi and Beit-Arieh 1994; Dagan 1992; Gophna and Beit-Arieh 1997; Zvi Gal 1998b; Gophna and Ayalon 1998; Berman et al. 2005; Olami and Gal 2003; Berman, Stark, and Barda 2004; Olami et al. 2005; Olami, Sender, and Oren 2005; Berman and Barda 2005). Some sites with documented ceramic material lack sufficient corresponding architectural remains to understand the full extent of the landscape during this time. These data are nonetheless valuable in measuring the degree of change to Megiddo and Philistia once Assyria annexed the regions. It should also be acknowledged that relying on unexcavated sites with only an assigned date of “Iron II” or “Persian Period” based on limited surface ceramics is not ideal. It is not always clear during which sub-periods a site was occupied within the Iron II and Persian periods. Both Dewar (1991) and Kintigh (1994) have identified this problem and offered some equations to theorize the contemporaneity of sites within a given time period. The impending doom of the Assyrian empire also poses difficulty in assessing settlement patterns because it is not clear in many cases if people abandoned sites gradually for fear of Assyria, if they fled at the same time with Assyria on their heels, or if they were captured by the Assyrian military. For the purpose of this dissertation, sites that have ceramic material that is dated to both the Iron II and the Persian period are assumed to have maintained a population during the time of Assyrian control (Figure 5). The presence of Iron II ceramics, presence or absence of corresponding architecture and continuity in ceramics from the Iron II to the Persian period are considered in both regions. These data will also help in ascertaining population changes on either side of the provincial boundaries proposed by Forrer (1920), Otzen (1979), and Na’aman (1995).
Figure 5 How sites are evaluated from settlement surveys

In order to view the data comprehensively, the data collected are separated into two main categories with several subcategories. The two main categories are evidence of destruction and no evidence of destruction. This is an important aspect of this research to determine how involved Assyria was in the initial changes in the area, as well as a way to measure whether or not regions experienced complete devastation by the Assyrian Empire. The category of sites believed to have undergone Assyrian attack are then divided into subcategories depending on the trajectory of the site following destruction. These categories are: A) destruction and abandonment B) destruction and a town with local material culture that is smaller than the town previously there; C) destruction and a town with Assyrian-influenced material culture that is smaller than the town previously there; D) destruction then a city comparable or larger than the city before with mainly local material culture; E) destruction then a city comparable or larger than the city before with mainly Assyrian-style material culture. For the second category of cities apparently not destroyed by Assyria, eight subcategories exist: 0) Sites with no noticeable change in size or material culture; 1) sites that grew with a primarily local material culture component; 2) sites whose size decreased with a primarily local material culture component; 3)
sites whose size grew with a primarily Assyrian material culture component; 4) sites whose size
decreased with a primarily Assyrian material culture component; 5) sites that were abandoned; 6)
Single-period sites with a primarily Assyrian material culture component; 7) Single-period sites
with a primarily local material culture component.

Much has been written in Assyrian annals and in academic literature about the mass
deportations that the Assyrians imposed on the region during this time (Oded 1979; Na’aman and
Zadok 1988; Na’aman and Zadok 2000). Deportations can only be measured in the
archaeological record by changes in population, abandonment of sites, and possibly textual
material. Therefore, I briefly touch on the idea of deportations, but focuses more on the fact of
abandonment evident in the record in order to understand how Assyrian deportations contributed
to the overall landscape in the Levant.

This analysis also employs biblical and Assyrian textual accounts regarding the relationship
between the southern Levant and Assyria. While the mechanics of campaigns have been
discussed elsewhere (e.g., Saggs 1963; Cole 1995; Nadali 2005; Hasel, Kelle, and Ames 2008),
this dissertation aims to understand how exactly Assyria perceived the region politically and how
the perception evolved over the span of Assyrian occupation. Special attention is paid to the
names of cities and regions, the political organization evident in their understanding of the
region, and the institution of political figures to serve the Assyrian cause.

While textual accounts are important in interpreting the archaeological data, their use also
poses some challenges. The tendency for exaggeration has been noted throughout the corpus of
Assyrian documents (Grayson 1981:45-46; Fouts 1994:211), though it has been argued that some
numbers and events must be taken at a case by case basis (see Millard 1991). In this

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5 Laato (1995) provides a case study for analyzing the validity of Assyrian texts.
dissertation, I specifically challenge those publications that seem to take Assyrian campaigns at face value, and investigate the archaeological record to conclude if Assyria really did employ a “scorched earth” policy as their annals often purport. I also accept that the archaeological record can reveal information about the changes that occurred during Assyrian expansion that texts do not discuss, though texts provide information that could perhaps enhance our understanding (Andrén 1998:79).

The goal of the research design is to clarify the impact of Assyrian occupation on the archaeological record. The site reports, settlement surveys and additional commentary on specific sites will all assist in compiling this data. This design will allow for a reevaluation of the destructions, changes in settlement, and evidence of Assyrian occupation.

6. Theoretical Framework

Whereas previous academic works on Assyrian expansion into frontier territories have situated their works within the realm of ancient imperial theory, this work relates the Assyrian impact in the Levant in a different, but related approach of military strategy. Underlying a military approach is the assumption that warfare has two primary objectives: either to destroy an enemy’s army or to besiege an enemy’s territory (Vego 2009:II-26, II-31-32). Regardless of the primary objective, destruction of a territory’s defense often results in the occupation of the enemy’s land (Vego 2009:II-26). In the case of Assyria and its expansion into the southern Levant, emphasis has been placed on the strategies used to acquire the peripheral territory as a means to achieve their end goal. The occupation of the southern Levant allowed them to restrain Egyptian

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6 Helpful summaries of ancient empire theories and how they relate to Assyria’s relationship with its peripheries and the Levant in particular are available in several key publications (Parker 2003:525-526; Thareani 2016:77-80). Some brief references to Clausewitz are in discussions about Assyria (Saggs 1963; Gallagher 1999; Nadali 2005; Yana 2008).
encroachment as well as to prepare for an eventual attack on Egypt itself (Oren 1990:102). An examination of the Assyrian impact on the southern Levant enables for a nuanced perspective on Assyria’s occupation strategy, and serves as a case study to compare to Assyria’s conquests that took place earlier and/or in different frontier regions.

6.1 Assyrian Military Strategy

In his 1988 article, Liverani (1988) challenges previous notions of Assyrian military strategy in examining the conquest of the Habur during the ninth century BCE. His goal is to dismantle the old paradigm that approached the Assyrian Empire as a “territorial empire” and instead to adopt a new paradigm consisting of considering the nodes of control important to Assyrian expansion (Liverani 1988:84). According to Liverani (1988:86), “Assyrian control is extended and becomes consolidated differently than the ‘oil-stain’ metaphor suggests.; by a thickening of pre-existing networks or by setting up other networks even at great distance… the empire is not a spread of land but a network of communications…” The nodes of this network are primarily former local capital cities annexed by Assyria located on the frontier and sometimes in the middle of foreign territories. Liverani’s article focuses on the expansion of Assyria in the Habur and Middle Euphrates regions during the ninth century BCE. Before Assyria fully annexed this area, it was a place with “ambiguous” loyalties. Liverani writes that in the Habur, the “status of tribute-paying zones is ambiguous, between independence and integration in the Assyrian organization. Their political behavior oscillates and depends on complex internal and external factors” (Liverani 1988:86). In the Habur, the campaigns “are not the moment of conquest, they are normally a moment of exercise of empire: they consolidate the Assyrian presence rather than bringing it into being.” The violent king-led campaigns repressed the revolts and laid “the foundation of new Assyrian centers,” which did not extend territory but thickened a network (Liverani 1988:87).
At the root of Liverani’s work are two ideas linked to network theory and warfare strategy. First, he employs Actor-Network theory to discuss the connection between different entities and the strength of that connection in relation to forces outside the network. Law (1999; 1986) and Latour (1993; 2005) are two anthropologists at the forefront of applying Actor-Network theory to their respective anthropological studies, and also in expanding upon the theoretical model of Actor-Network theory (see also Law and Hassard 1999). Smith (2007:29), who developed an anthropological model from biological studies of animals in natural habitats, defines network as “a combination of nodal links and selective boundary maintenance,” which “results in a model of landscape use that is highly flexible and energy-efficient, with significant implications for both the acquisition and defense of resources.”

Network theory allows for a study of nodes of control, interaction with other nodes of control, and their influence on the greater political, economic, and social landscape.

Second, the act of seizing a capital or urban hub to disable a regional state is a particular warfare strategy that some argue comes at a high cost. In Clausewitz’s (1873: 8,4) approach to warfare, the capital would be considered the “hub of all power,” which a military power aims to conquer as a means to weaken or defeat an entire region. Not only are capitals “centers of political, economic and cultural life,” they also “exert a certain psychological and symbolic influence” on both the locals and enemy military (Vego 2009:II-34). The main drawback of this strategy is that the seizure of a capital often requires more troops, time, and specialized equipment as well as a high morale on the part of the invaders (Vego 2009:II-36-37). Because of the disproportionate cost, Sun Tzu cautioned against this type of warfare. For him, the seizure of

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7 The notion of a network of sites, rather than territorial states, to the Iron-Age Syro-Anatolian city-state of Patina (Osborne 2013:787), as well as the Late-Bronze northern Levant (Casana 2012).

8 The Hub of All power has more than one definition for Clausewitz (see Strange and Iron 2005).
a capital or large urban center should be avoided in favor of more cost-effective strategies (Tzu 2011:III.4). If Assyria’s military capacity was much more substantial than local defense in the Habur, then a network approach as Liverani suggests would still be in Assyria’s favor.

It must be noted that Liverani does not intend for his approach to extend past Assyria’s involvement in the 9th-century Habur; he does not allow for a network analogy to be applied to the Assyrian imprint on the southern Levant nearly a century later. He writes that “the end of the 8th century will see the passage from an empire of communications to a territorial one,” meaning that the expansion no longer consists of a series of nodes, but rather of controlling an entire territory (Liverani 1988:81). Liverani (1988:92) further asserts that in the far territories, “the usual paradigm is valid enough” and the Assyrian military maneuvered “state by state where comes first the occasional raid, then the subjection to tribute, and finally annexation.” Liverani is correct in his assessment that Assyria’s strategy changed over two centuries and with new territories, with unique details related to each specific territory. The southern Levant was indeed a foreign frontier in a later stage of the Assyrian Empire.

The traditional model of Assyrian expansion into the Levant approaches Assyria as formulaic expansionists. According to this model, Assyria first required annual tribute from a local ruler. When the ruler stopped paying tribute, a local puppet ruler replaced the former, disobedient ruler. Finally, if the puppet ruler also proved to be defunct to the imperial cause, the Assyrian military would overthrow local government, often in battle, and replace them with an Assyrian governor (Van de Mieroop 2007:250). This view attributes a certain amount of agency to the local population; if the local ruler paid their tribute to Assyria, their autonomy would be spared. In other words, the path to provincial status was paved by irresponsibility of local rulers rather than a strategic plan on the part of the Assyrian military.
Another explanation for why they used this three-step system is that it was part of Assyrian design based on a model of attrition, instead of a scenario that could result in more than one outcome depending upon the local tribute contribution. Erosion or attrition warfare “seeks to systematically and progressively destroy the enemy’s capacity to wage war. Whether in rapid attempts with overwhelming force or in protracted form with small forces, the process destroys crucial resources faster than the adversary can replace them” (Tooke 2000:10). Assyria’s annexation of the southern Levantine states would then be seen as part of Assyria’s long-term plan in weakening the political infrastructure of the southern Levant with the goal to control the coast and eventually overtake Egypt. The strategy of attrition often requires a certain amount of patience, and an understanding that though fewer troops are needed to wear down an opposing territory, more time is essential in achieving positive results. Liverani 1979:308 touches on the Assyrian concept of time, suggesting that the creation of the empire by kings was a continuation of the creation of the universe by the gods. For Assyrian kings, each city or village overtaken by conquest was a god-like act in expanding Assyria’s borders (Liverani 1979:309). According to Liverani, in the Assyrian imagination, the chaotic, was awaiting an Assyrian king to bring it to cosmic order. In the context of strategy, “attrition warfare seeks to fix the adversary at a specific time and space or bring him to a chosen time and space to destroy his forces faster than he can recover the losses” (Tooke 2000:10). The prolonged loss experienced by the local population would in turn be a gain earned by patience for the Assyrian Empire who would then incorporate it into its ordered, political system.

The idea that Assyria invoked attrition to wear down the infrastructure of the southern Levant, or that the locals were to some extent in control of their own destiny, is at odds with a strategy of annihilation espoused in Assyrian texts and by some modern scholars. The strategy of
annihilation “aims to overwhelm the enemy and make him unable to resist one’s demands” (Vego 2009:I-41). This type of warfare is only possible if one opponent has military capabilities superior to the other (Vego 2009:I:49). Motifs in annals describing Assyrian kings as overwhelming entire cities conjure images of a military with an annihilalistic strategy but, this is not necessarily what the archaeological record reveals. A consideration of the ever-changing dynamic that empires face on their frontiers calls for further consideration of Assyria’s warfare strategy.

6.2 Assyria and Its Frontiers

As Liverani highlighted in his study of the Habur, frontiers are more dynamic and conditional than some previous scholarship suggests. In an attempt to standardize terminology about borderlands, Parker (2006:277) writes that “like other types of boundaries, frontiers come into being as a result of particular historical circumstances or processes and are thus unique social phenomena.” These frontiers can undergo drastic changes in demographics, economic production, and political organization. Parker presents a model to illustrate the complexity of interactions within a frontier:

“This model assumes that the processes that take place in borderlands are a result of the interaction between the various types of boundary sets that make up borders and frontiers. It also assumes that dynamics of these processes are propelled by time. As geographic, political, demographic, cultural, and economic pressures in any specific borderland change through time, the interaction between these boundary sets creates the dynamics that characterize borderlands. Thus, borderland processes can be defined as the dynamic interaction within and between boundary sets as their characteristics (i.e., static, restrictive, porous, fluid) and the nature of their interconnections vary through time” (Parker 2006:94)

Parker, who studies the impact of the Assyrian Empire in southeastern Anatolia, is at the forefront of defining Assyrian interactions with peripheral locations in the archaeological record. His ideas certainly inform a study of Assyrian interactions with the Levant, both regions being peripheral territories to the Assyrian heartland. Parker’s understanding of Assyrian frontiers led
him to the study of frontiers in general and their dynamic qualities that are sometimes difficult to
detect in the archaeological record. His quest to seek universal definitions highlights the
complexity of the issue.

Parker's (2003) research on southeastern Anatolia argues for an Assyrian Empire that is not
only interested in incorporating newly acquired territories into its political system but also in
protecting them with militarized buffer zones. His research focuses on Assyrian annexation of
three regions in Southeastern Anatolia. The Cizre Plain was part of the provincial system as
represented by three main capitals with Assyrian architecture, and many small satellite villages,
which were populated by both indigenous and deported peoples. In this region, agriculture was a
major aspect of Assyrian control and several specialized agricultural towns were made to satisfy
the demands of the empire (Parker 2003:541ff.). Like the Cizre Plain, Parker suggests that
Assyria also incorporated the Upper Tigris River Valley for food production. Following the
Assyrian invasion the number of sites increased significantly with a noticeable settlement
hierarchy. The material culture of the region became more “Assyrian” in style with standardized
construction and pottery different from the previous local assemblage (Parker 2003:535ff.). In
the most distant region, the Middle-Upper Tigris Region, probably served Assyria as a “Buffer
Zone” guarding Assyrian territories from the formidable enemy of Urartu according to Parker
(Parker 2003:351ff.). Unlike the other two regions, these river valleys do not appear to ever have
been actively incorporated into the Assyrian Empire given the minimal building activity save for
the construction of forts. Parker suggests that while Assyrian administration had the means to
develop this area, it intentionally stunted its development in order to prevent Urartu from
encroaching upon Assyrian-developed territories.
Detection of the different functions that an Assyrian territory can serve in the empire challenges the concept that Assyria created uniform provinces with clearly demarcated boundaries. The main issue with consideration of Assyrian impact on the southern Levant is that provincial boundaries on a map tend to skew perceptions of an ancient region by the modern scholar. Smith (2007:28) writes that depictions of boundaries “unwittingly guide our expectations for ancient human behavior, because the presence of boundaries and the application of a shaded overlay imply a certain level of cultural cohesion, administrative effectiveness, and bureaucratic control.” In his work in southeastern Anatolia, Parker (2012:137) concludes that “economically and strategically important zones” were connected to the core of Assyria by a network of fortresses and outposts. Territorial control requires a network of administration because “people cannot be evenly distributed across a landscape and communications must be maintained between the groups” (Postgate 1992:255). In the case of Assyrian provinces in the Levant, maps indeed imply a solidarity within a particular region and a break in connection from locally-run regions. For instance, the zone within the province of Megiddo has a number of geographical features such as the Galilean hills, the Beth Shean and Jezreel valleys, and the slopes of the Carmel range, that created a lack of cohesion within the proposed provincial boundaries, leaving at least one group of scholars to concede there "there is no evidence for the borders of the Assyrian province of Magidu" (Frankel et al. 2001:133). These types of varied elements lead Smith to write that:

“the cartographic crystallization of ancient states in a single territorial map hides a number of realities in the process of state formation and development: overlapping and contested frontiers; gaps between political centers; fluctuating levels of raw materials and population; changing relationships between and among hierarchical levels; and differential levels of investment from the center to the hinterland” (Smith 2007:29).
In other words, the Assyrian provincial boundaries in the southern Levant widely accepted in scholarship only encumbers a study of provincial formation processes.

The “frontier” status of the southern Levant is coupled with its role as a transit corridor connecting Africa, Anatolia, western Asia, and the Mediterranean by nodes of control. A transit corridor or a “broad open space” that connected important cities in the Levant served as a conduit between the stronger political powers in Mesopotamia and Egypt (Kessler 2008:17). Within the Assyrian empire, a “carefully maintained highway” dubbed the “King’s Road” (hûl šarrî) connected the vast empire (Parpola 1987:XIII-XIV). Today, minimal evidence of the road remains in the archaeological record, and the pathways of the Kings Road are reconstructed based on limited Assyrian sources and supplemented with later Babylonian texts (Kessler 1995:130). The pathways of the road are perhaps marked by the presence of buildings identified as road stations for the Assyrian imperial network, and “generally follow traditionally commercial roads” (Parpola 1987:XIV; Kessler 1995:130, 134). The Kings Road was utilized for the transport of troops, messages, and goods to and from the Assyrian core (Parpola 1987:XIV). In light of this system, Parker (2012:126, 137) urges one to view the whole of the Assyrian Empire as “economically and strategically important zones” linked to Assyria by “transportation and communication corridors.” With the case of Assyrian campaigns, they aimed to eliminate the “friction,” that Clausewitz (1873:I:23) defines as the “resistance of inertia” within their the corridors in order to provide smooth communication and travel to and from its outposts. Assyria’s campaigns into the southern Levant affected the overall landscape in order to create a corridor on land as well as access to the Mediterranean ports through which the Assyrian military could traverse without obstacles.
Northern Palestine, Philistia, and the western Negev thus serve as case studies to explore evidence of Assyrian occupation in a frontier zone. These case studies provide evidence with which to test Assyrian military strategy against models of attrition, annihilation, and conquest of an urban hub. These case studies also provide the information needed to consider if Assyria marked their long-term occupation in the region with a network approach of nodes with radiating centers of control (Wilkinson et al. 2005:49), or a territorial mindset in which a regional capital oversaw clearly demarcated areas of land. If the King’s Road, or a major Assyrian highway, is reflected in the archaeological record of the southern Levant, one would expect imperial stations perched along the way to Egypt (Parpola 1987:XIV; Kessler 1995:134). The southern Levant also provides access to the Mediterranean coast, whose ports were valuable for trade and control of places along the Levantine coast as well as places otherwise disconnected from Assyrian territories in western Asia. Findings from these case studies are meant to inform a greater corpus of works on imperialism in the Ancient Near East and ancient empires in general.9

7. Scope

The data from which this dissertation draws is limited to site reports, settlement surveys, and auxiliary publications; therefore, this study must rely on the knowledge of excavators and scholars for dates and identification of pottery forms. It is noted where there are discrepancies in

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9 Palestine provides a long and rich history of the occupation of Ancient Near Eastern Empires. The Egyptian New Kingdom and the Assyrian Empire are the earliest of the empires in the region. Primary sources describing the Persian Empire supply us with a general idea of the administration of the Empire. During the Persian period, Herodotus provides information on the administration of the Satrapy system and modern scholars have sought to understand the impact of this new imperial system on the Levant (several works address this time period, e.g., Elayi 1982; Stern 1982; Knauf 1990; Graf 1993; Stern 2001). The Roman period also provides a helpful comparison to empires of the Ancient Near East on account of several available documents and excavations. From these documents, we know that the Jews were under Roman control as a client kingdom by 63 BCE. Rome maintained its control over Palestine by dividing it into districts ruled by local officials. Though the southern Levant was demarcated as land under Roman rule, it was still considered an extension of Roman territories in the northern Levant (see Horsley 1986; Smallwood 2001; Nfa and Safrai 2003; Schäfer 2003; Raja 2012; Magie 2015).
an understanding of material at a site, particularly when it comes to the identification of a destruction layer or an Assyrian-style building. In addition, data for this dissertation relies on settlement surveys that have enough data to determine the general ages of a site. It is not always clear if a site was occupied for the duration of the period (see Dewar 1991; Kintigh 1994). With the smaller sites in a settlement survey, I can only determine whether or not a site continued from the Iron II to the Persian period to suggest a pattern of abandonment or continuity in a particular region.

This dissertation is delimited by its case studies. Northern Palestine, Philistia, and the western Negev were chosen as three case studies for this dissertation in order to highlight the key characterizations of Assyrian occupation in the region; academic literature tends to use examples from these three regions in order to support Assyria’s strong political, military, and economic role while occupying the southern Levant. Because I am using case studies, I cannot characterize the southern Levant as a whole, but the regions chosen are considered to be indicative of Assyrian occupation in the region. The studies from three case studies are presented as individual chapters in order to highlight their unique signature.

8. Overview of Study

Chapter Two focuses on the region of northern Palestine, specifically those regions thought to have been associated with the Assyrian inland province of Megiddo. An evaluation of the sites claimed to have evidence of destruction along with changes in settlement pattern during this time are noted with further analysis as to whether or not Assyrian strategy can be discerned from the archaeological record. This chapter also highlights issues specific to this region, namely the newly Assyrianized nature of the site of Megiddo and the Assyrian-style fortresses in Hazor,
Ayyelet HaShahar, and Kinnereth. Exploration of the network of control instituted by Assyria through the establishment of fortresses is highlighted.

Whereas Chapter Two addresses an inland territory, Chapter Three explores the coastal territory of Philistia. This chapter also addresses the destructions and construction associated with Assyria as well as two main discussions about this region. First, the provincial capital of Ashdod and its surrounding that show signs of the Assyrian imperial control of a coastal zone. Second, this chapter discusses the debate as to who is responsible for the olive oil industry at Ekron and imagines the nature of the Assyrian occupation with or without this industrial center.

Chapter Four considers the western Negev, a smaller portion of land thought to be part of Assyria’s defense against Egyptian encroachment. This study mainly explores the architecture and material culture of five sites labeled as “Assyrian” fortresses in order to understand Assyria’s role in this frontier territory. The eclectic material culture in the western Negev suggests a small, multicultural population participating in defense and perhaps trade along the fringes of the Assyrian Empire.

Concluding remarks and observations are discussed in Chapter Five. This chapter summarizes the data from the previous chapters and suggests connections that each region has with one another. Chapter Five explores possibilities of Assyria’s strategy in their occupation. Finally, it suggests further research pertaining to Assyria’s interactions with its frontier territories.
Chapter 2. Assyrian *Magidu* as a Transit Corridor

1. Introduction

Several studies on 8th- and 7th-century northern Palestine take their cue from the descriptive and violent language of the Assyrian annals agreeing that Assyria: 1) caused severe destruction in the region, and 2) fostered a high level of geographical demarcation in the region by carving the entire area into provinces (e.g., Gal 1998; Stern 20017; Faust 2015:263; Cline 2000:85). A closer examination of the archaeological data in northern Palestine, as in this work, reveals few destructions in the region with tenuous links to Assyrian campaigns. After the initial campaigns in the region, evidence of Assyria’s attempt to include the site of Megiddo and its surroundings within the provincial system are also minimal in the form of a few sites exhibiting characteristics of Assyrian administration. The Province of *Magidu* proves to be a rather unique province within the Assyrian Empire on account of its diminished population compared to the majority of Assyrian provinces that experienced a population increase following incorporation into the Assyrian Empire (Wilkinson et al. 2005:58). Some scholars suggest that the decrease in population lent to its utility as a buffer zone (Cline 2000:15; Ras 2010:89). However, a buffer zone is not the only type of zone that experiences a decrease in population and this designation downplays its location connecting the coast to the inland international highway (Dorsey 1991:95). This chapter argues that based on Megiddo’s strategic location, its function within the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\text{ See further discussion in a Brief History of Scholarship in this chapter.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\text{ See examples of Production Provinces in the Comparative Data section of this chapter.}\]
Assyrian Empire requires a more precise categorization, one that represents its status as a strategic Transit Corridor.

2. Location

The Upper and Lower Galilee, and the Jezreel and Beth Shean valleys, were important components of the political, financial and military success of northern Palestine on account of their connections to international routes as well as fertile land for cultivation (Oded 1979:59; Dorsey 1991:95). The city of Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley was the main guardian over a basalt ridge that allowed for safe travel even during wet winters. The route on which Megiddo sat connected the Mediterranean coast with the inland trade route to Mesopotamia, and was of particular interest in ancient texts and evident in its eclectic material culture from disparate regions. The importance of Megiddo during the time of Assyrian expansion lies in the ability to monitor the route going to and from the coast.

3. Texts Relating to Megiddo

Assyrian texts do not provide specific information concerning how they characterized the region of Megiddo, nor do they describe its conquest and incorporation into the provincial system.\(^{12}\) We

\(^{12}\) Over twenty Assyrian texts, thirteen of which are able to be assigned a specific date (Kelle 2002:640) describe events occurring in or with the Kingdom of Israel that shed light on the historical situation related to the archaeological material, and share insight on Assyria’s perception of the political configuration of the region before and after conquest (see also Kelle 2002). These texts mostly describe the hostile relationship developed between Assyria and the Levant that ultimately led to the Assyrian invasion of the region. The texts mentioning the northern kingdom in particular begin at the time of Shalmaneser III and his encounter with a Levantine coalition at the battle of Qarqar, specifically mentioning Ahab (Grayson 2002:23,ii:89b-102). Jehu, son of Omri, is highlighted in these texts as well as a tribute-payer to the Assyrians (Grayson 2002:11, 60, 88, 89, 213). The pattern of subduing the southern Levant and collecting tribute from their kings continues in Assyrian annals of Kings Adad-Nirari III and Tiglath-pileser III. Tiglath-pileser III is also the first king to mention reconfiguring the political makeup of the region, establishing a puppet ruler in the southern Levant, deporting much of the population and finally appointing Assyrian officers. Sargon II tells tales apparently associated with the previous reign of Shalmaneser III of destroying
are left with Assyrian texts discussing the kingdom of Israel as a whole to serve as a way to surmise Megiddo’s political transformation. One broken text during the time of Tiglath-pileser III lists cities “which are on the border of the House of Omri” (Rost 1893:78.6; trans. Luckenbill 1926:292.815, emphasis mine), but the majority of texts do not clarify the boundaries of the House of Omri. Nor do they clarify the boundaries of Assyria when Bit Humri was brought back within “the borders of Assyria” (Wiseman 1956:125.4). The Calah Annals suggest advanced knowledge of Israel’s political system when Tiglath-pileser III claims that he leveled “sixteen districts of the House of Omri” (Tadmor 1994:80-84). Megiddo was presumably in one of these districts, though its name is absent from the records. In this case, the identification of a political configuration is highlighted rather than a specific city.

The Assyrian annals perhaps also show an understanding of the network of cities whose conquest would be important in undermining the safety and economy of the Kingdom of Israel.13 In the region that the Assyrian Magidu possibly encompassed, eight place names are mentioned specifically: five cities, Ijon, Abel-Beth-Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, and three regions, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, though more recent reconstructions leave out some of these place names.14 Tadmor also points out that these cities provide more clues as to the boundaries of Aram and the Assyrian province of Damascus rather than guidelines by which to understand territories associated with Israel (Tadmor 1994:121). Of the five cities, Kedesh and

the capital city of the region and ultimately ending the life of the northern kingdom of Israel while paving the way for Assyrian control over the region.

13 Kelle suggests that Bit Omri also encompassed Judah, which could be possible for part of its political life (Kelle 2002:648, 654). However, two points call this hypothesis into question. First, at least one text lists regions and cities associated with the northern kingdom with no mention of Judah, and second, when Samaria is successfully besieged, the texts celebrate the fall of Bit Omri, suggesting that Judah was always independent or at least independent at the time of Sargon II and Shalmaneser III.

14 See Tadmor 1994 for further discussion.
Hazor can be identified with archaeological sites and both indeed show evidence of conflagration from this time period (Yadin 1958; Stern and Arieh 1979), but it is not clear whether or not their allegiance was to Aram or Israel (Tadmor 1994:118, 121). If Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali have boundaries in Assyrian texts similar to those in the Hebrew Bible, these regions display some evidence of destruction, and, more commonly, overall abandonment. Here, instead of mentioning districts that encompass a region, these cities were perhaps nodes of control that represent particular regions.

While the extent of Assyrian knowledge of Israel is somewhat unclear from the annals, Assyrian scribes seem to have understood some aspects of the political structure of the kingdom that would assist in their strategic political takedown. Although the Kurkh Monolith describes Ahab as a king of Israel, Assyrian texts more commonly refer to the Northern Kingdom as the House of Omri or simply Samaria after the capital. When the northern part of Israel falls, Ahab as a king of Israel, Assyrian texts more commonly refer to the Northern Kingdom as the House of Omri or simply Samaria after the capital. When the northern part of Israel falls,

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15 See Survey of Architecture and Material Culture in this chapter for further discussion.

16 The only Assyrian inscription to call the northern kingdom by a variation of the name Israel occurs in the first half of the 9th century BCE. The Kurkh Monolith (853-852 BCE) details the account of the Battle of Karkar in which Ahab of Israel (A-ha-ab-bu māt Sir-‘i-la-a-a) is apparently one of twelve kings in the coalition lead by Damascus to thwart Assyrian king Shalmaneser III’s attempt to invade the Levant (Grayson 2002:23,ii:89b-102). The Assyrian use of the determinative māt could be because the Assyrian military was conscious that Israel was a territorial state in the southern Levant, or at least that Israel was the name for a large coalition of city-states, though it is curious that this name is not the primary name to which the northern kingdom is referred in Assyrian annals. Kelle (2002:644) suggests that the reason that Assyria uses “Israel” is because “the scribes may have been influenced by the local designations,” given that the name “Israel is present in both the Mesha and Tel Dan Steles.”

17 The name “House of Omri” or simply “Omri” is the most popular nomenclature utilized by Assyrian scribes for the Northern Kingdom. Used in over half of the accounts describing encounters with the northern kingdom, this name refers to the founder of the Omride dynasty, who is known for his extensive building programs in the Hebrew Bible. House of Omri is typically preceded by the indicator KUR for land, though when referring to a king, he is the MAR or “son” or “man” of Omri. The name Omri appears to be favored by Shalmaneser III and used by subsequent kings, though they alternate Omri with Samarina. Assyria’s use of the term Land of the House of Omri portrays an idea of territoriality; the Assyrians understood that this entity was a locally-run territorial state with a capital at the city of Samaria. Kelle (2002:656) points out that Tiglath-pileser III makes a shift from referring to the land of Samaria to the city of Samaria, which other kings follow suit, suggesting that Samaria’s kingdom diminished during the time of Tiglath-pileser III.

18 The name “Samarina” or “Samaria” is known not only as the capital city but one of the names for the northern kingdom, but it is not until Adad Ni’rari III’s campaigns to the region that the name appears in Assyrian texts. The
Tiglath-pileser III is recorded as establishing “six officers as governors,” probably within specific cities now under Assyrian rule (Rost 1893:78.4-7). Tiglath-pileser III also states that he reinstated Menahem on the throne of his newly truncated kingdom, showing his control over the local ruler as well (Luckenbill 1926:293.815). The establishment of new governors led perhaps to a new political structure in Megiddo intended to keep watch over an apparently demoralized Menahem in Samaria. These details compliment the Biblical narrative.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assyrian King</th>
<th>Inscription</th>
<th>Place Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Shalmaneser III</td>
<td>Monolithic Inscription (c.853)</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>KUR sir-‘i-la-a-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalmaneser III</td>
<td>Black Obelisk, Calah Fragment, Kurba’il Stone, Ashur Stone (c.841)</td>
<td>Son of Humri</td>
<td>Mār Ḫu-um-ri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adad-Nirari III</td>
<td>Rimah Stela (c.803)</td>
<td>Land of Samaria</td>
<td>KUR Sa-mer-ri-na-a-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adad-Nirari III</td>
<td>Nimrud Slab (c.803)</td>
<td>the land of the house of Omri</td>
<td>KU [Bit]-Ḫu-um-ri-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiglath-pileser III</td>
<td>Layard 35b, IIIR 9.1 (c.740)</td>
<td>Land of Samaria</td>
<td>KUR sa-me-ri-i-na-a-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiglath-pileser III</td>
<td>Iran Stela (c.739-738)</td>
<td>Land of Samaria</td>
<td>KUR sa-m[e]-ri-i-na-a-[a]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiglath-pileser III</td>
<td>Layard 50a, 50b, 67a (c.738-737)</td>
<td>City of Samaria</td>
<td>URU Sa-me-ri-na-a-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiglath-pileser III</td>
<td>Layard 66 (c.732-731)</td>
<td>City of Samaria</td>
<td>URU sa-mer-ri-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiglath-pileser III</td>
<td>IIIR 10, 2 (c.731)</td>
<td>Land of Bit Humri</td>
<td>KUR É Ḫu-um-ri-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiglath-pileser III</td>
<td>ND 4301, 4305 (c.730)</td>
<td>Land of Bit Humri</td>
<td>KUR É Ḫu-um-ri-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shalmaneser IV</td>
<td>Babylonian Chronicle (c.725)</td>
<td>City of Samaria</td>
<td>URU Sa-ma/ba-ra-‘i-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Nimrud Prism, Great Summary Inscription (c.720)</td>
<td>City of Samaria</td>
<td>URU Sa-me-ri-na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Palace Door, Small Summary Inscription, Cylinder Inscription, Bull Inscription (c.720)</td>
<td>Land of Bit Humri</td>
<td>KUR É Ḫu-um-ri-a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The 13 datable inscriptions after Kelle (Kelle 2002:2)

First mention of the name in Assyrian texts comes with a city indicator, placing importance on the region’s capital in a military battle. Texts from Tiglath-pileser III’s activity in the area seem to use the two names interchangeably, Menahem is even recorded as being from the city of Samaria in one text and the land of the House Omri in another (Luckenbill 1926:292.772; ). It is not until the reign of Sargon II that the texts are used together in the same passages. Sargon II claims that he is the “conqueror of the city of Samaria, and of the entire country of Bit Humri” (Winckler and Abel 1889a). Sargon II also claims to have placed deportees within “Samaria” though it is not clear if this is a reference to the extent of the northern kingdom or specifically to the district of Samaria.
The detection of an Assyrian military and political strategy at Megiddo is unclear in Biblical literature, although the Hebrew Bible mentions several other place names that the Assyrians attacked such as Hazor, and Kedesh (2 Kings 15:29). According to 2 Kings 17, Tiglath-pileser III besieged Samaria for three years and settled deportees from other lands after Samaria was conquered (2 Kings 17:5, 24). Instead of listing places in 1 Chronicles, the authors lists the lost tribes of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, who apparently went into exile (1 Chronicles 5:26). In fact, the only captive listed by name to be carried off to exile is Beerah in the family line of Reuben (1 Chronicles 5:6). The lack of information about Assyria reflects a focus on the emotional and physical impact of Assyria on the region rather than an understanding of their military strategy.

More germane for the dissertation, the Assyrian and Biblical sources lack any mention of Megiddo. Peersmann (2000:526) writes that no mention of a destruction at Megiddo in either the Assyrian annals and the Hebrew Bible of Tiglath-pileser III’s campaigns suggests that Stratum IVA was “either non-existent or, more likely, unimportant,” or that “an occupation gap ensued” following the partial destruction of the domestic quarters. Davies (1986:98) explains that “Megiddo would probably be included in the general expression ‘Galilee’” as the reason the city is not mentioned by name in Tiglath-pileser’s annals or the Biblical texts describing the Assyrian invasion of northern Israel.

Megiddo (Magidu) is indeed listed as a province from an eponym list dated to 679 BCE during the reign of Esarhaddon (SAA 5 292, 15; SAA 11 06,10, SAA 11 080 r. 3; Radner 2006:61). This brief mention of the city suggests its importance to Assyria’s control over the region even if it was not initially acknowledged in earlier campaign annals. This identification of Megiddo as a province, though its regional extent is not clarified, invites archaeological inquiry.
concerning the nature of Assyrian warfare and politics, as well as the impact on and reactions of the local population.

4. Boundaries

The boundaries of *Magidu* would presumably be the boundaries of this study, but the exact boundaries of the province are not well defined. Indeed, it is unclear from the texts that the Assyrian provinces even had set perimeters. Still, some have attempted to carve out *Magidu* based on information from texts and landscape. A brief summary of the different viewpoints illustrates the possibilities of the boundaries of Megiddo, and allows for these views to be tested against the archaeological record.

Three views exemplify the debate on the boundaries of Megiddo based on the location of its capital, geographical contours, and clues from the Bible. Otzen (1979, Figure 6), following Forrer (1920), focuses on the capitals listed in Assyrian texts rather than the geographical contours of the region that could act as natural barriers. The rectangular shape of the province according to this map encompasses the Jezreel and Beth Shean valleys as well as the Galilee as far as Lake Huleh, but serves more as guidelines as to the area over which Megiddo would have jurisdiction.19 Davies (1986:98) instead focuses on the geographical zones, speculating that *Magidu* consisted of “Upper and Lower Galilee as well as the plain and valley of Jezreel.” Na’aman (2001), on the other hand, proposed elongated boundaries of *Magidu*, which included Upper and Lower Galilee and the Beth Shean and Jezreel valleys. His ideas are largely based on Solomon’s districts from 1Kings 4:7-14. Though Na’aman’s consideration of Assyria’s political agenda is not at the forefront of his article, he does consider power bases and the possibility of

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multiple power bases within one province. In this new configuration, Na’aman (2001:431, 432) places the northern boundary of Magidu far above Lake Huleh to include the city of Hazor and claims that this territory would have encompassed three of what scholars have identified as “Solomonic districts” apparently from the tenth century BCE; he argues that this list is reflective of an 8th-century reality and the Solomonic districts should have correlations with the Assyrian provincial boundaries.20 This new boundary is far less geometric in shape than Ferrer and Otzen propose in their works, though it does encompass some of the more Assyrianized cities in the region and assumes that they were the bases of control.

20 Also see Tadmor’s (1994:114-121) discussion on the boundaries between Damascus and Megiddo according to Assyrian texts and Biblical accounts.
Radner (2006:60, 61, 66, Figure 7), on the other hand, focuses on the provinces present in the Neo-Assyrian texts to conclude that evidence of the provincial status of Dor\textsuperscript{21} is questionable and therefore Megiddo oversaw the entire coast of Northern Palestine reaching as far north as Sidon and surrounding Tyre. Radner bases her information entirely on Assyrian texts, rejecting

\textsuperscript{21} See Appendix A
the Biblical passages that Na’aman incorporates in his analysis. Both Radner’s and Na’aman’s maps of Magidu will be the basis for the sites considered here because they encompass a larger territory and allow for more data to test for any differences between the nature of settlements found within and without the presumed boundaries. If no changes exist along the boundaries proposed by the above scholars, then further consideration must be paid to dismantling the idea of provincial boundaries in order to focus on observing a network of Assyrian military outposts.22

5. Brief History of Scholarship

The Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III declared that he “leveled to the ground” the districts of Bit Humria (i.e., “House of Omri”) Israel, and Sargon II takes credit as the “conqueror” of the “entire land of Bit Humri,” but the archaeological record does not necessarily corroborate these accounts.23 Studies of Assyrian expansion into the Levant echo the Assyrian texts rather than the archaeological record. For example, Stern (2001:7) writes that in the Galilee “the conquest brought about generalized destruction to all settlements.” Faust (2015:263) exclaims “the rural sector was devastated… in practically every village that was excavated.” And Cline (2000:85) proclaims that the Assyrians “seem to have been as brutal and bloodthirsty as they depicted themselves.”24 According to Gal (1998), Tiglath-pileser III was responsible for desolating the Jezreel Valley. The theme in these and other works is that Assyria utterly destroyed the cities and villages in their campaigns in northern kingdom during the campaigns of 732-722 BCE.

22 See Chapter 1.6.2 Assyria and Its Frontiers for further discussion.

23 From the Calah Annals, Pave d’Portes. See ANET pp 283-284 for full translation and context.

24 Barkay (1992) takes a more moderate approach to detecting Assyrian destruction in Palestine. Other more moderate approaches to the question of Assyrian expansion are discussed in this chapter as well.
Several site reports for this region also attribute destruction or abandonment of the Iron Age strata to the Assyrians. Excavators identify destruction and attribute the destruction specifically to Assyria at a number of sites in the region including Kinneret (Fritz 1993:190-193), Kedesh (Stern and Arieh 1979:5), Qarnei Hattin (Gal 1992:44), Hazor (Yadin 1972:185), TelDan (Biran 1974:50), Beth Shean (Mazar and Amitai-Preiss 2006:33), Qiri (Ben-Tor 1993:1228), Ta’anach (Stern 2001:47), based on factors ranging from ash layers to toppled stones. Other sites such as Horvat Rosh Zayit, Tel Jezreel, and Jokneam show signs of abandonment that archaeologists also attribute to Assyrian expansion (Gal et al 2000:178; Ussishkin and Woodhead 1997:70; Ben-Tor 1993b:807). Synthetic works take their cue from these site reports to argue for different levels of Assyrian involvement.

Archaeologists also attribute the apparent 8th-century destructions of Megiddo, Kinneret, and Hazor to Assyrian campaigns (Stern 2001:7; Yadin 1972:185; Fritz 1993:190), but it is the strata following destruction with Assyrian architecture that are most informative for understanding Assyria’s political control. As early as the 1930s, Loud (1936) identified quintessential Mesopotamian-style architecture linked to Assyrian imperialism, and this style was identified at some sites in northern Palestine including Megiddo and Hazor (Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958:28). Reich (1975) successfully argued that the building excavated at Ayyelet ha-Shahar should be related to the period of Assyrian occupation based on its similarities to other Mesopotamian-style construction in other imperial territories, despite its dearth of Iron II pottery and the fact that the excavators originally dated the building to the Persian period (Stern 1982:8-9; Reich 1975:233). Several works have noted the Mesopotamian architecture in the southern Levant during the late 8th to 6th centuries BCE (e.g., Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958; Turner 1970; Reich 1992; Bloom 1988). Excavations at the site of Megiddo, one of the more informative sites
in all of Israel, and in particular for understanding the Assyrian Magidu, began in the 1920s (Lamon and Shipton 1939). This site immediately yielded evidence of destruction and subsequent changes in the buildings and settlement of the town, both attributed to Assyria (Lamon and Shipton 1939; Finkelstein et al. 2006; Peersmann 2000). A later work by Peersmann (2000) synthesizes the material from Megiddo Stratum III, the stratum under Assyrian control, to discuss the specifics of the new Assyrian city. The evidence of conflagration at Megiddo followed by a reconstruction of the city by Assyrian design has been a case study of Assyrian involvement in the southern Levant from several angles (e.g., Davies 1986; Cline 2000; Stern 2001). These reports provide the means for further consideration regarding the network of sites with Assyrian-style architecture, the strategic location of Assyrian-style architecture, and the symbolism of foreign architecture amongst local population.

In order to test claims that Assyria laid waste to northern Palestine and left behind monumental Mesopotamian buildings, several archaeologists publish their finds from the Iron II period of settlement surveys and excavations. Landscape and small site surveys from the Upper Galilee (Frankel 2001), Lower Galilee (Gal 1992; Gal 1988), Jezreel Valley (Finkelstein et al. 2006), and surrounding areas (Gal 1998b; Olami and Gal 2003), record the number and type of sherds and other artifacts across the regional landscape. These surveys provide information to assess the number of sites that were abandoned versus sites with continued occupation from the Iron II period through the Persian period in Northern Palestine. Some synthetic works have used the settlement survey data to determine population (Broshi and Finkelstein 1992), and the impact of Assyria on rural areas in Magidu (Ras 2010). The settlement surveys in this region have typically been conducted in the last few decades, whereas excavation of key sites in northern
Palestine have an excavation history almost a century old. Together, these works provide the means to measure the extent of Assyria’s impact on the region.

6. Survey of Architecture and Material Culture

The hundreds of sites surveyed, tens of sites excavated, and several textual accounts of Assyrian campaigns in the southern Levant provide ample data to map out and assess the impact of Assyrian campaigns and subsequent incorporation into the empire. Here I analyze the particulars of each destruction, the changes in settlement, the network of Assyrian control, and the impact on the locals who maintained residence in the region. The following survey follows the trajectory of the Jezreel and Beth Shean valleys along with Upper and Lower Galilee from the mid-8th to mid-7th centuries BCE. A survey of settlement patterns following Assyrian control and evidence of both Assyrian and local architectural styles shows the changes in settlement pattern and number of Mesopotamian buildings in the newly-founded province.

6.1 Destructions Associated with Tiglath-pileser III 733/2 Campaigns in the Southern Levant

Excavators of sites in northern Palestine attribute a number of characteristics to Tiglath-pileser III’s campaigns in 732 BCE (Figure 8). No site was totally destroyed, but several sites possess evidence of some destruction attributed or attributable to Assyrian military campaigns (Table 2). Though archaeologists attribute fiery destruction of seven sites to Assyrian campaigns, these occurrence are only found at one or two structures at each site, rather than a full destruction of an entire city or village. Examples of fiery destruction attributed to Tiglath-pileser III include a large house at Beth Shean, a gate and pillared building at Kinneret, a cultic building at Kedesh,
the “governor’s quarters” at Megiddo and the wall at Qarnei Hattin (Mazar and Amitai-Preiss 2006:33; Fritz 1993:197; Zangenberg et al 2005:200; Stern and Arieh 1979:5-6; Davies 1986:197; Gal 1992:44). Two sites, Tel Dan and Hazor, experienced extensive fiery destruction. Tel Dan lost a large public building and several smaller buildings to conflagration while at Hazor, the citadel and a large pillared structure have large amounts of ash associated with their demise (Biran and Shadur 1994:253; Yadin 1972:187).

The point of entry by the military is evident in five sites with destructions attributed to Assyrian campaigns, though most sites only have evidence of destruction within the city. Archaeologists have identified three sites, Hazor, Kedesh, and Karnei Hattin that show signs of a

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25 Finkelstein, Zimhoni, and Kafri (2000:322) present a possible alternative to the commonly accepted idea that Tiglath-pileser III destroyed Megiddo, and suggest that the destruction could be attributed to Sargon II on account of the pottery assemblage, especially a locally made Assyrian-style bottle found in Stratum IVA. However, they still propose that a 732 BCE destruction is more likely
breach of the city walls (Yadin 1972:190; Stern and Arieh 1979:6; Gal 1992:244), and two sites, Kinneret and Tel Dan, have evidence of burnt or ruined gates (Biran and Shadur 1994:260; Fritz 1993:200). The destruction of the fortification systems perhaps identifies a varied military strategy as to how cities were entered and conquered.

Destruction of monumental buildings only, or of monumental buildings with smaller, perhaps residential buildings, is the most common combination. However, two large sites, Megiddo and Beth Shean, only show evidence of destruction of domestic quarters rather than any monumental buildings. These domestic buildings were still monumental in their own right; Davies calls the destroyed building at Megiddo a “Governor’s palace” and the Beth Shean building was “one of the largest and most impressive Iron Age dwelling structures excavated in Israel” (Davies 1986:197; Mazar and Amitai-Preiss 2006:33, 213).

In sum, we can conclude that apart from Tel Dan, no other site has extensive destruction of domestic quarters. Also, no evidence exists of a site being completely razed. Finally, the signs of possible warfare at each site lack conformity or other evidence that one could solidly attribute to the Assyrians.

26 No sites have evidence of soil or stone siege ramps. This is perhaps due to the fact that siege ramps could have been constructed with wood, or that that soil and stones were reused in later strata. The more probable explanation is that siege ramps were usually unnecessary considering that so far only two sites, Kinneret and Tel Dan, have evidence of burnt or ruined gates.

27 Finkelstein, ZImhoni, and Kafri (2000:310) note that the stables of Area L “revealed no sign of destruction by fire, thus suggesting that only the living quarters of [Megiddo] Stratum IVA were set ablaze.” James (1966:153) assigns the assemblage before the destruction of Level V a date of around 800 BCE based on the similarities between assemblages of Samaria III and “Megiddo V-a platters,” but Mazar and Amitai-Preiss (2006:34-5) insist that the assemblage could be dated to the time of Tiglath-pileser III.
Evidence of portable military material culture that would provide more data to support that these destructions were at the hands of the Assyrian military is also sparse. Minimal evidence of warfare accoutrements such as arrowheads, sling balls, metal armor, exist in northern Palestine from the time of Assyrian expansion. The number of smashed, reconstructable vessels found in Beth Shean, Tel Dan, and Hazor, suggest that inhabitants were forced to flee hastily from the attackers (Mazar and Amitai-Preiss 2006:33, 213; Biran and Shadur 1994:260; Yadin 1972:190). This evidence of abandonment of entire cities is perhaps the best line of evidence that Assyria was responsible for at least some of the attacks.

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Table 2 Sites with Signs of Destruction Dated to Tiglath-pileser III’s Campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Siege Ramp</th>
<th>Wall Breech/ Gate debris</th>
<th>Conflagration</th>
<th>Monumental Destruction</th>
<th>Domestic Destruction</th>
<th>Warfare MC</th>
<th>Household MC</th>
<th>Assyrian text/iconography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beth Shean</td>
<td>P7/ UME IV</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethsaida28</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinneret</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tel Dan</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hazor</td>
<td>V</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horbat Rosh Zayit</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kedesh</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qarnei Hattin</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ta’anach</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 Bethsaida is located just outside the regions associated with this study, but it is included here as another city nearby with destruction attributed to Assyria (Brandl, Arav, and Freund 2009:20, 26, 52, 66-70).
6.2 Abandonment associated with Tiglath-pileser III 733/2 campaigns in the southern Levant

Perhaps more compelling than the destructions in the region is the trend of abandonment in cities and villages dated to the 8th century BCE. Though these phenomena vary by region, settlement surveys show an overall decrease in sites and population during the 8th century BCE. Surveys in Upper and Lower Galilee, the Jezreel Valley, and surrounding areas indicate a depleted population with about half of the sites surveyed lacking ceramic forms and styles from the late 8th to the 6th centuries BCE (Gal 1992:83; Gal 1998:14*; Frankel et al. 2001:106-7; Olami and Gal 2003:12*). The decrease in population does not leave any area entirely abandoned, but rather the number and size of sites in each region diminished considerably (Ras 2010; Broshi and Finkelstein 1992; Na’aman 1995). Both large, excavated sites, and smaller sites only recorded in surveys saw a decrease in material culture from this time period.

While several of the abandoned sites are small mounds or sherd scatters that have only been analyzed within the context of a settlement survey (Gal 1991; Gal 1998b; Gal 1998b; Olami and Gal 2003), some larger sites experienced a decrease in occupation around the same time as the destructions. Horvat Rosh Zayit in Lower Galilee had a series of domestic structures, other buildings and an oil press until the entire site was abandoned at the end of the 8th century BCE (Gal et al 2000:6,160,178). Tel Jezreel in the Jezreel Valley only yielded graves from the latter

29 Though the Manasseh Hill Country is peripheral to this study, some of the data from this region provides further information for the nature of Assyrian control. East Manasseh saw a “sharp decline” in settlement, with only 25 sites yielding pottery from the Iron Age, and no sites showed evidence of destruction (Zertāl 2007; Zertal 2008:89-90). None of these 25 sites were new developments, but rather, continuations from Iron II Israelite site (Zertal 2008:90). In East Manasseh, “the villages and the farms in the arid zones were the first to be abandoned, and the population moved to the richer and better defended Mediterranean zones. However, even in the latter area there is a 50% decline of settlement” (Zertal 2008:90). In western Manasseh the sites in the region declined by 50% (84 sites in Iron Age II to 40 sites in Iron III) (Zertal 2004:57). It appears that several sites in the valleys of West Manasseh were abandoned (Zertal 2004:58). “In the internal highlands and the eastern valleys there is clear evidence of renewed settlement” where 12 settlements “were established on virgin soil” (Zertal 2004:58).
part of the Iron Age, which indicates a small settlement otherwise undetected in the excavations that replaced a larger settlement from the Kingdom of Israel (Ussishkin and Woodhead 1997:71). Jokneam Stratum XII, dated to the early to mid-8th century, was a fortified city with two circuits of walls, which went into ruins and was replaced by a small, unwalled settlement dating to the 8th-7th centuries BCE (Ben-Tor 1993a). Though Stern writes that Tel Hadar Stratum I, a fortified site with and outer and inner wall, was razed by the Assyrian military (Stern 2001:7), Kochavi instead suggests that it just fell into ruins and never resettled following the Assyrian campaigns (Kochavi and Yadin 2008:552). This discrepancy concerning Tel Hadar illustrates a problem with the presentation of data; Assyria is presented as a military force destroying every site, whereas the archaeological reality shows much more evidence of abandonment. The rhetoric of intimidation exhibited in Assyrian annals is reflected in Biblical texts, suggesting that a fear of Assyrian military campaigns had pervaded the minds of the Levantine locals. This fear most likely caused many of them to flee to neighboring kingdoms or to take refuge in fortified cities, never to return to their homes (Dubovský 2006:10-22).

Although some key sites exhibit little evidence of destruction, the impact of Assyrian campaigns might be more readily measured in the population decline and significant site abandonment in the region. Several sites have evidence of destruction that scholars have attributed to Assyrian campaigns, but nothing can confirm that the destructions were from imperial advances rather than local squabbles. Hazor is the only town in this region that is both mentioned in Assyrian campaign annals and has some evidence of destruction from the same time period. The map of sites exhibiting some evidence of late 8th-century destruction shows that the sites were all strategically on or near the major north/south communication highway running though the southern Levant (Oded 1979:59). During that time it was “the most important
highway linking Egypt with the Beqa valley was certainly the one that branched from the international coastal highway at Megiddo and led to the Beqa Valley by way of Chinnereth and Hazor” (Dorsey 1991:95). Not only was this route important for Assyria to control, but it also was the lifeline of the international economy and means of defense of the Kingdom of Israel. If Assyria did cause the destructions, conquering the major cities along the trade route cut off the network from its capital at Samaria. This strategic plot would cause those who were not deported to have no choice but flee the area, leaving a once-thriving local state at the mercy of an empire. The region newly configured under Assyrian control would serve as a Transit Corridor connecting the coast and the inland routes with Assyrian outposts placed strategically along the way.

6.3 Assyrian Administrative Architecture

Following the destructions at Megiddo and Hazor, four buildings identified as Assyrian construction are present in the region, though their identification as “Assyrian” is based on varying degrees of evidence. Assyrian political control is based on the presence of the “Mesopotamian Courtyard building,” a style otherwise foreign to the southern Levant. Also known as the “principal reception suite” and the “Assyrian courtyard building,” the Mesopotamian courtyard building has several correlates throughout the Assyrian Empire, most notably Khorsabad/Dur Sharrukin, an 8th-century capital of Assyria (Loud 1936:137; Turner 1970:177), which further suggests its administrative function.30 Two different types of sites in

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30 The traditional courtyard building consists of a (almost) square courtyard surrounded by long, rectangular rooms that varied in size (Loud 1936:159; Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958:29). One of the outerrooms served as an entrance and could also connect on courtyard building to another (Loud 1936:159-60). The courtyard layout was used both in the private and public sector in which the courtyard either served as a central point of “communication” connecting “private apartments,” or, for administrative buildings, it served as a “forecourt” or “central court” in administrative duties (Loud 1936:157).
the former kingdom of Israel have remnants of the Courtyard building: the fortresses of Ayyelet HaShahar, Hazor, and Kinneret, and the administrative city of Megiddo.

Only partial remnants exist of the three courtyard buildings in Ayyelet HaShahar, Hazor and Kinneret, though all three sites have evidence of continued occupation and very little material culture from the Assyrian period (Figure 9). Ayyelet HaShahar, the only courtyard building in this region built on virgin soil (Kletter and Zwickel 2006:154, Figure 10), yielded partial remains of the building with the rest left in ruins (Reich 1975:233-5). Whereas Ayyelet HaShahar was built on virgin soil with little evidence to assign a definite date to its construction, the courtyard buildings at Hazor and Kinneret were built atop ruins of ninth and 8th-century cities. The Mesopotamian courtyard citadel at Hazor had thick (1-2 m walls) and was located on the “western bluff” and isolated from the rest of the tell (Yadin 1958:45; Yadin 1972:191, Figure 12). The outline of the Hazor courtyard building was more or less complete and even had a tower attached to the eastern wall. The Mesopotamian courtyard building at Kinneret also sat on ruins
from the previous city on the “upper terrace” of the site. In addition to the courtyard building at Kinneret, there was also a squatter occupation amongst the rubble, though it is not clear if both settlements occupied the mound at the same time (Fritz 1993:193,203-4). Though all of the buildings were built following Assyrian campaigns, a consideration of the material culture does not assist in dating the occupations.

The material culture found within the three courtyard buildings can only be assigned a “pre-Persian” date. The building at Ayyelet HaShahar yielded such little material culture from its initial construction that excavators thought that the building was built during the Persian period (Stern 1982:8-9; Reich 1975:233). The lack of material culture from the Assyrian period at Ayyelet HaShahar fails to support the argument that Assyrians originally built and utilized the building. Like Ayyelet HaShahar, the Hazor building had very little material culture from its initial occupation, though the little “pre-Persian” material culture present at the site corresponds with that found at Megiddo III, supporting that it was in use during Assyrian occupation (Yadin
Kinneret also had no finds associated with the courtyard building that could provide clues about the people who initially utilized the city, though the village had newly introduced “Assyrianized” pottery forms in this stratum (Fritz 1993:203-4). For the most part, the dating of the three sites seems to depend on architecture and material culture from previous strata, rather than the material culture associated with Mesopotamian architecture.

Due to the lack of portable material culture dated to the time of Assyrian expansion, some who study Iron Age northern Palestine take a more skeptical approach, suggesting very minimal Assyrian involvement. Kletter and Zwickel (2006:169) question the enthusiasm with which scholars identify Assyrian architectural elements at all, citing the very poor condition of the courtyard building at Kinneret as an example of identifying a building as Assyrian with very little data. They observe that architectural plans are not the only support for the Assyrian nature of the building at Ayyelet HaShahar: the absence of a building foundation, the pebbled and lime floors, the niches in the throne rooms, the sockets on the entry doors, all point to a Syro-Mesopotamian plan, though not necessarily Assyrian (Kletter and Zwickel 2006:171-173, 178). Kletter and Zwickel leave room for speculation that the Mesopotamian-style architecture does not necessarily equate to Assyrian-building propaganda.
The precarious evidence of Assyrian involvement in Hazor, Ayyelet HaShahar, and Kinneret is perhaps strengthened by the location of the sites along an inland route that would lead to the Assyrian province capital city of Megiddo. Megiddo, Kinneret, and Hazor were all situated along what Dorsey calls the “Main Megiddo-Beqa’ Valley Highway,” which was the “most important highway” between Egypt and the inland Levant (Dorsey 1991:95-97; see also Aharoni 1979:52-53). Though Dorsey bases this information on 19th-century roads, it also corresponds to the key archaeological sites during the Assyrian period (Dorsey 1991:96).

Megiddo also sat along the International Coastal Highway as it skirted the Carmel Range that includes Jokneam as the next major site on the path to the northern coast (Dorsey 1991:72-75). The abandonment of Jokneam during the time of Assyrian occupation further bolsters the importance of Megiddo and the inland highway as essential in Assyria’s Levantine network.

The confirmation in the Assyrian eponym list that Megiddo was a provincial capital coupled with the marked difference in building style and city plan from Stratum IVA to Stratum III provides the best support that Assyria was behind its transformation. Megiddo Stratum III underwent the most significant changes in the region during the 8th-7th centuries BCE. Little from the previous city (Stratum IVA) was incorporated into the new Stratum III city, save the water tunnel and the offset/inset fortification wall, though the date underwent modifications to a two-chamber gate characteristic of other Assyrian provincial cities (Stern 2001:24; Peersmann 2000:525).31 The most obvious architecture is that of the Assyrian-style courtyard buildings (490, 1052, and 1369) clustered in the northern sections of the site. Bloom (1988:96) suggests that Building 1369 is a hybrid building with both Mesopotamian and local characteristics with a

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31 North Syrian gates especially those found at Tayinat under Assyrian administration are structurally similar to the Megiddo III gate (Bloom 1988:98)
courtyard of Assyrian style, but also a columned entrance characteristic of the Syrian Bit Hilani. This building represents the diverse population that could have inhabited the site.

Figure 13 Megiddo Stratum III courtyard building in NW area of site (after Herzog 1992:256 and also found in Peersmann 2000:525)

The courtyard buildings at Megiddo (Figure 13), although substantially different from the broadroom administrative halls from the previous stratum both in layout and location, were not the only major change. The orthogonal city plan was also a departure from local city plans. The streets of Megiddo Stratum III are set in an orthogonal plan creating “eight rectangular insulae, or blocks, from east to west and four or five from north to south” with domestic buildings in the center of the plan that could have housed up to 2,000 people (Peersmann 2000:524, 531-2). The domestic area in the center of the orthogonal plan are according to Assyrian measurements (Assyrian cubit = 49.5 cm) (Herzog 1992:253). This attention to careful planning of the domestic quarter with more domestic buildings in Stratum III than Stratum IVA is evidence that more people actually lived in the Assyrianized city than the Israelite city. The function of the city may
have shifted from an outpost protecting the capital Samaria to a regional capital during the Assyrian period (Reich 1992:216).

The relationship between the domestic structures and the Assyrian-administrative structures gives insight into the relationship between the local population and the Assyrian administration. Reich (1992:217) asserts that “no Assyrian influence can be distinguished in the plans of the private houses and it seems that the local population had built them within an urban plan that was dictated by the authorities.” The domestic structures were probably hemmed in by administrative buildings to the north and industrial and/or administrative buildings to the south, given that some of the buildings in the southernmost section of the city probably functioned in capacities other than domestic quarters. Bloom (1988:96) points out that at least one Mesopotamian-style building also consisted of local elements, which coincides with Manuelli’s (2009:124-125) observation that Assyrian architecture in the southern Levant experienced more local anomalies than Assyrian administrative buildings closer to the heartland. This is also true of the mixture of material culture found at the site. According to Finkelstein, Zimhoni, and Kafri (2000:319), Megiddo Stratum III only has one “relatively safe assemblage,” near the main gateway, that displays several similarities to the assemblage of Stratum IVA. These local affinities also give clues about the nature of the population maneuvering through the area.

32 Building 957 may have been a wealthy home, or an administrative building (Peersmann 2000:528). Building 1427 contained a pebbled courtyard and was a gatehouse due to its location at a gap in the wall thought to function as a smaller, southern gate (Peersmann 2000:528). Building 1616 may have served a cultic function due to the high frequency of figurines and possible altar (Peersmann 2000:529). Peersmann (2000:530) asserts that Insula 292 could be an industrial center and the large pits, and “higher number of bone spatulas, whorls and figurines,” raises “the possibility that it served as a textile production and/or weaving area.” Davies (1986:101) writes that the concentration of iron and bronze objects in the southern part of the city may be evidence of an inhabitation by metalworkers. These buildings to the south coupled with the Assyrian courthouse buildings in the north no doubt integrated “the inhabitants of within the compounds of the new Assyrian city” (Peersmann 2000:530), which was a web of control, much as the new Assyrian outposts did to the region.
6.4 Local Material Culture Alongside Assyrian Architecture

Though the settlement of small sites declined drastically during the period of Assyrian occupation, a number of rural sites remained in the region, and the new settlement pattern favored valleys and areas closer to Assyrian courtyard buildings. In the Lower Galilee, 60% of sites show continuity from the Iron II to the Persian period. Although Lower Galilee saw a decrease in sites overall, the southern part of the region has material culture through the late Iron Age, which is “perhaps due to its proximity to the Jezreel Valley” (Figure 14, Gal 1992; Ras 2010:88). According to the map of Gazit, the region had twelve sites in both the Iron Age II and the Persian period. Ten of the twelve Iron Age II sites continued into the Persian period, suggesting occupation throughout Assyrian control (Gal 1991). Of the thirteen sites that Gal (1998) confidently dates to the Iron II, eight of those continue during the Persian period. The Map of Shefar’am shows that all eight sites in the region with remains dating to the Iron II also continued into the Persian period, suggesting substantial continuity (Olami and Gal 2003). Their close proximity to the city of Megiddo would place them under the jurisdiction of Assyrian provincial governors and the region directly around Megiddo maintained a steady population with “a peaceful transition from the Iron II to the Persian period” (Finkelstein et al. 2006:770). Meanwhile, “in Upper Galilee there is a clear shift in settlement pattern, moving to the west and to the east, leaving the central part only scarcely inhabited,” closer to the Assyrian sites at Hazor and Ayyelet HaShahar (Frankel et al. 2001:106-107; Ras 2010:88). The maintenance of several rural sites suggests a local contingent that survived Assyrian campaigns and their dependence on the Assyrian city and fortresses newly present in the region.
Figure 14 Number of sites by region dating to the Iron II period vs the Persian Period (Gal 1991; Gal 1998b; Olami and Gal 2003; Finkelstein et al. 2006)

Jezreel Valley

Iron II Sites with no continuation into the Persian Period (18)
New Persian Period Sites (29)
Iron II Sites continuing into the Persian Period (40)
Alongside the new Mesopotamian-style architecture was the local architecture that continued during and following the 8th-century military campaigns. A few larger sites in the former kingdom of Israel even enjoyed a flourishing city with overwhelmingly local characteristics following Assyrian campaigns. Tel Dan Stratum I yielded a fully reoccupied city following Assyrian expansion as opposed to the several sites that were abandoned during this
time. Following the destruction of Hazor, Tel Dan was the “main center of population in the Huleh Valley” with all of the contours of the tell, paved planned roads, and large public buildings dated to the 7th Century BCE (Biran and Shadur 1994:261). This city also showed an “affinity to the Phoenician and coastal cities” in both architecture and exhibiting items that suggest trade with the Trans-Jordanian communities (Biran and Shadur 1994:261-2). Following the destruction of Beth Shean, there appears to be a very small “squatter occupation” with no evidence of rebuilding the town to the extent it was before, only evidence of meager walls and poorly preserved buildings (Mazar and Amitai-Preiss 2006:33,35,238). In regards to material culture, excavators found that “there are no finds at Beth-Shean associated with the period following the Assyrian conquest…No Assyrian or Assyrian-type pottery or any other objects from this period were recovered” (Mazar and Amitai-Preiss 2006:36). The squatter occupation of Beth Shean shows that locals were still living within the newly conquered Assyrian territories.

These surveys are based on local Iron II and Persian ceramics, because Assyrian-style ceramics are not present at the smaller sites. A dearth of Assyrian or Assyrianized artifacts is one line of evidence allowing us to assume that local populations remained in the region following the destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel and the deportation of its population. Gal's (1992:82) conclusions about Lower Galilee are that “Assyrian pottery and its local imitations are absolutely lacking” but “this pottery is found in a number of sites surveyed in Samaria,” illustrating a different interaction with the land in the southern part of the former local territory of Israel. In fact, Lower Galilee lacked not only portable Assyrian finds, but Assyrianized architecture was also not identified.

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33 Gush Halav, a site in the region of Dan, had a large sherd scattering of Iron II sherds, though no associated architecture. It may have been within Dan’s network of sites inhabited by a local population that survived Assyrian campaigns (Meyers, Meyers, and Strange 1990:62, 131).
6.5 Combined Data

The following map and charts present a collation of the data summarized above. For further explanation, see Chapter 1 5. Research Design.

Figure 16 Map of Sites Before and After Assyrian Expansion

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<td>B- Destruction then decline with local architecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>2- Decline with local MC only- no destruction</td>
<td>C- Destruction then decline with Assyrian architecture</td>
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<td>3- Decline with Assyrian MC- no destruction</td>
<td>D- Destruction then settled local city</td>
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<td>E- Destruction then settled with Assyrianized city</td>
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<td>5- Grew steadily with Assyrian MC- no destruction</td>
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58
6.6 Overview of Sites

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34 Information from these sites was gathered from multiple settlement surveys (Finkelstein et al. 2006; Olami and Gal 2003; Gal 1992; Gal 1998; Frankel et al. 2001; Ras 2010).

35 X and Y equal the coordinates of the sites within the Israeli grid.
## Lower Galilee

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7. Comparative Data

Several territories incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system serve as comparisons with Assyrian involvement at Megiddo. Sites such as Ziyaret Tepe (Assyrian Tushan) along the Tigris River in the Upper Tigris River Valley (Parker 2003:545-546), Dur Katlimu situated on the Lower Habur River (Bonacossi 2000:360; Liverani 1988:90), Tel Ahmar (Til Barsip) in the Saruj Plain just west of the Euphrates (Bunnens 1992:2-4; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003:382; Bonacossi 2000:357), and Arslan Tash east of the Upper Euphrates (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003:282) contribute to our understanding of Assyrian provinces. These Assyrian territories possess examples of Assyrian architecture at both large and small sites that are also characteristic of Megiddo, but the population increase in all of these regions is in contrast to the population decrease at Megiddo.

Each of these regions have sites that possess Assyrian architecture and material culture during the Assyrian imperial period. The architecture in these sites included larger fortification systems, palaces, and Mesopotamian-style courtyard buildings at Ziyaret Tepe (Parker 2003:537), a Bit Hilani in Dur Katlimu (Morandi Bonacossi 1996:35-36), and Assyrian-style artwork in a “governor’s palace” at Tel Barsip and Arslan Tash (Bunnens 1992:2-4, 6; Akkermans and Schwartz 2003:382). This trend of newly developed Assyrian cities was accompanied by smaller fortifications. Smaller sites with Assyrian architectural characteristics, and in proximity to the larger Assyrian “capitals,” would have been important satellites connected to the provincial centers. In Parker’s research, Boztepe, a small site in proximity to Ziyaret Tepe, possessed a settlement dating to the 8th century with a Mesopotamian-style courtyard building that Parker hypothesizes was part of the Assyrian colonization process after Ziyaret Tepe was established (Parker 2003:539). Jurn Kabir, a site on the Euphrates south of
Arslan Tash, had a fort dating to the Assyrian Imperial period. Tell Sheikh Hassan was an abandoned city that the Assyrians apparently appropriated and built a Bit Hilani at its apex (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003:383). The smaller satellite fortresses found in close proximity to the larger Assyrianized cities are only part of the changes in settlement pattern each region underwent due to Assyrian military campaigns, deportations, and emphasis on trade routes throughout the kingdom.

The Assyrian provinces in the Upper Tigris River Valley, the Lower Habur River, the Saruj Plain, and the Upper Euphrates region all underwent changes in settlement pattern and increase in population contemporaneous with the inauguration of the large Assyrianized cities. According to Parker’s findings in southeastern Anatolia, Assyrian administration appropriated strategic local cities for their own political and military agenda (Parker 2003:545). Parker finds that these cities were in fertile valleys, in close proximity to important routes (Parker 2003:545). Parker asserts that the “rapidity with which the settlement pattern is altered after Assyrian annexation of the region” and the number and size of smaller sites support the notion that settlement pattern changes were indeed brought about by Assyrian expansion (Parker 2003:536). Wilkinson et al. (2005:38) note the “dramatic increase in settlement” in “Cizre, Iraqi North Jazira, Hamoukar, Wadi Ajij, Beydar, Jebel Abd al-Aziz, Wadi Hamar, and Balikh valleys.” The population in the Upper Tigris River Valley experienced a sharp increase following Assyrian expansion with more sites in agricultural zones as opposed to earlier when sites tended to be located in naturally defensible locations (Parker 2003:536). The Cizre Plain settlement increased from ten sites to 38 sites with continuation of the previous ten sites into the Assyrian occupation period, creating an “infilling of the previous settlement pattern” (Parker 2003:544). Parker (2003:544-5) identifies “four major centers” around which the sites were gathered. In addition to
the enlarged cities like Dur Katlimmu, the Lower Habur became dotted with small villages, most likely inhabited by deportees brought closer to the heart of the empire to participate in agricultural production. The settlement in the Habur increased from 18 “Early Neo-Assyrian sites (95 ha) to 66 Late Assyrian sites” (270 ha) (Morandi Bonacossi 1996:20). The area surrounding Arslan Tash also underwent a population increase focusing on agricultural production by war refugees and deportees (Akkermans and Schwartz 2003:383). This population increase allowed for agricultural productivity that would benefit the Assyrian core and building projects needed to facilitate the influx of people in their respective regions (Postgate 1979:197). The increase in population and number of sites took place directly around the time of Assyrian control, linking it to the imperial agenda.

The city of Megiddo and the fortresses at Hazor, Ayyelet HaShahar and Kinneret are like analogous sites such as Dur Katlimu, Tel Barsip, and Arslan Tash. Megiddo and Hazor are on a strategic east/west route connecting the inland trade network to the Phoenician ports (Dorsey 1991:95). Like its analogs, Megiddo underwent major renovations to its local city architecture including a bolstering of its fortification, at least three courtyard buildings, and an increase in the city’s domestic residences (Peersmann 2000). Megiddo was also connected by routes to other fortresses at Hazor, Ayyelet HaShahar, and Kinneret (Yadin 1972; Reich 1975; Fritz 1993), much like Boz Tepe and Tel Sheikh Hassan. The the architecture and location at Megiddo and the fortresses of Hazor, Ayyelet HaShahar, and Kinneret that sit along the inland routes comply with other provinces located in closer to the Assyrian heartland. However, the overall population decrease in the area surrounding Megiddo as opposed to the population increase in other provinces prevents a complete comparison (Frankel et al. 2001:106-107).
Several characteristics, outlined by Parker (2001, 2003), are universal to Assyrian provinces, supplying case studies against which to measure Assyria’s impact on the province in Megiddo. The term Province is widely accepted in Assyrian scholarship, but each province does not necessarily share the same characteristics. I retitle the provinces in southeastern Anatolia as “Production Provinces.” Production Provinces experienced an increase in population, an increased number of agricultural villages, and the institution of large administrative centers that supplied the core of Assyria with agricultural goods. The large Assyrianized cities along strategic routes monitored trade and travel in the region, and facilitated the safe transfer of precious goods to the core. According to Parker, the characteristics of the provinces he evaluated include the following:36

1. Assyrians appropriated local cities on transportation corridors
2. Main cities were surrounded by newly settled agricultural villages
3. Main cities had evidence of Assyrian-style construction
4. Change in surrounding settlement pattern
5. New settlements in the region and increase in population

I propose to rename this as a “Production Province,” because its infrastructure sustained a large population as well as provided additional food and supplies to the Assyrian core (Postgate 1979). They monitored their highways with strategically placed Assyrian outposts and populated the region with disoriented deportees newly subject to the Assyrian Empire.

36 These characteristics are based on Parker’s (2003:552) observations of the provinces of southeastern Anatolia and anthropological works on ancient empires. He simply describes it as “the annexation of a previously peripheral region into a provincial system,” and one characteristic that he emphasizes is “made up of small newly founded agricultural villages” by resettled subjects (Parker 2003:552). Although Megiddo is recorded as a province, it does not exhibit the characteristic of increased settlement and population. Therefore I call the provinces which Parker describes as “Production Provinces” in contrast to the phenomenon at Megiddo.
The designation Production Province applies to provinces in the Habur, southeastern Anatolia, and other Assyrian territories on account of their population increase. These provinces closer to the Assyrian heartland focused on the cultivation of food crops as well as the production of straw for animals and building materials needed for the increased population (Postgate 1979:197, 215). The capital cities exhibited Assyrian-style architecture and probably were the hub of administration with the surrounding villages subject to the Assyrian empire (Postgate 1979:216). While it seems that the site of Megiddo served as an administrative hub for the Assyrian empire based on its location and substantial Assyrian-style architecture, it did not oversee a large population compared to the capital cities of Production Provinces.

Provinces in the Levant do not universally exhibit with all of the characteristics of a “Production Province,” in terms of population increase and crop cultivation. Postgate (1979:198-199) offers that Assyria was forced to “embrace a different type of economy” in the Levant based on its unique climate, agricultural produce, and a stronger focus on trade. The differences in population between Production Provinces and the provinces in the southern Levant could also be due to the fact that the southern Levant became part of the empire much later than other regions. Whereas in earlier times, “the empire was regularly pushing its borders outwards and consolidating its conquests with an essentially military administration,” later several regions had existed within the imperial structure “long enough to have acquired a certain stability” (Postgate 1979:194, emphasis mine). In the case of the southern Levant, it was incorporated into the region late in the trajectory of the empire, and only took on characteristics of military administration, never existing long enough in the empire to adjust “their economic and civil life to the new conditions” (Postgate 1974:194). In this case, the lack of population in the southern Levant functions within an Assyrian strategy of military expansion.
8. Analysis

To contrast Production Provinces, I introduce the term “Transit Corridor Province,” to define more accurately Magidu’s role in the Assyrian Empire. The Transit Corridor Province shares some but not all characteristics with the Production Province, namely its lack of population and large-scale agricultural production. Its name assumes its function as a province specifically configured to monitor the transfer of goods, booty, and military troops from the shore to the core of the Assyrian Empire. It is a province that concerns itself less with foodstuffs, and does not need a large population to maintain production. In fact, the lack of populations most likely facilitated easier monitoring of those within the province and traveling through.

A Transit Corridor Province consisted of:

1. Small Assyrian forts along trade routes connected to a provincial capital city
2. Depopulated region
3. Proximity to coast or other region with access to precious commodities
4. A Transit Corridor would also be farther from the heartland of Assyria in a location where distance impeded the degree of control that Assyria established on territories closer to the capital.

37 Parker identified one region of the three he studied in southeastern Anatolia that experienced a minimal degree of control though still had great utility for the Assyrian empire. The Middle-Upper Tigris Region was never incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system and only has one record of an Assyrian campaign to the area in the 9th century BCE and during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, a fort was ordered to be built in the region “to protect downstream river traffic” (Parker 2003:548-551). Other than some minor activity along the Tigris, the region did not experience population increase, and instead small settlements continuing from the Late Bronze Age were left alone with no trace of Assyrian deportation or colonization (Parker 2003:552). Parker (2003:552) identifies this region as a “Buffer Zone” between its provinces and Urartu, a territorial state that was a formidable enemy to Assyria Using Parker’s Buffer Zone hypothesis, Ras (2010:89) argues that the Lower Galilee was a Buffer Zone, but it protects against “rebellion” within the empire rather than encroachment of another political entity from outside the empire. Ras cites the fact that it appears that the Lower Galilee was intentionally left desolate. The major problem with simply identifying the region around Megiddo as a “Buffer Zone” with agricultural limits highlights the lack of population, but unfortunately downplays its provincial status and the characteristics the city of Megiddo possesses that exhibit its reign as capital in the region. Megiddo, therefore, has characteristics of both buffer zone and imperial province, leaving little in the way of substantial material culture for some scholars to be satisfied with its heavy association with the Assyrian empire. See further discussion in Chapter 4.
To contrast with my model of Production Province, a Transit Corridor Province did not sustain a large population, nor provide additional food and supplies for the Assyrian core. They monitored their highways with strategically placed Assyrian outposts in regions with minimal population, most of whom were locals who were made aware first hand of the power of the Assyrian military through campaigns and building projects.

Megiddo, though far from Assyria, was much less “peripheral” to the empire than the Phoenician Coast. Whether the Phoenician coast had a military advantage by its maritime connections (Chase-Dunn 1988:48), or Assyria chose a lesser form of control on the coast to acquire more wealth, it is clear by the archaeological record that Assyrian politics were more evident directly inland from Phoenicia than in Phoenicia itself (Oded 1974:40). On account of their naval acumen and access to coveted trade items such as fine garments, wood and metals, Assyria granted Phoenicia “commercial advantage and protection because of their importance” (Frankenstein 1979:270-271, 272; see also Thareani 2016:94). The exact relationship between empire and city states of Phoenicia is often illusive in core-periphery models because of their varied autonomy, often coinciding with their level of freedom in their production, trade, and economy (Chase-Dunn 1988:46; Marcus 1990:130, 131). Chase-Dunn observes that independent cities “are often intermediate between empire cores and peripheral regions and they mediate the exchange between core and periphery” (Chase-Dunn 1988:46). Within a world systems approach, Marcus (1990:130) invokes Wallerstein’s “semi-periphery” to describe Assyrian territories (Wallerstein 1980). In her understanding, the semi-periphery forms as “a link … between the core and periphery economically as well as geographically” providing “a means of moderating political pressures that might be brought to bear on the core” (Marcus 1990:130). If the Phoenician cities along the middle-Levantine coast operated as intermediaries, then the
presence of a network of Assyrian-style buildings and routes just inland in *Magidu* would have represented that the land was directly controlled by Assyria (Frankenstein 1979:270-271). The close proximity of Megiddo to the coast allowed the Assyrians to monitor the Levantine coast while still allowing a higher level of autonomy (Frankenstein 1979:272).

The hybrid material culture in sites with Assyrian-style architecture suggests interactions between Assyria and the local population. Marcus (1990) identified different artistic styles found on seals at Hasanlu, a site in Iran peripheral to the Assyrian heartland. There were seals with a “Central Assyrian Style” identical to those found in the Assyrian heartland, but also seals with a “Provincial Assyrian Style” that combined local and Assyrian characteristics (Marcus 1990:135-136). Marcus’s principles could also be applied to the buildings found at Megiddo and Ayyelet HaShahar. Specifically, Building 1369 at Megiddo shares characteristics of both a Mesopotamian-style courtyard building as well as a Syrian Bit Hilani (Bloom 1988:96). In addition, Ayyelet HaShahar shares similarities with a building at Arslan Tash, an Anatolian site also part of the Assyrian peripheral territories (Reich 1975). These hybrid architectural styles could be identified as “Provincial Assyrian Style” as opposed to “Central Assyrian Style,” and suggest a more nuanced perspective when dealing with “the dynamics of cultural change in frontier situations” (Marcus 1990:142).

In addition to hybrid Assyrian and local sites, there were sites with strong Phoenician and local influences rather than Assyrian. Assyria most likely allowed the Phoenician outpost of Dan to exist because activity and transport to the city could be closely monitored from Hazor and Ayyelet HaShahar. The material culture from Dan, including the pottery styles, architecture, and small finds, are identical to those finds found at Dor, Tyre, and Sidon, linked the city to the Phoenician city-state network (Biran and Shadur 1994:261-2). The architecture of Tel Dan was
of a local tradition as opposed to the Mesopotamian-style courtyard buildings newly constructed in the area (Biran and Shadur 1994). The presence of local material culture traditions provided a notion of traditional presence in the midst of a new imperial order.

Local inhabitants, like those living Dan and the smaller hamlets, were most likely part of the new Assyrian system. A new settlement configuration consisted of villages concentrated around larger Assyrianized cities, and along the routes between Assyrian outposts. In addition, the hamlets were most likely among the fields surrounding the outposts, suggesting an agricultural guild or occupation group necessary to supply foodstuffs to administrators and Assyrian military camps, as well as construction workers for the newly renovated Assyrian outposts. These villages represent a vital part of the provincial system, and their inhabitants should be considered “not just as passive subjects of the taxation system, but rather as active agents in the production and circulation of goods and in the management of manpower” (Ponchia 2012:222). The location of Tel Dan also served as a reminder that the Phoenician coast was intertwined with Assyria and both the coastal city states and inland local cities were connected to the Assyrian trade network.

Though no material culture in the outposts exists to suggest the types of items that were transported through Megiddo, we can infer some items based on textual evidence and material from the Assyrian heartland. First, it is possible that Megiddo functioned as a Transit Corridor for tribute and spoils of war. As early as 732 BCE, Megiddo was emptied of much of its population and an Assyrian fortress network along the main inland road was established. All booty, deportees, and tribute from southern Palestine would have needed a protected corridor to ensure safe transit to the homeland. Assyrian annals list several items from its vassals in southern Palestine ranging from silver to livestock to craftsmen (Grayson and Novotny 2014:193).
Postgate (1979:199) argues that the Assyrian kings would have wanted the most current luxury goods in their palaces and temples, and these could have been transported through Megiddo as well. Megiddo could have served as a road station to sort, bundle, and secure travel arrangements of items and people enroute to Mesopotamia. Studies on road stations from “scattered textual evidence” in Neo-Assyrian letters implies that the international highways, also called King’s Roads, were maintained “for rapid and safe transit traffic” (Parpola 1987:XIV). These roads were monitored by Assyrian forts that could house troops, monitor traffic and transfer messages to other outposts (Oded 1970:179, 182; Parpola 1987:XIV). Megiddo would have been one of these forts along the King’s Highway that provided housing for military and postmasters.

Second, material culture found in the palace at Nineveh suggests elite items were somehow acquired from Samaria and transported to the Assyrian heartland (Winter 1976). These items provide evidence that materials were indeed transported and if they are from the fallen Northern Kingdom, then they most likely were transported through Megiddo on their way to Assyria. Still the material culture is scarce enough to question Assyria’s strong interest in Megiddo (Gal 1992:82).

Some authors have recently equated the lack of evidence of Assyrian influence with a lack of interest. Kletter and Zwickel (2006:169) also object to the interpretation of a massive Assyrian presence compared to the minimal material culture. More drastically, while Bagg (2013:10) does agree that the Assyrian Empire was interested in a low-cost, high efficiency strategy when it came to military campaigns and political infrastructure, he also writes that the

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38 Translated as “stage house” or “road station,” the Akkadian term Bītu Mardītu appears in Assyrian letters. According to the few letters with this term, a road station was meant to contain a postmaster, military recruits, additional families living at the site, horses, and perhaps caravans of merchants (SAA 01 177, 4; 19 194). Two letters mention multiple road stations (SAA 01 177, r5; 15 332, 8).
cause is that Assyria was “a world empire without a mission” but with an ideology of imperial expansion. However, it seems that the mission of Assyria is clear later on in his article when he states that “the principal goal was to draw raw materials, livestock, luxury objects, and manpower from all regions of the empire into Assyria” (Bagg 2013:10). The principal goal for a place like Megiddo on a strategic trade route was not to “draw raw materials” but instead to monitor trade, transport of booty, and people traveling throughout the empire. The minimal impact of Assyria in the archaeological record of Megiddo seems to be a matter of its function as a Transit Corridor rather than a reflection of an indifferent attitude by the Assyrians.

The creation of a depopulated Transit Corridor in Megiddo was a result of the military efforts most likely carried out by Assyria during the campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III. Several academic works have adopted an understanding of Assyrian warfare policy to be a “scorched earth” or annihilation strategy in which no town was spared from the horrors of the Assyrian military (Gal 1998; Cline 2000:85; Stern 20017; Faust 2011:263; Vego 2009:I:49). In this vein, a number of sites are listed as destroyed by Assyria with no concrete evidence of destruction, let alone that caused by Assyria. Sites that do indeed have evidence of destruction dating to the time of Assyrian expansion, such as Megiddo, Beth Shean, Qarnei Hattin, Kinneret, and Hazor, did not experience site-wide destruction, but rather destruction of key buildings or a breach in the fortification system. If these destructions were a product of Assyrian campaigns, it shows a much more focused violence than that purported in Assyrian texts and several academic works.

The destructions in the kingdom of Israel suggest that Assyria used a combination of strategies in order to cause the collapse. Assyria appears to have espoused a strategy of attrition

in which they took an entire decade, first wearing down the defense system of the kingdom by annexing its cities north of Samaria, like Megiddo and Hazor, then besieging the capital city of Samaria (Tooke 2000:10). As the capital of the kingdom, and seat of the throne, Samaria would be considered the “hub of all power” in the region (Vego 2009:II-34). Rather than staging a direct attack on the city, Assyria waited for their defenses to weaken before striking. They also could have used the tribute and booty they acquired from previous campaigns in the kingdom in order to finance the siege of Samaria, eliminating Sun Tzu's (2011:III.4) concern for the high cost of siege warfare.

The number of abandoned sites further supports the argument for an efficient Assyrian military strategy focused on destroying the political and defensive network of the Kingdom of Israel. Based on the location of the sites with destructions that some associate with Tiglath-pileser III, the destruction of sites that facilitated communication throughout the kingdom caused smaller satellite sites to wilt without the larger sites to protect them. The villages may have been especially keen to Assyrian intimidation reflected in the rhetoric of Assyrian texts (Porter 2003:81, 83; Hoskisson and Boswell 2004:73), forcing inhabitants to take refuge elsewhere, never to return to their homes. This proved to be the most efficient way to dismantle the Kingdom of Israel and disconnect the capital of Samaria from the north and the coast. The Assyrian texts that record the campaigns also display a strategy in only referring to Samaria as a city rather than a region and rarely mentioning other cities in texts. They were primarily concerned with the capital city and its royal family. Very few cities have evidence of Assyrian destruction in the region, and the texts focus on the eventual demise of the capital and urban hub of the kingdom of Israel. The conquest of Samaria would topple the regional infrastructure, allowing Assyria to take possession of the entire land of Bit Humri.
The destructions dating to the time of Tiglath-pileser III’s campaigns support a concept of either a network of destruction, or indicate that the Israelites had a network of defense within its territorial state. Both biblical and Assyrian texts prior to and during the destruction of the northern half of the northern kingdom suggest that Assyria considered Israel to be a territorial state. If the destructions can be attributed to Tiglath-pileser III, Assyria engaged in strategic warfare, focusing on larger cities in settlements and only partially destroying these cities in order to subdue the local population. Over half of the villages surrounding the destroyed sites were abandoned, resulting in a reduced population in the region. This abandonment was probably a result of the residents fleeing the region as refugees as well as those who took refuge in the fortified towns that were conquered by the Assyrians, who in turn would deport them to other regions in the empire. If on the other hand Assyria was not responsible for all destructions detected in the region from this time, they still used local warfare to their advantage. No evidence of destruction explicitly confirms Assyria as the attacker; however, whether or not Assyria was responsible for all the attacks to which they are attributed, they still took advantage of the situation to create a secure frontier territory. Future campaigns in the region were provided with an obstacle-free path through northern Palestine to save their energy and supplies on southern Palestine and Egypt.

9. Conclusion

This chapter argues that Assyrian strategy in both warfare and politics is evident, if subtle, in the landscape and archaeological record of northern Palestine. Though texts are not clear concerning the specifics of warfare at and around Megiddo, the archaeological record shows an operation that focused on fortified sites along main highways. As a result, the local political infrastructure crumbled and much of the population diminished. Assyria replaced the once-thriving and
agriculturally rich region with four fortified outposts along the main route, but did not settle a substantial number of people, if any, in the region from other locations. Megiddo and the surrounding region then functioned as a Transit Corridor within the official Assyrian provincial system to monitor the transport of booty and goods to the Assyrian heartland.
Chapter 3. Assyrian Strategy: The Province of *Asdudu* and the Problem of Ekron

1. Introduction

The region of Philistia provides a context in which to study Assyrian military expansion via a frontier composed largely of the coastal highway and ports connecting the Levant to the Mediterranean and Egypt. The details of the archaeological record indicate a strategic conquest and occupation on the part of Assyria, rather than a wholesale destruction of the region followed by political and economic development as some have argued previously. Assyrian destruction is attributed to several sites, but without sufficient evidence (Na’aman 1991:49; Stern 2001:9). A closer look at the data reveals a more muted violence in the region that consequently resulted in settlement shifts and depopulation. The archaeological record also does not support Assyrian economic development in this region. The only evidence of such is the presence of an olive oil industrial center at Tel Miqne (Ekron) that excavators credit to Assyrian occupation (Gitin 1995:69; Dothan and Gitin 2012); however, others have argued that it was a local or Phoenician investment instead of Assyrian, or that it was developed following the collapse of Assyria (Schloen 2001:147; Faust 2011:73; Stager, et al., 2011:10, 740). Additionally, the archaeological record does not support substantial political reconfiguration of the region into an Assyrian province. The city of Ashdod (*Asdudu*) is recorded as having an Assyrian governor (SAA 2 669),

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40 See 6.1 Destructions Linked to Assyrian Campaigns in this chapter.
but the lack of Mesopotamian material culture in the region provides no indication of a strict Assyrian political network. The lack of identifiable Assyrian destructions or construction, the sparse Mesopotamian-style architecture, and the slightly diminished settlement suggests that Philistia functioned as a Transit Corridor to monitor trade but more importantly to deter Egypt from encroaching on its newly acquired territories.

2. Location

The Mediterranean Coast in southern Palestine, often referred to as Philistia, is a region located along natural harbors and international routes to Egypt, Arabia and Mesopotamia. The coastal highway cuts through Philistia, connecting the major hubs of Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza (Dorsey 1991:64-67). The fertile soil and climate also allowed it to sustain a local population successfully that could participate in and monitor the trade efforts (Aharoni 1979:25-26; Dorsey 1991:64). Harbors at Jaffa, Gaza, and Ashkelon connected the southern Levant to the entire Mediterranean world, linking trade across the Arabian Desert and the Negev to an international market (Dorsey 1991:61-67). In the previous millennium, Egypt proved to be the most frequent visitor both by land and by sea, creating a strong connection between itself and Philistia economically and politically. Though Egypt maintained interest in Philistia during the entirety of the Iron Age, the Assyrian Empire also recognized the benefits of Philistia’s location and sought to annex it as described in Assyrian and Biblical texts.

4. Boundaries

More than one line of thought exists regarding the political boundaries and provinces of Philistia based on the extent of autonomy of the Philistine cities (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). A range of opinions is apparent in the discussion of the extent of control Assyria exhibited in the region and
the variation of control over individual cities. The archaeological record can perhaps provide insight as to whether or not Assyria treated each city individually, or whether they were all under the jurisdiction of Ashdod. Those scholars who map out the Assyrian provinces base their conclusions on the political makeup of Philistia from textual evidence in Assyrian documents and the Hebrew Bible.

Radner, following Wolff, suggests a map of the southern Levantine Assyrian provinces in which Ashdod encompasses the entire coastal region of southern Palestine, with a rather low level of autonomy or individuality to the cities granted by the Assyrians (Figure 7). Radner (2006:60) argues that since Ashdod is the only province listed in Assyrian texts, then it must be the only city truly under Assyrian jurisdiction. The map shows that the northern boundary is the province of Megiddo, which covers the northern coast of Palestine, the eastern boundary meets the province of Samaria to the north and the territory of Judah to the south, the southern boundary reaches the outskirts of Ashkelon’s territories, and the western boundary is the Mediterranean Sea. It is not clear why the southern boundary is limited to Ashkelon, and perhaps the other city states answered in some way to the Assyrian governor in Ashdod. Indeed it appears that Radner places Ekron within the Assyrian province of Ashdod, suggesting that Assyria consolidated the former northern Philistine city states (Radner 2006).

Otzen, on the other hand, is more liberal with his boundary demarcations for provinces in the southern Levant, giving Philistine cities individual control over their surrounding territories (Figure 2). In his continuum of Assyrian control from vassal to puppet state to province, he assigns a level of control to each Philistine city and surrounding territory (Otzen 1979). Ekron, the northernmost of the four, is labeled as a “vassal.” Its southern neighbor Ashdod transitioned from vassal, to puppet state, and finally to province. Ashkelon and Gaza south of Ekron
remained puppet states according to Otzen. This is in line with Na’aman (2004:60), who points out that he considers the wadis to be “clear” boundaries between the coastal Philistine city states of Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Gaza. Stern (2001:104) agrees with these boundaries stating that “the country was divided among four semiautonomous political units” including Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath. Stern (2001:104) also speculates that the kingdom was bordered on the east by the Judean foothills and the south by the el-Arish River, which he suggests is the river mentioned in Tiglath-pileser III’s campaign to the region. This configuration, with its minor variations, still places Ashdod as the city and region under the highest Assyrian control, suggesting again that perhaps Ekron, Ashkelon, Gaza, and even Jerusalem answered in some way to Ashdod (Otzen 1979).

3. Texts Relating to Philistia

Over twenty Akkadian texts list Philistia or a town in Philistia, and most not only describe a military campaign but also political action taken (see Table 3). Early on, texts from the reign of Adad Nirari III reference military campaigns to the land of Palastu, sometimes accompanied with the lands of Humri, and Edom. All three place names are preceded by the determinative KUR meaning “land” or “country” (Schrader 1889:35/1.12; Unger 1916:10.12; ANET 274).41

The number of southern Levantine place names listed in Assyrian texts increases during the next century of Assyrian expansion. This increase in geo-political knowledge is showcased in texts during the times of Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II and Sennacherib where Palastu and Humri are

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41 Though the texts record that Philistia gave an annual tribute to the Assyrian king, Ehrlich believes that this is most likely an exaggeration because the texts do not give any sense that Philistia was a vassal at this point, nor had campaigns reached the region. Instead, this would have been a one-time tribute based on Assyria’s encounter with Philistines in the northern Levant (Ehrlich 1996:79-89). Ehrlich’s suspicion that Assyrian texts exaggerate their interactions with Philistia during this time coincides with the idea that Philistia was a generic term used for the coastal region in the southwestern Levant.
now accompanied by Yehuda located in the Cisjordan, and Ammon and Moab join Edom as regions in the Transjordan. The shift from only using the term Palastu to detailing cities within Palastu suggests that either Assyria was only concerned with a few regions in the beginning of its campaigning to the southern Levant, or Assyria used generic or encompassing regional terms at first, then when they became more interested in annexing a region, they were more inclined to understand its regional complexities. The latter seems more probable based on the changes in the archaeological record during the late 8th and early 7th centuries BCE.

Texts mentioning Philistia from the late 8th and early 7th centuries provide evidence that Assyria indeed understood the specific location and political makeup of the area, which lent to its successful annexation of the region. These texts display a knowledge of capitals of regions versus independent cities along the coast (e.g., Rost 1893:72.11, 38.235; Winckler 1889:188.29; Grayson and Novotny 2014:192-193). The first instance of a city or region mentioned in Philistia from the Assyrian Empire occurs during the time of Tiglath-pileser III when we find that some cities are apparently already under the hegemonic rule of the Assyrians. The texts from Sargon II that use the term Palastu, seem to do so as a region that encompasses several independent

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42 Sennacherib’s reign has fewer accounts of Assyrian interactions with Palestine, though they maintain the same level of detail apparent in Sargon II’s accounts.

43 Kelle (2002:648;654) argues that this encompassing term also reflected a political situation in which southern Palestine answered to the southern Levant.

44 One text from Tiglath-pileser III’s 9th year of campaigns includes a situation where he confronted Mitini from Ashkelon who had apparently violated an oath previously made with Assyria (Rost 1893:72.11, 38.235, ANET 283). Another series of texts relays a similar story in which a ruler, Hanno, of Gaza flees to Egypt leaving Assyria to annex Gaza for itself (Rost 1893:72.12,78.8; ANET 283). The story is repeated with information about booty collected in an inscription from Nimrud (Wiseman 1951:23.14), and another broken text suggests that another ruler fled to Gaza and that a palace is located in Gaza (Wiseman 1956:126.13,14). Note that not only are regions and city states mentioned, but also specific names of rulers, further emphasizing both the military and political interaction between Assyria and Palestine. See Ehrlich for additional treatment of this passage (Ehrlich 1996:94-98).
The Annals of Sennacherib confirm the understanding of the political makeup of the region where it is understood that Ekron is an independent city, in contrast to Jerusalem which is very clearly the capital of the regional state of Judah (see Grayson and Novotny 2014:192-193). These texts focus specifically on the port cities and larger inland cities of Philistia such as Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod, though the Sennacherib prism lists Beth Davon, Joppa, Banai Barqa, and Azuru, as well. Neo-Assyrian texts are careful to mention the name of the rulers responsible for the Philistine city-states and regions, which is a feature absent from earlier texts describing the southern Levant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>King</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Place Name</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adad Nirari III Stone Slab (expedition to Palestine)</td>
<td>796 BCE</td>
<td>Adad Nirari III</td>
<td>Stele</td>
<td>KUR PA-LA-AS-TU2</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annals of Tiglath-pileser III year unknown</td>
<td>mid 8th c</td>
<td>Tiglath-pileser III</td>
<td>Annal</td>
<td>URI ḤA-AZ-ZA-AT-AJA; URI ḤA-AZ-ZU-TU</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nimrud fragmentary inscription</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tiglath-pileser III</td>
<td>Annal</td>
<td>URI ḤA-AZ-ZU-TU</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nimrud historical inscription</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tiglath-pileser III</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
<td>URI ḤA-AZ-ZA-TA-AJA</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter SAA01</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>KUR PI-LIS-TA-AJA</td>
<td>Tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get from library</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
<td>KUR PI-LIS-TE</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nimrud Administrative Tablets</td>
<td>Late 8th c</td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>KUR IS-QA-LU-NA-AJA</td>
<td>Rations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nimrud Administrative Tablets ?</td>
<td>Late 8th c</td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>KUR PI-(LIS-T)A-AJA</td>
<td>Rations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pave de Portes</td>
<td>late 8th c</td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
<td>URI AS-DU-DI; URI AS-DU-U2-DI</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annals of Sargon II year 1</td>
<td>late 8th c</td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Annal</td>
<td>Gaza</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One possible mention of Philistia is in a text describing rations (Parker 1961:57.1.21). Another fragmentary inscription lists Palestine with Judea, Edom, and Moab (Winckler and Abel 1889a), further suggesting that Palestine is an umbrella term. This term most likely encompasses several cities listed in other texts from the time of Sargon II that give clues to the political climate in the region. Sometime during Tiglath-pileser III’s reign, the rendering Palastu changes to Pilištu, and Sargon II continues this spelling suggesting an increased knowledge of pronunciation or spelling of the region they have recently annexed.

See discussion of this date in Ehrlich (1996:81-85), who gives reasoning for scholars to date this text anywhere from 805 BCE to 796 BCE.

Tadmor (1969:46-47) disagrees with Unger and suggests that if Palestine is mentioned, it should be rendered PA-LA-AS-TU, but Tadmor further argues that the cuneiform reads KUR ḤAT-TE instead, conforming to the early traditional name Assyrian use for the southwestern Levant.
<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Sargon Annals of Room XIV</td>
<td>late 8th c</td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Annal URU AS-DU-(U)-DI; URU ḫA-A-ZI-TI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annals of Sargon II year 2</td>
<td>late 8th c</td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Annal Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nimrud Letters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Letter UUR ḫA-ZA-TA-AJA; UUR AM-QAR-RU-NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annals of Sargon II year 11</td>
<td>late 8th c</td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Annal UUR AS-DU-DI, UUR ḫA-ZI-TI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display inscription of Sargon II</td>
<td>late 8th c</td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Annal UUR AS-DU-DI, UUR ḫA-ZI-TI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian Letter SAA 17082</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Letter UUR AS2-DU-DU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>late 8th c</td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Prism UUR AS-DU-DI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sargon Cylinder Inscription</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>Cylinder UUR ḫA-ZE-TE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bull Inscription</td>
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<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>UUR ḫA-ZI-TI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palace Halls Inscription</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>UUR AS-DU-DI-DA-AMA; (URU ḫA-ZI-TI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken text about Ashdod</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sargon II</td>
<td>UUR AS-DU-DI, KUR PI-LIS-TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annals of Sennacherib</td>
<td>694 BCE</td>
<td>Sennacherib</td>
<td>Inscription KUR PI-LIS-TE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriental Institute Prism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sennacherib</td>
<td>Annal UUR AS-DU-DU-DA-AMA; UUR ḫA-ZI-TI</td>
</tr>
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<td>Annals of Sennacherib</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sennacherib</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull Inscription</td>
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<td>Sennacherib</td>
<td>Annal UUR AS-DU-DU-DA-AMA; UUR ḫA-ZI-TI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Esarhaddon’s Treaty with Ba’al of Tyre</td>
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<td>Treaty KUR PI-LIS-TE</td>
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<td>Sungod Prayer</td>
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<td>Prayer UUR ḫA-ZI-TI</td>
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<td>Requests of Shamash</td>
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<td>Prayer UUR ḫA-ZI-TI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prism Nineveh A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hexagonal Prism Text</td>
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<td>Campaign KUR ḫA-ZI-TI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cylinder C</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ashurbanipal</td>
<td>Inscription KUR ḫA-ZI-TI, KUR ḫA-ZI-TI, KUR AM-QAR-RU-NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ashurbanipal</td>
<td>Seal KUR AN-QAR-U-NA-ΑJA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Place names in Assyrian annals referencing Philistia or a city in Philistia

The Assyrian political control described in the late 8th-century and early 7th-century texts provides key events at named cities that can be compared to the archaeological record at the

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48 Parpola et al. (1970) and Saggs (1955) dates here are primary, but see bibliography for works consulted.
respective site (Table 3 Table 6). From these texts we learn that Mitini King of Ashkelon makes a vow of loyalty to Tiglath-pileser III that he did not keep, leading to campaigns in the region (Rost 1893:72.11, 38:235; ANET 283). About three decades later, another Ashkelonite king also revokes his loyalty to Sennacherib, which also resulted in a campaign. 49 Texts from the time of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II list Gaza as an ally of Egypt, which also motivates the Assyrian military to attack Philistia (Rost 1893:72.12,78.8; ANET 283; Wiseman 1951:23.14; Wiseman 1956:126.13,14). 50 Sargon II states that the king of Ashdod did not pay tribute and was taken out of office and replaced by his brother in order to encourage loyalty to Assyria, who eventually instated an Assyrian governor according to an Eponym list decades later. 51 During the time of Sennacherib, The King of Ekron, though loyal to Assyria, was taken captive by the surrounding kings, a deed for which Assyria once again campaigned into the region. 52 Finally, a “Battle of

49 During the time of Sargon II, Ashkelon is mentioned along with horses in an administrative text, though it is too fragmented to understand its relationship in the text (Parker 1961:23.42.ND.2672.6). It is listed with the determinative KUR as well, suggesting it is a regional territory rather than just a city. Later, the Annals of Sennacherib give some insight into the political hierarchy along the coast at the time. Ashkelon was apparently an overlord to four cities listed by the annals: Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Banai-Barqa, and Azuru. Mitini, the ruler of Ashdod, submitted to Sennacherib with tribute (Grayson and Novotny 2014:192-193.ii:65-57).

50 A letter suggests tension between the Assyrian overlord and local Assyrian rulers (SAA 01). In the letter, the determinative KUR (land) is used for Gaza instead of other texts that use URU (city), marking a different relationship in correspondence than in annalistic records. Letters to Sargon also discuss horses taken as booty from Gaza along with Egypt, Judah, and Moab. This text also mentions Ekron in an unknown context (Saggs 1955:134.35.40.42). The Cylinder inscription boasts that Sargon brought Hanno of Gaza as a prisoner to Assyria (Lyon 1883:3.19; Luckenbill 1968.61).

51 Sargon II’s inscriptions specifically mention the disloyalty of Azuri King of Ashdod, he did not bring tribute and also conspired with the kings in southern Palestine. According to several inscriptions, Sennacherib abolishes Azur of Ashdod, replacing him with his brother Ahimiti. This younger ruler also succumbs to rebellion and causes Sargon II to march against his city in addition to Gath and Asdudimmu (Lie 1929:38.249-257). A display inscription and inscription from Sargon II’s Annals from the eleventh year of campaigns both also relay that Azuri, the king of Ashdod refused to pay Assyria tribute and connived with other local rulers to rebel against Assyria. Aziri was overthrown and replaced with Ahimit and Sargon records that he marched against Ashdod, Gath, and Asdudimmu (Winckler and Abel 1889a). The Palace Hall Inscription reiterates that Imani of Ashdod fled to Egypt and Assyria took over his kingdom and collected booty from Gaza (Weissbach 1918:178:11,17).

52 According to these texts, Sennacherib gives the formerly Judean territories to Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod (Grayson and Novotny 2014:192-193.ii-iii). Ashkelon’s leader, Sidqa, was taken back to Assyria because of his disobedience. The ruler of Ekron who was bound by oath to Assyria was overthrown by the local administration who were punished to death by Assyria, then Padi of Ekron received more land conquered by Assyria (Grayson and Novotny...
Eltekah” describes an open-field battle that took place during the time of Assyria, suggesting that one might find more evidence of abandonment than violent destruction of cities and towns (Luckenbill 1968:311).

While Assyrian texts do describe military campaigns and political changes in Philistia, they are rather silent on economic endeavors in the region. The texts say nothing of developing industry or trade in Ekron, nor any other town in Philistia. Ekron is mentioned fewer times than Ashdod, Gaza and Ashkelon (Table 4), and these texts have to do with campaigns and tribute rather than olive oil. No other economic pursuit, whether it be the institution of an industrial center or facilitation of a trade network, is evident in the texts.

Assyrian texts mentioning Philistia toward the end of the fall of the empire are fewer and less violent in nature than under the previous kings, focusing on political and economic responsibilities of the vassals. Esarhaddon enlists Silbel king of Gaza, Mitini King of Ashkelon, Ikausu king of Ekron, and Ahi Milki King of Ashdod along with the kings of Moab, Tyre, Judah (Manasseh), Edom, Byblos and Arvad to send lumber, paving stones and other building materials to Assyria (Frame 2011: I.V.54ff.; cf., 5.vi). The treaty between Esarhaddon and Tyre stipulates that if a shipwrecked boat from Tyre is located off the coast of Philistia, then it becomes property of the Assyrian king. At this point, Philistia was equated with a place on the borders of an Assyrian territory (SAA 2 005). During the time of Ashurbanipal, a list of kings from Cylinder C includes the kings of Ekron, Ashkelon, Gaza, along with the kings of Judah, Byblos, Edom, Moab, Byblos, Arwad, Arbail, etc. (Streck 1916:140.28.29.35; ANET 194). Finally, an Assyrian

2014:192-194). The political upheaval in the southern Levantine coast due to Assyrian campaigns and hegemony lead to fewer references in the annals of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.

53 Though it appears that Esarhaddon’s reign led to a more peaceful southern Levantine coast, some issues erupted with Ashkelon. An Assyrian prayer to the sun god includes a reference to Ashkelon and Egypt (Knudtzon 1893:70.R4,5), and another broken text mentioning Ashkelon has to do with campaign (Frame 2011:31).
stamp seal lists Ekron as bringing tribute to Ashurbanipal (Millard 1965:16).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Known texts</th>
<th>Adad Nirari</th>
<th>Tiglath-pileser III</th>
<th>Shalmaneser</th>
<th>Sargon II</th>
<th>Sennacherib</th>
<th>Esarhaddon</th>
<th>Ashurbanipal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>2?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashdod</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaza</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashkelon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekron</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Cities and Regions mentioned in Assyrian texts by quantity

Despite a plethora of information regarding the rebellions and tributes of kings of the small city-states, only one text lists Ašdudu as a province in Philistia (SAA 2 002). This text solidifies Ashdod’s status as fully incorporated into the political framework of the Assyrian Empire during the 7th century BCE. Still, the first occurrences of Ashdod in Neo-Assyrian texts dated to the time of Sargon II provide a background for Ashdod’s eventual incorporation into the provincial system. 54 Sargon overthrew the authority of Azuri, ruler of Ashdod, and replaced him with his Assyrian-loyal brother. Sargon II “reorganized these cities” and replaced local authority with an Assyrian governor, making them “Assyrian citizens” (Lie 1929:38.249-257). Also, a letter from the time of Sargon II describes locals being deported from Ashdod to another location (SAA 17 802). The events listed in these texts that describe the relationship between Ashdod and

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54 In the Pave des Portes inscription, Ashdod is mentioned as a city conquered by Sargon II along with the lands of Samaria and Bit Humri. It is mentioned as the only city in Philistia (Winckler and Abel 1889b), perhaps foreshadowing its status as the only provincial capital in the region.
Assyria from the late 8th century illustrate the path from independent city to provincial capital by the mid-6th century.

Though Assyrian texts do not provide the outlines or territory under Ashdod’s jurisdiction, one text from the time of Esarhaddon provides some clues. A treaty that specifies the relationship between Tyre and Philista suggests some “territory” of the Assyrian Empire (SAA 2 005). This treaty suggests that the King of Tyre is granted some jurisdiction by Esarhaddon to manage its Assyrian territories including the “entire district of the Philistines” (SAA 2 005). It is not clear what Philistia entails exactly, but it suggests that either 1) Ashdod is not yet a Province, 2) Ashdod is not part of Philistia or Ashdod is within the boundaries of the region that Assyrians refer to as Philistia, 3) Philistia is also not considered a Province but has a different political relationship with Assyria than the relationship outlined between Assyria and Tyre, or 4) Assyria chose not to list the several ports available in Philistia, but instead used the land term to encompass the entire region. Further, Esarhaddon’s specification of a boat off the coast of Philistia specifically suggests a notable economic connection between the northern and southern Levantine coasts.

Biblical texts tend to mention the term Philistia in poetry rather than prose. The Song of Moses and Miriam proclaims Philistia as a region subdued by the Israelites (Exodus 15). Psalms 60, 83, 87, and 108, prophesy doom on Philistia along with Moab, Edom, Ammon, and Tyre. Joel 3 and Isaiah 14 also proclaim divine wrath on the region of Philistia. Finally, Philistia is mentioned in Zecheriah 9 as a term that encompasses the cities of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Gaza and the destruction that will come upon them. The combination of the cities and the region display the knowledge that the writers had of the geo-political situation of their coastal neighbors.
5. Brief History of Scholarship

Discussion concerning the impact of Assyrian involvement in Philistia centers on a few main issues that require further consideration. While an assessment of the destructions in the region serves as a guide to Assyria’s military strategy, interpretations of the olive oil industry discovered at Ekron perhaps provide insight into Assyria’s economic impact. In addition, the nature of Assyria’s political control in the region is highlighted by interpretations of the provincial capital of Ashdod and the settlement pattern following Assyrian campaigns. A lack of consensus exists on these three topics that muddles the understanding of the military, economic and political impact of Assyrian expansion on Philistia.

Like Megiddo, several works assert that Assyria destroyed the region, but these claims often require further investigation. Sites in Philistia such as Ashdod, Ashdod Yam, Ekron, Tel Hamid, Tell el-Hesi, Horvat Huga, Tel Mor, Rishon le-Ziyyon, and Qudadi are all said to have evidence of destruction attributed to Assyrian campaigns (Stern 2001:9; Dothan 1971:38, 92; Kogan-Zehavi 1993:1074; Gitin 1989:26; Wolff and Shavit 1993:1763; Fantalkin and Tal 2009:200). Based on these and other claims, Na’aman (1991:49) writes that “most of the Shephelah towns were razed” by Assyrian campaigns led by Sennacherib. Stern (2001:9) lists “Rishon le Zion, Tel Mor, Ashdod, Ashdod-Yam, Tell el-Hesi, Horvat Huga” as places “where Assyrian conquest is reflected,” though other works show that these sites do not have evidence of destruction (see Dothan 1971; Fargo 1993). The evidence, date, and perpetrators of the destructions require further analysis in order to confirm Assyria’s military impact on the region.

A rather prominent issue related to Assyria’s impact on the economic landscape following Assyrian campaigns is the date and developer of the olive oil industry at Ekron. Analyses of Assyria’s impact on Philistia strongly factor in Ekron Stratum IC, which the
excavators claim was a thriving town with a large olive oil industry with over 200 presses during the time of Assyrian control (Gitin 1995:69; Eitam 1996; Stern 2001; Dothan and Gitin 2012).

The excavators date Stratum IC to “the first three quarters of the 7th century” and Stratum IB to the “fourth quarter of the 7th century” because the ceramic assemblage associated with the olive oil presses and the destruction are congruent with the Iron IIC southern Levantine corpus. They also attach these dates to the Ekron strata because the most monumental event within that period was the rise and fall of the Assyrian Empire, concluding that the oil industry boom must have come into fruition during Assyrian control and faded along with the Assyrian Empire (Dothan and Gitin 2012:3, 8). In other words, scholars such as Dothan and Gitin argue that Ekron could not have initiated and sustained the olive oil industry without Assyrian involvement.

The lack of Assyrian material culture associated with Ekron Stratum IC has left some to question whether or not the olive oil industry boom was a result of the Assyrians, or even took place during the time of Assyrian expansion (e.g., Master 2003; Faust 2011:470; Stager, et al. 2011). Faust does not seem to object to the date assigned to the industry in Ekron, but rather with the political entity assigned to the construction of the complex. Faust (2011:73) argues that it was the locals’ relationship with Phoenicia and the Mediterranean that fueled the industry in Ekron, and that “the Mesopotamian empires were not interested in economic development,” at least in the way of olive oil production. Master (2003) also argues for a lack of noticeable Assyrian involvement in Ekron or Ashkelon based on material culture remains from the sites, but his survey of the material culture does highlight a strong Phoenician influence. On the other hand,

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55 Faust (2011:70-71) suggests that it would be nonsensical for Assyria to begin trade in Philistia when it just as easily could have developed industry in the Galilee, which he refers to as “Assyria’s territory.” While Faust’s argument is helpful in considering the multitude of factors that must engage for a successful industry, his evidence does not support his argument cogently.
Schloen (2001) proposes that locals and refugees fleeing to the area from the north developed the olive oil presses. In Schloen's (2001:141-142,147) view, the presses reflect a local, household-based effort to meet the economic demands of the Assyrian Empire, resulting in a large-scale compound that may have arisen out of circumstances rather than as a grand city plan. While these scenarios put forth by Master, Faust, and Schloen are still based on Gitin’s chronology, they deviate from Gitin in that they negate direct order by the Assyrian Empire to construct a large industrial center in Assyrian territory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratum</th>
<th>Dothan and Gitin</th>
<th>Ussishkin (partly based on Na’aman)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Date (BCE)</td>
<td>Upper Mound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>8th C</td>
<td>Fortified settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>After 700</td>
<td>Unfortified settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>7th C</td>
<td>Fortified city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
<td>After 600</td>
<td>Unfortified settlement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 The Stratigraphy and Chronology of Ekron according to Dothan/Gitin and Ussishkin/Na’aman (after Ussishkin 2005:63)

Stager offers a more revolutionary approach to the olive oil presses at Ekron by arguing that they were not constructed under the Assyrian Empire, but under Egyptian influence after Assyria’s fall. Stager (1996) calls for a reevaluation of evidence from Ekron Stratum I when he found that the ceramic assemblage sealed by a Babylonian-period destruction dates “to the last half, if not the last quarter of the 7th century BCE,” as well as the lack of Assyrian-style material culture at the site (Stager, et al. 2011:10, 740). A reassignment of the date of Stratum I material at Ekron to the end of the 7th century would mean that the olive oil compound was constructed following Assyrian domination in the region, and the landscape of Philistia during Assyrian
control was much sparser than Gitin and others suggest. Naʾaman (2003:86) admits in his critique of Stager and support of dating Ekron to the Assyrian period that “we can do no more than give a general estimate of the economic strength, the scope of building operations, and the prosperity of Ekron in the first half of the seventh century.” This perhaps leaves room for the possibility of Stager’s interpretation. In a reaction to Stager’s proposal, James (2006:90, 93) offers that the olive oil presses date to the middle of the Assyrian period, and proposes his own stratigraphical scenario for Ekron that only changes Stager’s date of Ekron IB by 25 years (Table 6). While a lack of consensus exists regarding the date of Ekron IC, most scholarship accepts Gitin’s chronology (Barkay 1992; Stern 2001). A reevaluation of the Assyrian impact on Philistia that dates Ekron IC to a time toward the end of, or following Assyrian control, would reveal a political landscape that lacks a strong economic component, suggesting Philistia was more like a Transit Corridor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tel Miqne (Ekron) Strata</th>
<th>IIB</th>
<th>IIA</th>
<th>IC</th>
<th>IB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gitin</td>
<td>800-750 BCE</td>
<td>750-701 BCE</td>
<td>710-630/623 BCE</td>
<td>Early 6th C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stager</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>Second half of 7th C</td>
<td>Second half of 7th C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naʾaman</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>Late 8th- mid/late (?) 7th C</td>
<td>Mid/late (?) 7th C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Late 8th C</td>
<td>701-675/650 BCE</td>
<td>675/650-c.600 BCE</td>
<td>c. 600-c. 570 BCE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6 Various chronologies proposed for late Iron Age Ekron (after James 2006, table 1)*

56 Though Naʾaman (2003:86) commends Stager for questioning the strata at Ekron, he rejects Stager’s dating of the olive oil presses to post-Assyrian control, stating that he made the claim before the discovery of the Building Inscription of Akhayush, which Naʾaman believes is an indication of Assyrian involvement in the industry at Ekron. Gitin (2003) also replied to Stager, maintaining his stance that Ekron Stratum 1C should be dated to the early 7th century, but offers no additional evidence to support his claim.
Like Ekron, the status of Ashdod during Assyrian expansion is also a debated topic. The excavators date the Assyrian-style architecture present at the site to Assyrian expansion, based on the material culture and the text that confirms Ashdod’s provincial status (Dothan 1971). Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001:248, 249), on the other hand, argue that there was nothing more than a squatter occupation in the 7th century and suggest that 7th-century Ashdod was actually located at the site of Ashdod-Yam.57 Thareani (2016:91) agrees with this proposal, stating that “while it is clear that Ashdod-Yam was closely linked with, but secondary in status to, the city of Ashdod farther inland to the southeast, by the seventh century BCE the latter was abandoned and Ashdod-Yam took its place as the kingdom’s capital.” Ben-Shlomo (2003:97, 102) sees no reason to deny the 7th-century occupation in Ashdod and reminds that Ashdod Yam and Ashdod have always been considered different places. He cites that the similarities between 8th and 7th century pottery were what confused Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz into falsely claiming that Ashdod was not inhabited in the 7th century. The problems of Ashdod and Ekron require further examination of the surrounding political landscape in order to assess the material culture within its greater context.

Settlement surveys and site reports dedicated to the Late Iron Age inform studies on the last remnants of an autonomous Philistine coast, though their dating of a site is based on pottery sherds whether or not architecture can be associated with the pottery (Gophna and Beit-Arieh 1997; A. Berman, Stark, and Barad 2004; Dagan 1992; Fisher and Beit-Arieh 1994; Gophna and Ayalon 1998). These surveys typically rely on readings of pottery sherds from unexcavated and excavated sites and sherd scatters as well as site reports and smaller settlement surveys for a full

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57 They also propose that the population of Ashdod was moved by Sargon II to Ashdod Yam (Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2001:251), instead of the excavators’ conclusion that the town ended at the Babylonian conquest of 600 BCE (Ben-Shlomo 2003:95).
presentation of data. Several settlement surveys provide the data needed to assess smaller sites, though some of the pottery readings are not as precise as they are at larger sites. Shavit (2003; 2008) and Pierce’s (2015) compilations of survey material provide comprehensive studies covering the six river basins and records settlement patterns and settlement size over a 2,000 year span including the late Iron Age. Shavit and Pierce detect the changes that occurred in Philistia over the 8th and 7th century that made the late Iron Age unique compared to other time periods, though they must rely on dates provided by previous publishers for their conclusions, and information on ceramics is sometimes without accompanying architecture. Other reports also do well in compiling disparate data, such as those by Broshi and Finkelstein (1992:53), who provide an overall comparison of population and settlement size to other regions in the southern Levant. The valuable and insightful information presented in these surveys and synthetic works provide a basis for a reevaluation of Philistia under Assyrian control.

6. Survey of Architecture and Material Culture

Unlike the province of Megiddo where archaeologists claim to detect differences in the archaeological record before and after the 732 BCE invasion of Tiglath-pileser III, the Assyrian campaigns into the Philistine coast lasted over 3 decades resulting in a much more gradual and

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58 Several key site reports were consulted in the following survey. Ekron’s very informative site report and articles focusing on the newly organized city with an olive oil industrial zone during the 7th century (Gitin 1989). Ashdod’s site reports and articles interacting with the site report also provide a picture of Philistia during the 7th century BCE, but also of one of the debates concerning its excavation and interpretation of data (Dothan 1971; Dothan and Freedman 1967; Dothan, Ben-Shlomo, and Ariel 2005; Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2001; Ben-Shlomo 2003). Other reports also provide both a plethora of data on the site excavated as well as commentary on archaeology in Philistia. Most recently, Stager, et al. (2011) has offered data on 7th century Ashkelon as well as an interpretation of Ekron and the surrounding area in general. The site reports and their critics provide ample interpretations of data in Philistia.

59 Several settlement surveys conducted in this help to piece together information concerning Assyrian involvement in this region: Maps of Herzliyya, Kerfar Sava, Tel Aviv-Yafo, Petah Tikva, Rosh Ha-‘Ayin, Miqve Israel, Rishon le-Ziyyon, and Lod (Gophna and Ayalon 1998; Beit-Arieh and Ayalon 2012; Gophna 2015b; Gophna 2015a; Fisher and Beit-Arieh 1994; Barda 2013; Gophna and Beit-Arieh 1997).
cumulative change in the archaeological landscape than among its northern neighbors. The numerous inscriptions listed above detail the many campaigns and political interactions between Assyrians and those in Philistia. These campaigns are also reflected in the population shifts and changes over the decades, but excavations in the region yielded minimal detectable destruction layers that are dated to the time of Assyrian expansion.

6.1 Destrucions Linked to Assyrian Campaigns

Based on the minimal evidence of destruction in the archaeological record, the Assyrian military apparently practiced a more muted violence on Philistia than that exhibited in the northern Levant and northern Palestine. Indeed, very few sites in Philistia have yielded palpable evidence of destruction from the late-8th and early-7th centuries BCE, even at sites where archaeologists list evidence of destruction (Table 7). Ekron at the time was a fortified town of local construction assigned to Stratum IIA on the upper tell that “ended with the confrontation of Sennacherib” in 701 BCE, though no archaeological evidence suggests that intense siege warfare occurred at the site dating to this period (Gitin 1989:26; Gitin 1996:230-231). However, a relief from Sargon’s palace does depict a siege of Ekron (Amin 1943:37ff.), so it is not clear how this relief is connected to the lack of evidence at the site. Dothan and Stern both attribute a destruction at Tel Mor to Assyrian campaigns (Dothan 1993: 1074; Stern 2001:9). Barako (2007:33-34, 46, 52-53, 57, 60, 64-65), on the other hand, proves to be much more skeptical of the evidence in the Tel Mor site report, hesitantly dating Stratum II to Iron IIA period, but acknowledging later pottery sherds dating as late as the second half the 7th century BCE also present in this stratum. Though Barako (2007:34, 46) does acknowledge a destruction layer in Stratum II, the minimal architecture lacks association, and Stratum II “was so poorly stratified that the provision of parallel strata from neighboring sites would be misleading.” This discussion shows that the
perpetrator of Tel Mor’s Iron Age destruction could possibly be linked to Assyria, but too little evidence exists to support this notion fully. Excavations at Tel Hamid revealed walls with pottery dated to the late 8th-early 7th-centuries BCE but data are too sparse to assume it was destroyed or abandoned until the Persian period, though others claim Assyrian destruction (Wolff and Shavit 1999:69*; Wolff 1999:55*; Wolff and Shavit 1993:1763). Fantalkin and Tal (2009:194, 200) noticed a destruction noted by the excavators of Tel Qudadi that they suggest could be dated to the campaigns of Sargon II, but they admit “there is no shortage” of explanations for the construction or destruction of the fortress. Ashdod Yam is credited with being destroyed by the Assyrian army, but erosion of the site leaves little evidence of destruction (Kaplan 1969:137-143). Further, scholars seem to count Ashdod Yam as a site destroyed by Assyria based on Assyrian documents rather than archaeological finds (e.g., Kaplan 1969:147-149). Finally, Tell el-Hesi has an ash layer from Stratum VII, though it could be as late as the Persian period because the stratigraphy of the few buildings on the site that date to the Iron Age cannot be dissected clearly due to the invasive foundations of later levels (Toombs 1989:126, 149, 151, 152, 155). As illustrated above, the archaeological record is rather enigmatic in this region as to the extent of damage brought on by the Assyrian military, but texts suggest that Assyria was nevertheless involved in the region in a political capacity evident in marked settlement changes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Publication suggests Assyrian destruction</th>
<th>Strong evidence that Assyria destroyed the site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ekron</td>
<td>Gitin 1989</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Mor</td>
<td>Dothan 1993</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Hamid</td>
<td>Wolff and Shavit 1999</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Qudadi</td>
<td>Fantalkin and Tal 2009</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashdod Yam</td>
<td>Kaplan 1969</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell el-Hesi</td>
<td>Toombs 1989</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashdod</td>
<td>Dothan 1971</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7 Sites in Philistia thought to have been destroyed by Assyria*

Ashdod is one site that does indeed yield evidence of destruction with a corresponding mention of campaigning in the region from Assyrian annals. Dothan (1971: 38, 92, 205, 115) dates the fiery destruction of fortification walls and a pottery workshop in Ashdod areas A and D, combined with mass burials in Area D, to the military campaigns of Sargon II in 712 BCE. Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001) blame Sargon II as a perpetrator of Ashdod’s destruction, and Kogan-Zehavi (1993:1074) describes the areas of the casemate wall and fortress as considered to have been destroyed by Sargon II during the end of the 8th century BCE. Given the accompanying textual evidence, this site very well could have been destroyed by the Assyrian military.

6.2 Evidence of Settlement Changes during the Time of Assyrian Campaigns

Although evidence of destruction is sparse, changes in settlement are palpable in the archaeological record during the time of Assyrian expansion into the southern Levant. During the 8th Century BCE the region experienced a change in its political and economic landscape.

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60 Although Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz (2001) differ somewhat on the interpretation of Ashdod’s material culture, they also agree to a destruction level being attributed to Sargon II.
including an increase in population, newly founded cities, and enlarged capital cities (Dagan 1992; Berman et al. 2005; Berman, Stark, and Barda 2004; Fisher and Beit-Arieh 1994; Berman and Barda 2005; Shavit 2003; Shavit 2008). The Yarqon, Nahal Soreq, Lachish, and Nahal Besor basins all underwent an increase in number of sites, adding 10–20 additional villages to the landscape (Pierce 2015:183; Shavit 2008:144-153). Larger sites also increased in size and population during the 8th century, creating a more defined settlement hierarchy than in the previous centuries of the Iron Age. During the 8th century BCE, Tel Ashdod, Tell es-Safi/Gath, and Ashkelon were all enlarged with smaller satellite sites in the hinterlands (Dothan 1971:138,38; Shavit 2008:144). Several scholars attribute these changes to Assyrian expansion, including the 8th-century fortress at Ashdod Yam that some have argued may have been a response to the impending Assyrian invasion (Kaplan 1969:147), or that it was an Assyrian building project (Na’aman 2001:261). These increases in settlement during the 8th century are in contrast to the shrinking of sites and population during the 7th century.

6.3 Philistia in Assyrian Territory

Each subregion within Philistia experienced changes in varying degrees during the 7th century BCE. While settlement surveys focus on ceramic material to identify a site, some of these sites lack sufficient architectural remains to understand the full extent of the landscape during this time. However these data are still valuable in measuring the degree of change to the environment once Assyria annexed the region. In addition, sites that have ceramic material that is dated to both the Iron II and the Persian period show that a site was not abandoned during the time of Assyrian control. The presence of Iron II ceramics, presence or absence of corresponding architecture and continuity in ceramics from the Iron II to the Persian period are presented here,
beginning with the northernmost Coastal Plain and Shephelah and moving south through the other river basins.

6.3.1 Ashdod and Its Surroundings

Further south along the coast, Ashdod and the surrounding area were also impacted during the 8\textsuperscript{th} and 7\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Twenty-four sites are listed as having Iron II remains, though only three sites, Ashdod, Ashdod Yam, and Tel Mor, are more than sherd and/or stone scatters (Berman et al. 2005). Shavit (2008:147-8) uses the data from this region to conclude that Tel Ashdod was its largest at 28 ha (population 5,600), spilling over the lower tell into the region southwest of the tell, making it “unparalleled to the size of any other Philistine town in the Iron Age.”\footnote{Shavit’s (2003; 2008) exhaustive work serves as a guide to evaluate settlement patterns in Philistia during the 7\textsuperscript{th} century BCE. His conclusions will be presented and discussed in combination with site reports of the larger sites in each region, other settlement surveys and additional supplementary material. The goal in evaluating this material is to assess the changes in the archaeological record during the time of Assyrian control and if an Assyrian political policy is detectable in the region.}

Although 15 settlements are recorded, their combined population was only 60% compared to that of the city of Ashdod (Shavit 2008:148). During the 7\textsuperscript{th} century Tel Ashdod declined to only 7 ha of area, but its surrounding cities only decreased by 9% (Shavit 2008:148-149). Tel Ashdod did have an Assyrian-style building during the seventh century (discussed below). Ashdod Yam was a fortified site at the end of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century and continued well into the 7\textsuperscript{th} century. Newly built fortifications surrounded the city on the mound, comprised of sun-dried brick about 3.10 meters thick and supported by a glacis, rampart, and possible moat, dating to the 8\textsuperscript{th} century BCE (Kaplan 1969:138, 140, 142, 143-4). Pottery from the fortification at Ashdod Yam dates to the late 8\textsuperscript{th} century, post-Assyrian invasion, but one group of vessels could date as late as the end of the 7\textsuperscript{th} century BCE (Kaplan 1969:147).\footnote{Kaplan speculated that the local king Yamani was in charge of the fortifications, which were built in anticipation of Assyrian campaign to the city, but Fantalkin (2014:45) thinks that the fortifications were not built in a hurry.} Kaplan (1969:147) also believed that Ashdod Yam
was part of the Assyrian province of Ashdod, and Fantalkin (2014:54) agrees with this stating that Ashdod Yam was an Assyrian emporium. Tel Mor has architecture associated with some pottery from the 8th to 6th centuries BCE, but nothing substantial enough for further analysis (Barako 2007:34, 46). Only a few of these sites continued into the Persian period.

Of the 24 sites surrounding Ashdod listed as having Persian-period material culture, only eleven of these sites are a continuation from the previous period (Berman et al. 2005). Tel Mor and Ashdod are the only large sites from the late Iron Age that also continued to have artifacts dated to the Persian period (Dothan, Ben-Shlomo, and Ariel 2005; Barako 2007), while the other sites listed are sherd scatters and/or rock scatters (Berman et al. 2005). This also indicates continuity not only in the provincial capital but in some surrounding sites following Assyrian collapse.

6.3.2 Nahal Soreq and Ekron

To the east of Ashdod, lies the Nahal Soreq, somewhat included in Ashdod and the surrounding area, but also stretched to the Shephelah including the controversial town of Ekron. Shavit found that during the 7th century, Nahal Soreq continued to grow in settlement and population, with an estimated 8,200 people in the region, a 62% increase from the previous century. Shavit (2008:140) writes that a large part of this increase was due to the city of Ekron, who most likely housed half of the population in the Soreq Valley Basin. Unlike the settlement pattern prior to the 8th century, the Soreq Valley Basin showed signs of a settlement hierarchy, with Ekron being the largest city with surrounding satellite cities (Shavit 2008:141). However this estimate does not indicate during which part of the 7th century Ekron grew, whose population makes up about

63 See further discussion of “Assyrian” fortresses in chapter 4.
half of his estimate. Shavit seems to follow Gitin’s chronology, though Shavit (2008:141) himself notes the unusual growth of Ekron yet blames it on an “immature settlement” pattern. This reaction is similar to Stern’s, who accepts Gitin’s date of the olive oil presses in his treatment of Philistia, but does admit that their presence is unusual in its context. According to Broshi and Finkelstein (1992:53), the total number of inhabited hectares in Philistia to 144 including Gitin and Dothan’s estimate that Ekron was 25 hectares. Nonetheless, with the assumption that Ekron grew later in the 7th century BCE, a less-drastic increase in settlement is still detectable in the Nahal Soreq in the 7th century BCE with a less dramatic difference in individual site size between Ekron and the surrounding sites.

6.3.3 Area surrounding Tell es Safi/Gath

The area surrounding Tell es-Safi/Gath sits to the east and south of Ashdod, and illustrates further the changes in settlement during the 7th century BCE. In the eastern coastal plain and western Shephelah, the Upper Lachish Basin saw an increase of sites or a “settlement complex” around Tell es-Safi/Gath during the 8th century BCE amounting to 17 sites and an estimated population of 5,400 (Shavit 2008:144). It is possible that Tell es-Safi/Gath declined after a battle with Judahite king Uzziah (2 Chron 26:6) or that it “declined with the expansion of Judeah” (Shavit 2008:144). Maeir (2004) believes that the settlement increased at Ekron as it decreased at Tell es-Safi/Gath (see also Shavit 2008:145; Uziel and Maeir 2005). In the 7th century, Tell es-Safi/Gath declined to 4 ha with 16 satellite settlements, making the population in the Upper Lachish Basin estimated at around 4,000 people, a number much lower than in the settlements in the Soreq Valley (Shavit 2008:145). The agricultural husbandry in the Soreq Valley did not

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64 In Stern’s (2001:111-112) assessment of Assyrian domination in the region, he extensively includes Ekron Stratum IB, basing his facts on Gitin’s interpretation.
decline, and Shavit (2008:146) speculates that the olives for Ekron came from the Upper Lachish Basin. Excavations at 8th century Tell es-Safi/Gath show a substantially diminished site with no Assyrian activity evident on the tell (Maeir 2004:322. 325).

6.3.4 Ashkelon and Its surroundings

The southernmost region for this chapter encompasses the city of Ashkelon and its surroundings (Berman and Barda 2005; Berman, Stark, and Barda 2004). Within the maps of Nizzanim, the region in which Ashkelon is located, 26 sites had Iron Age remains, and seven of the sites were accompanied with some architecture (Berman and Barda 2005). Tel Kursun, Nahal Evta, Kh. Bezza, and Kh. Hass all have some architectural elements and Iron II pottery continuing into the Persian period, while Tel Poran has some building elements associated with the Iron Age II continuing into the Persian period (Berman and Barda 2005, sites no. 42, 67, 140, 142, 110).

Within the map of Ziqim, 40 Iron Age II sites are present, but only four of the sites, Saknat Muhammad Mahmud, Tell esh Shuqaf, Nahal Shiqma, Holot Karmiyya, have architecture that could be associated with Iron II and into the Persian period based on the presence of pottery representing both time periods (Berman, Stark, and Barda 2004b).

Based on this information, Shavit (2008:150) concludes that during the 7th century, Tel Ashkelon and the Shiqma Basin changed little except that the surrounding villages “seems more consolidated than the 8th century.” Shavit suggests that Ashkelon relied on its port during the 8th and 7th centuries based on the fact that the settlements surrounding Ashkelon were not large and it had “almost no rural hinterland” (Shavit 2008:151). Ashkelon during this time was the largest

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65 Tell Es-Safi/Gath was not an important city in the 8th century and was perhaps under control of Judah in the late 7th century (Uziel and Maeir 2005:64-65).

66 This survey also includes Ashdod (Berman and Barda 2005, Site no. 24).
town in the region, with fortifications and a winery during the time of Assyrian invasion and hegemony. Though the town was thriving during the 7th century, the architecture and material culture at Ashkelon are local to the Levant (Master 2003:52). Other smaller sites maintain continuity from the 8th century BCE. For example, Tell el-Hesi had residential structures dated to the eighth to sixth centuries BCE (Strata VII-b and VII-a) with no noticeable destruction or abandonment (Fargo 1993:633). Nagila also yielded pottery vessels dating to the first half of the 7th century BCE in a building originally constructed earlier during the Iron Age (Amiran and Eitan 1993:1081).

6.3.5 Northern Coastal Plain and Northern Shephelah

Even though a debate exists as to whether or not the northern Coastal Plain and northern Shephelah would have been under the jurisdiction of Ashdod, it is included here for a broader picture of the geopolitical situation. The location of this region could have been part of Dor, Ashdod, Samaria, Megiddo, or Judah. Despite its ambiguous connections, it is still important to note its changes during the late 8th and 7th centuries.67 Pierce (2015:124) compiles data from these maps to find that in these sub-regions, 124 sites “appear to be founded during this period,” though only three walled sites and fifteen unwalled sites can be securely dated to the Iron III.68 Ceramic dating reveals that only four Iron Age II sites, Jaffa, Azor, Lod, and Tel Hadid, continued occupation into the 7th century BCE (Pierce 2015:184-185, 187). However the dating

67 The eastern portion of this territory was also associated with the Kingdom of Israel. Hadid and Lod are specifically mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as a territory of Israel or in the outskirts of Judah (Ezra 2:33, Nehemiah 11:34). However, this region is still important to the study of Philistia to determine whether or not a visible political boundary occurs during Assyrian occupation, and to which region they belong.

68 His compilations are based on information from several settlement surveys: Maps of Herzliyya, Kerfar Sava, Tel Aviv-Yafo, Petah Tikva, Rosh Ha-‘Ayn, Miqve Israel, Rishon le-Ziyyon, and Lod (Gophna and Ayalon 1998; Beit-Arie and Ayalon 2012; Gophna 2015b; Gophna 2015a; Fisher and Beit-Arie 1994; Barda 2013; Gophna and Beit-Arie 1997).
of Azor and Lod rely more on pottery sherds than the minimal associated architecture (van den Brink 1999; Shmueli 2000; Dagot 2002; Arbel 2004; van den Brink 2005). In addition, only several pottery sherds dating to the 8\textsuperscript{th} to 6\textsuperscript{th} centuries BCE have been identified both on and off the tell at Jaffa that have not accompanied architectural remains. Though architecture remains sparse, Jaffa was most likely an unfortified town with pottery of local, Phoenician, and northern Israelite style (Pierce 2015:186; 273-275).

Hadid, sitting on a hill in the easternmost part of the Shephelah, is one site that provides more helpful information for this time period. Not only did this site have two large buildings, cultic objects, and pottery from the late Iron Age, but also two clay tablets inscribed with Assyrian contracts in the terrace of the tell, suggesting occupation during the time of Assyrian political control (Na’aman and Zadok 2000; Torge 2010). At Tel Hadid, two cuneiform clay tablets are dated by the surrounding pottery to the second half of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century, but based on the Assyrian kings mentioned in the tablets, they are dated to the beginning of the 7\textsuperscript{th} century BCE (Na’aman and Zadok 2000:178,182). Na’aman and Zadok (2000:179 ff.) attribute the tablets to deportees from Mesopotamia (possibly Babylon) because the tablets are written in Akkadian, a language used mostly by those in Mesopotamia, and because of the east-Semitic names in the contract. These tablets perhaps provide information about the relationship between Assyrian officials and locals living in the newly configured space.
Two fortified sites were present along the coast in the north with substantial data from the 7th century. First, Tel Qudadi, a fortress erected of finely hewn kurkar stones and mudbrick walls, dates to sometime during the second half of the 8th century with a second phase including a casemate wall dating to the first half of the 7th century BCE (Figure 17; Fantalkin and Tal 2009:190,194,199). Second, Rishon le-Ziyyon was a fortified site with material culture dated to the 7th century BCE, leading some to suggest that it was also an Assyrian fortress based on its courtyard-style architecture, though this cannot be confirmed (Figure 18; Levi and Pielstocker 1993:2020-2022). Seven other fortified sites also were present in the region. None of the sites exhibit Mesopotamian architectural style or claims Assyrian artifacts that would support that Assyria indeed constructed and/or controlled them.

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69 Fantalkin and Tal (2009:193,197) disagree with the dating of the site from previous excavators, and instead believe that based on the ceramic assemblage, the site is from the time of Assyrian occupation.
Several unfortified sites also dotted the northern Coastal Plain according to surveys, but the material at each site is minimal. Tel el-Hashash is recorded as having pottery that dates to the 9th to 8th centuries and during the Persian period, but no indication of 7th-century remains (Tal and Taxel 2010:96). Qasile Stratum VII is dated to the late Iron Age and contained refuse pits with pottery in them. Mazar (1980:58-59) believes that the pottery from Qasile possibly dates to the end of the 7th or beginning of the 6th centuries BCE, so it does not necessarily belong in a discussion of Assyrian expansion. Michal, a site that experienced an upsurge in population during the 8th century, was also apparently abandoned at the end of the 8th century (Herzog et al 1978:(29)127). Givatayim had some pottery that could be dated to the Iron Age II, though it is not clear that it definitely was occupied in the 7th century (Gophna 2015a). A “farmstead” at Gan Soreq (Southwest) yielded architecture remains and pottery that can be dated to the final years in the Iron Age (‘Ad 2008). Some material culture at Tel Ya’oz dates to the Iron II, and
may display a presence in the town that percur ses the large Persian town that would later take its place (Fischer, Roll, and Tal 2008:128, 133, 134).

In this northernmost region, ten sites dated to the Iron III continued into the Persian period, suggesting continued occupation through the Assyrian and Babylonian occupations. Khirbet el Bira, Tirat Yehuda, Khirbet el Bira North, Tel Qudadi, Qasile, Ya’oz, Jaffa, Rishon le-Ziyyon, Lod, and Gan Soreq, are all sites that have material culture and architecture that dates to both the 7th century and the Persian period (Gophna and Ayalon 1998; Beit-Arieh and Ayalon 2012; Gophna 2015b; Gophna 2015a; Kochavi and Beit-Arieh 1994; Barda 2013; Gophna and Beit-Arieh 1997; Fantalkin and Tal 2009:190; Maisler 1950:211; Fischer, Roll, and Tal 2008). This material from the late Iron Age to the Persian period shows continuity of some sites, allowing for a more robust view of Assyrian involvement and the ability of local towns to maintain continuity in settlement after the collapse of the Assyrian Empire.

6.4 Assyrian Architecture and Material Culture

The minimal evidence of Mesopotamian-style buildings in Philistia is in contrast to the number of distinct sites found in northern Palestine, and the Mesopotamian-style buildings also vary in date from the 8th to the 7th centuries. Salvage excavations at Ashdod revealed remains of an Assyrian-style palace measuring 7.5 acres and made with mudbrick construction located on the northwestern area of the tell in Stratum 7, and with modifications in Stratum 6 dating to the time of Sargon II (Kogan-Zehavi 1993:1573-1574). The complex had the typical courtyard construction adjoined with an elaborate bathhouse (Kogan-Zehavi 1993:1573). Since Ashdod Stratum 6 dates to the end of the 7th century, it is not clear how involved Assyria was at that
point and the renovations of the Stratum 7 courtyard building may belong to another entity of control. Corresponding to Ashdod is the site of Ashdod Ad-Halom, which may also exhibit Assyrian-type architecture, though not to the extent of Ashdod proper. This building had a square podium and an opening for a courtyard paved with gray mudbricks (Kogan-Zehavi 2005; Kogan-Zehavi 2006).

Other sites have been attributed to the building efforts of Assyrians after they annexed the region even though it has no affinities to Assyrian style. Based on its date and nature as a fortress, Fantalkin and Tal (2009:199) offer that the fortress at Qudadi was an integral part of the system of administrative centers, trade stations, and fortresses established on the coastal plain and inland in response to the needs of the Assyrian Empire. In addition, Nagila possessed a courtyard building dating to the 8th century BCE, though lack of distinctive Assyrian artifacts or texts mentioning the site make it unclear whether or not it is an Assyrian construction (Amiran and Eitan 1993:1081).

Figure 19 Imitation Assyrian palace ware from Tell el-Hesi (after Engstrom 2004:74)
Some artifacts in Philistia are directly from Assyria or influenced by Assyrian style. A petrographic analysis of Assyrianized vessels from Ashkelon concluded that all materials were local, suggesting an adoption of a style rather than imported goods (Master 2003:56; Stager, Schloen, and Master 2011:121). Some artifacts do seem to be from Assyria, such as a possible fragment of an Assyrian armor scale was found at Ashkelon (Stager, et al 2011:510). Though Tell el-Hesi was once a fortress, it declined to an unfortified settlement during the 8th century, but had a large number of sherds attributed to Assyrian style, all of which were made from materials near or around Tel Jemmeh (Figure 19; Engstrom 2004:68-70, 79). Hardin and Blakely propose on account of the large number of Assyrian palace ware in conjunction with the absence of lmlk jars that Tell el-Hesi “was a small governmental post” under the control of Assyria via Gaza, then is was destroyed during Sennacherib’s third campaign into the region (Blakely and Hardin 2002:56). The sparse Assyrian material culture in the region is in contrast to the local signature still apparent in the archaeological record during Assyrian political domination.

6.5 Local Material Culture

While few artifacts suggest direct Assyrian control, most of the material culture shows a region with sites economically intertwined with one another and the greater Levant. Even in a commercial city like Ashkelon, it possessed mostly local ceramics with no indication of importing items anywhere from the Assyrian Empire (Master 2003:56, 60). The petrography and style of Assyrian and Assyrianizing bowls, jugs and bottles from Ashkelon link the site to the fortresses in the Western Negev, specifically Tell Jemmeh and Tel Sera (Stager, Schloen, and Master 2011:121). Three stone four-horned incense altars were found in 7th-century Ashkelon stratigraphy. These altars share similarities with those found in Philistia, Judah, and Assyria.
Gitin suggests that the increase of these altars following Assyrian destructions in the north suggests an influx of refugees and deportees from the north and Judah into Philistia (Gitin 1996). Finally, the local signature of the architecture and the material culture suggests a population maintained the region with some Assyrian supervision.

6.6. Summary

Overall the regions surrounding Ashdod experienced a slight population decrease or stayed the same. The region around Ashdod experienced a population decrease and Ashdod, though an Assyrian capital, was smaller than it was in the 8th century. The Nahals Soreq only experienced growth in Ekron whereas the other sites around Ekron stayed the same or became smaller. The region around Tel es-Safi/Gath diminished in both number and size of sites and the once-large site of Tel es-Safi/Gath shrunk during the 7th century. The region around Ashkelon maintained a similar population to the 8th century and the site of Ashkelon exhibited a Phoenician, rather than Assyrian, signature in its material culture. In the northern Coastal Plain and northern Shephelah, though not necessarily under Ashdod’s political control, the majority of sites dated to this time are small villages or fortresses that sit along the northeastern Shephelah. Tel Hadid is one such site that is located in the northern Shephelah and also yielded cuneiform tablets attributed to deportees newly living in the area, most likely from Mesopotamia (Na’aman and Zadok 2000). Though Ashdod is listed as a capital, the land that is considered to be part of its province does not exhibit an overall change that would suggest an intense integration within the Assyrian empire.
### 6.7 Combined Data

**Table 8 Sites in Philistia with notations regarding Assyrian involvement in the region and their coordinates**

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Figure 20 Map of Philistia measuring Assyrian conquest

- 0- Stayed the same
- 1- Decline then abandoned
- 2- Decline with local MC only - no destruction
- 3- Decline with Assyrian MC - no destruction
- 4- Grew steadily with local MC only - no destruction
- 5- Grew steadily with Assyrian MC - no destruction
- A- Destruction then abandoned
- B- Destruction then decline with local architecture
- C- Destruction then decline with Assyrian architecture
- D- Destruction then settled local city
- E- Destruction then settled with Assyrianized city
7. Comparative Data

Since scholars are willing to identify Ashdod as a small province in the midst of territories that were not fully incorporated into the provincial system, one questions why this wouldn’t be the same throughout the empire. Parker (2003:526) observed the “discontiguous nature of imperial control” in which Assyrian provinces were separated by regions without large populations or Assyrian-style administrative centers. In southeastern Anatolia, “Assyrian authorities concentrated their efforts on a few major arteries that crossed this region and linked the Upper Tigris River region with the rest of the empire” but did not invest in the entire expanse of land (Parker 2003:553). In the case of the Levant, Assyrian authorities concentrated efforts on hubs along the Coastal Highway. Perhaps the Province of Megiddo only encompassed the Jezreel Valley surrounding the city, and the rest of the region was not considered part of a province, but rather just part of Assyrian territory. This idea would suggest a network of provinces controlling intermittent territories across the Assyrian Empire. The province of Ashdod may have only encompassed a small region, but allowed Assyria to exert influence across Philistia and into Judah.

The presence of local and Phoenician traditions in the region suggests that a diverse population was allowed to interact within the confines of Assyrian occupation. Three sites in the southern Levant exemplify sites with strong Phoenician influence in material culture and little to no evidence of Assyrian hegemony. In the north, Tel Dan experienced destruction followed by growth of a town with local or Phoenician-style material culture that sat along an inland route connecting the province of Magidu to Assyria’s northern territories (Biran and Shadur 1994:261). Ruqenish in the western Negev south of the Shephelah also yielded more affinities to Phoenician style than Assyrian (Biran 1974). This site also sat along a trade route in
the western Negev. Ashkelon, as Master points out, resembles a town under Phoenician control more than Assyrian control, serving as an important location for Phoenician interaction with the southern Levant (Master 2003). These sites all resemble Phoenician outposts in the midst of Assyrian control.

8. Analysis

Assyria’s impact on the region varies by drainage basin, which brings into question the exact area of the Province of Ashdod. According to Otzen (1979), Ashdod was a small province only along the Lachish Basin, sandwiched between the territorial city-states of Ekron and Ashkelon that never reached full Provincial status. On the other hand, Radner suggests that Ashdod encompassed its immediate region (the Lachish Basin) and reached north covering the Sorek, Ayalon, and Yarqon Basins. Both renderings leave Ashkelon and the Shiqma Basin and everything south out of an Assyrian province. The Province of Ashdod encompassed a small area regardless of whether or not it reached the Yarqon, allowing for a close look at its political structure. During the 8th century BCE Tel Ashdod’s size was “unparalleled to the size of any other Philistine town throughout the Iron Age” (Shavit 2008:148). This town has evidence of destruction dated to the time of Sargon II was followed by a severe reduction of the town size from 28 ha in the 8th century to 7 ha in the 7th century (Shavit 2008:148; Dothan and Freedman 1967). The 7th-century town had one of the few Assyrian-style courtyard buildings in the region and an Assyrian text confirms its status as a provincial capital.

The province of Ashdudu has the markers of a Transit Corridor Province with characteristics like that of Magidu. Ashdod has textual confirmation of provincial status with one Assyrian capital city (Ashdudu) along the major coastal trade route as well as proximity to the
coast. The large cities of Tell es-Safi/Gath and Ashdod, as well as the towns surrounding them, lost population. Ashdod Yam and Ashdod ad Halom, may have served as fortified sites controlled by Assyria to monitor traffic to and from Ashdod. If Ekron did experience a population boom during this time, the Nahal Soreq and sites in the Shephelah surrounding Ekron also experienced an increase in population. On the other hand, the Shiqma Basin and Ashkelon as well as the lower Lachish Basin and Ashdod experienced a population decrease. In other words, the coastal sites appear to have been thinned out but the population in the Shephelah remained. These characteristics lead some to label this region as a “buffer zone” between Assyrian territories and Egypt, but this dissertation argues that Philistia served a more complex role in the Assyrian Empire (Ehrlich 1996:98, Thareani 2016:95). Its links to the Phoenician coast and the inland coastal highway suggest its function as a Transit Corridor along the Mediterranean (Dorsey 1991; Master 2003).

Master and Faust argue for a stronger Phoenician influence in Philistia rather than evidence of Assyrian control (Master 2003; Faust 2011). However, others assume a strong economic connection between Assyria and Phoenicia based on several Assyrian texts spanning over a century (Oded 1974; Aubet 2001:46-49). Though material culture is scarce for detecting Assyrian activity along the coast, texts beginning with Tiglath-pileser III suggest that Assyria had strong influence on the economic and political life of several Phoenician cities (Oded 1974). This continued throughout Assyrian control with notable treaties between Tyre and Esarhaddon as well as blockades on trade (Aubet 2001:49-50). Oded argues that Assyrian texts mentioning Phoenicia show a considerable level of control of Assyria over Phoenicia and its economy, suggesting that a large number of Phoenician artifacts present at a site like Ashkelon does not
necessarily indicate local or Phoenician autonomy (Oded 1974:48). In light of Oded’s observations, Phoenicia would act as a proxy for Assyrian hegemony.

With the cluster of small sites along the Shephelah, and Tel Hadid being one of those sites with tablets attributed to deportees, the possibility exists that the westernmost edge of the Shephelah marks a boundary between the locals left in Philistia, perhaps demarcating the province of Ashdudu, and the deportees placed in Assyrian territories in the foothills. Tel Hadid reflects a different type of interaction in the Shephelah than in the Coastal Plain. Whereas the Shephelah served as a deposit for deportees, Assyria does not seem to encourage growth in the Coastal Plain, but prefers to maintain an uninterrupted pathway to the coast and Egypt with close monitoring by a couple forts. Tel Hadid would not be part of this Philistia dataset, as suggested by the Biblical passages that instead claims it was part of the territory of Israel or Judah (Ezra 2:33, Nehemiah 11:34), and not connected politically to Coastal Plain. This would also make sense because the cluster of sites along the Shephelah stands in contrast to the few sites, mostly placed along the coast and riverbeds, in the Coastal Plain.

With the Shephelah out of the equation, the northern Coastal Plain appears to have the characteristics of a transit corridor. Two fortifications, Qudadi and Rishon le-Ziyyon, guard the Mediterranean coast and just inland from the coast, and a few sites sit along the riverbeds traveling inland, such as Qasile, Tel el-Hashbash, and Azor, as well as some smaller sherd scatters (Fantalkin and Tal 2009; Levi and Pielstocker 1993; Mazar 1986; van den Brink 2005). A low population with the only habitation mostly concentrated around avenues of transport allows for Assyria to monitor commodities and people traveling to and from the coast as well as hostile neighbors such as Egypt. The lack of material culture related to Assyria in the fortresses does not necessarily negate Assyrian involvement; as argued in Chapter 4, the distance from the
Assyrian core and the transient nature of the Coastal Plain and western Negev allowed for locals, mercenaries, and refugees to take advantage of the newly created trade and travel network in order to further their economic interests as well as those of Assyria.

Ashdod and Ashkelon, the two larger cities along the Mediterranean coast in the central Coastal Plain, as well as their surrounding areas, also went through changes related to the political climate of the 8th and 7th centuries BCE. First, Ashkelon maintained its status as a strategic port, but its material culture had a more local and Phoenician signature (Master 2003; Stager, Schloen, and Master 2011). Based on its continued flourishing with a local population, this city could either be considered a mercenary post of the Assyrian Empire, linked to the Phoenician network. Or, Assyrian control could have been much more subtle, allowing Ashkelon to maintain economic relations throughout the Mediterranean while benefitting the empire. Thareani (2016:92, 93) suggests that this could be part of a “different control strategy” implemented by Sennacherib in which Ashdod was ruled by its royal family and Ashkelon was one of the “surrounding client kingdoms.” In these scenarios, Ashkelon is still seen as very much incorporated in the Assyrian Empire whether or not the material culture reflects the presence of Assyrian material culture.

In contrast to the apparent relative autonomy of Ashkelon, Ashdod (or Ashdod Yam) stood as a provincial capital in Philistia according to an Assyrian eponym list. This city has the strongest evidence of destruction by Assyrian military based on evidence of destruction datable to the time period as well as texts that confirm campaigns to the city (Dothan 1971). The city of Ashdod has the most evidence to assume its status as an Assyrian fortress with Assyrian administration monitoring the region. Perhaps this fortress oversaw the cities like Qudadi,
Ashkelon, and Rishon le-Ziyyon with more local signatures, though not enough data is available to confirm this notion.

The towns around Ashdod decreased slightly, showing that the severity of Ashdod’s size change did not result in a drastic emptying of the Lachish Basin (Shavit 2008:149). If the Province of Ashdod did indeed encompasses the eastern Lachish Basin, then Tell es-Safi/Gath was greatly reduced, but the settlements around Tell es-Safi/Gath saw only a minimal reduction (Shavit 2008:144-145; Uziel and Maeir 2005). Ekron, on the other hand, grew in size or at least maintained its size from the 8th century BCE, though no conclusion regarding the debate as to how to date Ekron IB has been reached.

If Stager’s (Stager 1996; Stager, et al. 2011) calculation of the date of Ekron Stratum I pottery is correct and Stratum Ib does indeed date to a time later than the Assyrian period, then those who negate Assyria from the installations in the first place still provide valid points. In support of an entity other than Assyria responsible for the olive oil industry in Ekron, Faust (2011) and Master (2003) have cited the lack of production centers following Assyrian expansion into their far territories especially those in the southern Levant. Their point that Assyria did little to develop Palestine would be supported by the redating of Ekron Stratum I finds. Indeed, Thareani (2016:93) observes that “it seems that Assyria was not interested in developing or restoring the infrastructures of the annexed territories along the coastal plain.” This dissertation has proposed that it is not a lack of Assyrian interest in developing the newly acquired territories as scholars have argued but a different type of interest in the land, one that facilitates trade and defense of newly acquired trade routes rather than increasing agricultural production.

While the lack of a large production center at Ekron fits with Assyrian involvement in the rest of Palestine, the proposal that Egypt was involved in facilitating a production center on the
Philistine coast would be congruent with other time periods of Egyptian expansion into the region. The winery at Aphek and the Egyptian administrative port at Jaffa, are remnants of a long history of Egyptian political and economic interest in Philistia. When the retreat of the Assyrians allowed Egypt to expand into the Levant again, the Late Bronze Age history of the region would suggest that Egypt would set up production centers. Furthermore, the close proximity of Egypt to Philistia could be likened to the close proximity of Assyria to the Jezirah, where increase in population and evidence of production is evident following Assyrian expansion. The distance between the Assyrian heartland and Philistia would have prohibited such a production facility with additional artifacts such as the silver hoards.

Several works have argued that the silver hoards found in Ekron Strata IC-B coincide with the advent of currency, but these works use the earlier Assyrian-period date proposed by Gitin (1996; 1995). Three silver hoards were found in Ekron, one consisted of 330 pieces and one that consisted of 64 pieces were from “two separate rooms in adjacent buildings” from the “Elite Zone” in Field IV. Another hoard consisting of 30 pieces was from the acropolis in the Upper City in Field I, and all sealed by a destruction level assigned by excavators to 603 BCE to Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign to Palestine (Golani and Sass 1998:57; Gitin 1989:46). These hoards “primarily consisted of broken or damaged silver jewelry” and also included “whole silver ingot and cut ingot pieces, or Hacksilber (Golani and Sass 1998:58). Golani and Sass (1998:60) conclude that the hoards are a form of currency based on the nature of the hoards and the lack of any evidence of a silversmith or jewelry shop that could have used the precious metal as scraps or jewelry replacement pieces. Though the silver pieces have a much stronger connection with Phoenician style than with Neo-Assyrian style, Golani and Sass
(1998:74-75) still argue that the reason is because Phoenician style was prevalent in the region and should not suggest a lack of Assyrian political control when the silver was collected.

Thompson (2003:69, 92) is of the opinion that, although the first official coinage is argued by scholars to be from 6th-century Lydia and Greece, Ekron offers a link between Greek currency and Hacksilber hoards of silver fragments found in the Ancient Near East beginning in the 11th century BCE. Based on Gitin’s assignment of the olive oil production center to the Assyrian period, Thompson suggests that the silver hoards reflect Assyria’s interest in metal for trade and raw metal for crafts. She uses the silver hoards at Ekron as evidence to suggest that European “Greeks became involved in the silver trade that had been developing in the Mediterranean in the early first millennium partly under the influence of Neo-Assyrians” (Thompson 2003:96). Na’aman (2003:86) cautions against accepting the date of the silver hoards assigned by the excavators, pointing out that the terminus ante quem is 603 BCE and it is not clear what time period each artifact in the hoards dates to. Because the date of the hoards could be as late as 603 BCE, the hoards still have an earlier date than the Greek currency. However, it would be Babylon, Egypt, and Phoenicia at the forefront of this innovation rather than Assyria.70

70 The silver hoards from Ekron, dated to the later half of the 7th century BCE were a result of a complicated trade relationship that Assyria had developed with Phoenicia. Using a world-systems approach, Allen (2005:5) argues that Assyria’s growth led to the demand for “items of status,” which in turn led to the expansion of Phoenician trade to acquire such goods. Assyria adapted to their new merchants in the west, adopting Aramaic as a lingua franca, using stamp seals instead of cylinder seals, among other things (Allen 2002:5). Assyria’s tumultuous relationships with Egypt, Babylon, and the Levant had left the military spent. The reconquest of territories with little booty to supply the core and the tax exemption granted to some imperial territories left the Assyrians in a bind, unable to fund the core in ways that were previously beneficial (Allen 2002:6). Assyria had to develop different types of control, such as manipulating trade and elites, to deal with the Levant because of their ties with Egypt and their far distance from the Assyrian core (Allen 2002:6-7). But the Assyrians controlled the avenues in which they traveled within the empire, rather than the goods themselves and their transportation to the territories (Allen 2002:7). They did not want the traded goods, but the currency of silver, gold and copper (Allen 2002:9). These ideas spurred the advent of silver exchange that would become the norm a century later.
9. Conclusion

Whether or not the olive oil presses at Ekron date to the time of Assyrian expansion, Philistia is still congruent with a settlement pattern familiar in other Assyrian territories. The site of Ashdod served as a small capital to the Assyrian province Ashdudu with a small Assyrian-style building. Fortresses such as Ashdod Yam, and perhaps Qudadi and Ekron, served as outposts along a coastal highway that linked to other Assyrian territories, such as Megiddo. Though Assyrian architecture is sparse in Philistia, Assyrian texts detail an intense relationship of military campaigns, tribute, and political reorganization during the late 8th and early 7th centuries BCE. The subtle settlement changes in Philistia during this time reflect how the local population recovered and maneuvered through the new Assyrian configuration focused on transport of goods and control of the coast.
Chapter 4: The Western Negev, So-called “Assyrian Fortresses” and “Buffer Zones”

1. Introduction

The western Negev is a region that served as a military perimeter for the Assyrians, hemming in its Levantine territories and monitoring trade and local interactions along the fringes of its occupied regions. The western Negev is of unknown political status leaving its identity as a province open for interpretation based on a few vague textual references and archaeological features. The Negev’s position along the south of Assyria’s territories made it Assyria’s first defense against Egypt, a formidable territorial state also interested in controlling the southern Levant. Fortified sites dating to the Iron Age IIC period dot the landscape of the western Negev and archaeologists tend to label these sites as “Assyrian fortresses” based on time period and location rather than on a distinct set of guidelines pertaining to material culture. This work illustrates how the label “Assyrian fortress” overgeneralizes the diverse material culture and variety of architectural elements present at the sites, and stifles the detection of social complexity in the ancient western Negev during the Iron Age IIC. Rather than a string of Assyrianized military outposts, the western Negev was a patchwork of strongholds representative of a system in which both the Assyrian military and the local Levantine population participated.
2. Location

The western Negev is part of the greater Negev, a large arid zone (13,000 km\(^2\)) south of the Philistine coastal plain and the Judean Hill Country and Judean Wilderness. It is bordered to the east by the Arabah and to the west by the Sinai Peninsula (Figure 21). In contrast to the green hills of the Galilee and the coastal plain of Philistia, the Negev is a rugged desert with sparse vegetation due to its average rainfall of 250 to 350 mm per year. The arid western Negev experienced development only during times when a strong, centralized government took interest in supporting the region (Aharoni 1979:26). Settlements in the region tend to be found along the Nahal Gerar (Wadi esh Shariah) and Nahal Besor (Wadi Shalleleh) (Aharoni 1979:26), which supplied opportunities for water and access to and from the coast. The five sites in the region that scholars describe as “Assyrian settlements and fortresses” (Stern 2001:3) are situated along the coast and the inland wadis: Ruqeish sits along the Mediterranean coast just north of Tell el-Sheikh Zuweid. Tell Jemmeh is located to the east along the Nahal Besor, and Tell Haror and Tell Sera are located further east along the Nahal Gerar. These fortified sites presumably monitored branches of the highway from Gaza to Egypt (Dorsey 1991:67-68, 199-201).
3. Texts Relating to the Western Negev

Although several Assyrian texts mention Philistia and Judah, Assyrian texts only vaguely reference the western Negev specifically, making it difficult to assess Assyria's political
relationship with the region based on texts alone. From these vague texts, it is not clear if Assyria assigns the region to Philistia or Judah, or if it is considered a separate entity altogether. Nonetheless, archaeologists and historians such as Na’aman (1979), Oren et al. (1993), Reich (1984) and Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek (2014), have associated three place names from Assyrian texts with the western Negev, allowing for further speculation as to the type of shared interactions between locals and the empire.

The “Brook of Egypt” appears in at least twelve instances spanning from the time of Tiglath-pileser III to Esarhaddon, mostly within the context of campaigns to the southern Levant. The term comes in three variations including NAḤAL KUR MUŠUR (River/Brook of the land of Egypt), URU NAḤAL MUŠUR (River/Brook of Egypt City, or City of the Brook of Egypt), and NAḤAL MUŠUR (Brook/River of Egypt). One reference is from Tiglath-pileser III, who apparently erected a stela in this location (Wiseman 1951:23.18). Immediately following a campaign led by Tiglath-pileser III to Gaza, in which the ruler of Gaza fled to Egypt, Tiglath-pileser III embarked on a campaign to the Brook of Egypt where he collected booty and erected a stela (Wiseman 1951:211-24). Two instances of the phrase occur from the time of Sargon II in descriptions of his campaigns to the southern Levant when he also settled deported peoples on the border of the Brook of Egypt (Lyon 1883: Cyl.13; Winckler and Abel 1889b; Weidner 1941:42.55). The most frequent references occur date to the time of Esarhaddon in campaign annals where he besieged the town of Arza. Na’aman (1979:69) speculates that as early as the Late Bronze Age, the Nahal Besor was considered the border between southern Canaan and northern Egypt, and that the Assyrians adopted this configuration of space, naming the Nahal

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71 It is not clear whether the campaigns in this text are listed chronologically or because the places are near each other (Na’aman 1979:69). Either way the texts suggest some sort of proximity whether it is because the battles occurred one after the other or because they are listed on account of geography.
Besor “The Brook of Egypt.” According to Na’aman’s assertion, sites on the border of the Nahal Besor would have served as the last outposts before entering the desert that would lead to the heart of Egypt.

Along the Nahal Besor, the two sites of Ruqeish or Sheikh Zuweid (Abu Salima) are thought to be associated with place names occurring in Assyrian texts. First, Oren et al. (1993:294) suggests that Ruqeish was under Assyrian control based on an excerpt from the Nimrud prism from the time of Sargon I that mentions a “sealed Kāru of Egypt,” or an Assyrian outpost of some sort stationed in a peripheral Assyrian territory. This sealed kāru of Egypt is mentioned in a text of Sargon II when, following campaigns, he “opened the sealed harbor of Egypt… mixing the Assyrians and the Egyptians together” in order to “make them trade together” (Tadmor 1958a:34; Tadmor 1958b:78). Oren et al. (1993:294) speculates that the kāru of Egypt is Ruqeish, because it is a coastal city “founded on the border with Egypt,” assuming the Brook of Egypt is the Nahal Besor. Reich (1984) objects to Oren’s claim and instead nominates Sheikh Zuweid as the Sealed kāru of Egypt based on what he identifies as an Assyrian temple at the site. Second, several scholars follow Grintz’s speculation that Jemmeh is ancient Arsa mentioned in Assyrian texts (Grintz 1961:16; Na’aman 1979:72; Aharoni and Ben-Arieh 1974:90; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:3-4). Esarhaddon apparently campaigned to the Brook

72 Based on Assyrian texts that refer to a “gatekeepership over Egypt” and a tribe “dwelling at the foot of Egypt” Na’aman (1979:70) concludes that a region south of Philistia that was that northernmost region considered Egypt by Assyria. Based on texts from Biblical passages, Na’aman concludes that “the region south of the Besor Brook was considered “Egypt”” by northerners. Previous scholars have equated the Brook of Egypt with Wadi el-‘Arish based on Greek sources, but Na’aman argues that these sources are much later than the Assyrian texts and should not be taken at face value based on geographical issues in texts (Na’aman 1979:74, 78-80). Na’aman (1979:75) believes that as early as the Late Bronze Age, the Besor was considered the border between Egypt and Canaan based on Egyptian texts that he believes Yurza was the southernmost town in Canaan dated to the time of Thutmès III, and a Shishak inscription that lists places and names connected to the Negev. In addition, two New Kingdom texts suggest that Gaza is the end of Canaan, which is congruent with Biblical texts (Gen 10:19). Finally Joshua 15:47 states that Gaza and her towns were along the River of Egypt, which Na’aman states is the Nahal Besor based on its proximity just south of Gaza (Na’aman 1979:76).
of Egypt and specifically targeted Arsa (Borger 1956:122). These later attacks by Esarhaddon poised the Assyrian military for its campaigns into the heartland of Egypt.

The few and vague references to the western Negev confirm the region’s liminal position in the Assyrian Empire. If the Nahal Besor is indeed the “Brook of Egypt,” Na’amān (1979) proposes, then the context of the label in Assyrian texts suggests that the area was a community on the outskirts of the Assyrian provincial system. Because Assyrian texts during this time describe a tribe of Idibi’ilu as being gatekeepers over Egypt and a group of people living below Egypt, Na’amān (1979:70) concludes that the Nahal Besor bordered “a region south of Philistia… considered part of Egypt” (Rost 189338-40:235-240). The position of the western Negev was thus the southernmost border of Assyrian territory, abutting land that may have been considered part of Egyptian territory that would one day be conquered by the Assyrians.

4. Location in Provincial System

On account of the lack of texts discussing the western Negev, the region is not usually included among Assyrian territories. The western Negev is an outlier region, depicted by scholars as a frontier outside of Assyrian provinces and territories. Neither Otzen (1979) nor Radner (2006) include it within any boundary system. Otzen (1979) does include the “Brook of Egypt” in the very south of the map, suggesting that the western Negev is indeed part of the Levantine territory, but with no formal political designation. The lack of textual sources from the region prevents further speculation regarding its territorial boundaries.

5. Brief History of Scholarship

Several academic works identify sites in the Levant, and specifically in the western Negev, as fortresses built under Assyrian orders despite the lack of textual sources. Oren et al. (1993:294)
identifies Ruqeish, a fortified coastal site, as a project “established by Assyria to facilitate trade at the Egyptian border...” The site of Sheikh Zuweid is said to leave “little doubt” that it is an “Assyrian fortress,” based on architecture rather than the questionable excavation of the small finds (Figure 25; Reich 1984:33, 37, 38; see also Stern 1975; Stern 2001). The Mesopotamian-style building construction and pottery, and the fortification, have lead Van Beek (1993:372) to suggest that the 7th-century strata at Tel Jemmeh were built as a residence for an Assyrian military or political leader and a “storage facility,” and was “a base of Assyrian regional power in the 7th century” (Engstrom 2004:69). Na’aman (1979) agrees with Oren and Netzer’s (1993:1332) assertion that Tel Sera' was home to an “‘Assyrian’ citadel.” The construction of Iron II-III Haror was also the work of Assyria, according to Oren (1997:475-6), and perhaps an 8th-century Assyrian “administrative center.” Stern (2001:3) even calls all five of these sites “Assyrian fortresses” in his comprehensive volume. This trend continues in the greater Negev where Kadesh Barnea, En Haseva, and Tel el-Kheleifeh are identified as Assyrian fortresses as well (Na’aman 1991:48; Cohen and Yisrael 1995:230; Finkelstein 2010:121). The assertion by several archaeologists that Ruqeish, Sheikh Zuweid, Jemmeh, Haror, and Tel Sera’ were “Assyrian” fortresses forces us to question what characteristics warrant this label.

In order to investigate what features are specific to an Assyrian fortress in the western Negev, one would typically consult site reports. Few site reports are available for this region, leaving considerable gaps in our knowledge. Jemmeh is the only comprehensive site report to have come out in recent years (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). Oren released a book with his findings about Tel Sera’ (Tel esh-Sharia, also assumed to be ancient Ziqlag) in 1974 and additional summaries of his findings later on (Oren 1974; Oren 1982). Petrie and Ellis (1937)

73 Storage pits were also found at Tel Sera’ (Oren 1982:159).
originally excavated and published a site report for Sheikh Zuweid and assigned it to the Babylonian period, but Stern (1975, 2001) and Reich (1984) re-date this stratum to the time of Assyrian control instead in their treatments of the site. Information for the remaining sites in the region is only available in encyclopedia articles and brief site reports (e.g., Huster 2000). As an excavator and expert of this region, Oren is responsible for several of these shorter works (e.g., Oren, Morrison, and Gilead 1986; Oren 1993b), as well as encyclopedia articles on the archaeology of several sites (e.g., Oren 1997; Oren and Netzer 1993; Oren et al. 1993). Other site reports have been reassessed more recently in a few articles (Reich 1984; Fantalkin and Tal 2009). In addition to site reports and encyclopedia articles, studies on specific aspects of material culture highlight certain phenomena and provide further insight into the relationship between the peoples in the western Negev such as studies in Assyrian- and Edomite-style pottery (e.g., Bienkowski and van der Steen 2001; Engstrom 2004). The combination of site reports and material culture analysis leads to further assessment of the relationship between Assyria and the western Negev during the 7th century BCE.

While several works offer a greater context for the fortresses in the Negev, these do not deal specifically with the lack of uniform architectural design or how these differences could speak to a more diverse population. Though the diversity of architecture is overlooked, the multiple ceramic traditions have been addressed as a sign of the international interactions that took place in the region, specifically focusing on Edomite, Phoenician, Greek, and Assyrian imports and styles (Waldbaum 1994; Lanfranchi 2000; Engstrom 2004; Tebes 2007; Thareani 2010). The scholarship on the different pottery traditions tends to focus on trade but largely

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74 Some of these works, among several, include (Oren 1990b; Burdajewicz 2003; Dubovský 2006; Finkelstein 2010; Ben-Shlomo 2014).
overlooks both how the differences reflect architectural traditions, as well as how the Assyrians facilitated and monitored the buffer zone protecting their southern territories.

The combination of these studies leads some to label the western Negev as a “buffer zone,” though an in-depth assessment of how this region coincides with a buffer zone model are lacking in this scholarship (Oren 1990b; Burdajewicz 2003:30). Labeling the western Negev as a buffer zone definitely seems plausible at first glance, but comparison to different regions on the fringe of empire and anthropological models is essential to locate the region more precisely within the Assyrian political framework. These ideas will be explored further after an examination of the architectural elements present in so-called “Assyrian fortresses” in the western Negev.

6. Survey of Architecture and Material Culture

A lack of both textual accounts and treatments of material culture prohibits an exhaustive understanding of the 7th-century Negev. Enough information, however, is still available to detect aspects of sites that suggest a culturally diverse presence in the region. The western Negev possesses several Iron IIC building phases with elements associated with Assyrian imperial style, but that also represent a variety of other populations with varied interests in the region. Stern (2001:3) lists five fortified sites in the western Negev, Sheikh Zuweid, Tell Jemmeh, Ruqesh, Tel Sera’, and Tel Haror, as “Assyrian settlements and fortresses,”75 erected in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE in the western Negev.76 Stern's assertion that these sites were Assyrian fortresses

75 Stern calls the site Tell el-Sheikh Zuweid, but the Assyrian temple is also called Abu Salima (Reich 1984), excavated by Petrie and Ellis (1937).

76 All of these sites area dated to the Iron IIC (Herr 1997:166; Oren 1997:475), and, more specifically, Ruqesh phases IV-II dates to the 7th and 6th centuries Oren 1993b:294); Jemmeh strata E-F underwent phases of development in the 8th and 7th centuries, and excavators tentatively assign Jemmeh Phases 6-7 to 750-700 BCE and Phase 5 with the vaulted Assyrianized building to 700-650 BCE (Jemmeh 544). Tel Sera V-IV is dated specifically
is congruent with the conclusions of others working with material from the western Negev, who largely base their conclusions on the fact that the sites were built during Assyrian domination, and contain some elements of Assyrian material culture (e.g., Oren 1997; Oren and Netzer 1993; Oren et al. 1993; Reich 1984; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). However, the weaknesses of such interpretations are self-evident and warrant a reappraisal of the identifications of the sites in this region during the Assyrian period.

### 6.1 Destructions Attributed to Assyria

The largest site in the western Negev to experience destruction during the late Iron Age is Beer Sheba. Archaeologists date the large cities with case-mate fortification systems of Strata III and II to the 8th century BCE (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2016:23, 24 29). Specifically, archaeologists date Stratum II to 720-701 BCE and attribute its demise to Sennacherib’s campaigns in the region (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2016:26). Thick layers of burnt debris were found in buildings in the north, eastern and southern parts of the site, and several artifacts were sealed by the destruction (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2016:71,77-79, 119, 385, 412). Following the destruction of the large site was a squatter occupation (Stratum I) that is believed to have been resettled on account of a “private rather than state initiative” (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2016:26). The demise of the once large and important site of Beer Sheba allowed other sites in the region to grow in importance, as illustrated by the fortified sites at Jemmeh, Haror, Sheikh Zuweid, Tel Sera’, and Ruqueish.

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* to the 7th Century (Oren 1993a:1333). Haror is sealed by a fiery destruction dated to the late 7th – early 6th centuries BCE (Oren 1985:64). Reich dates Sheikh Zuweid to the late 8th or early 7th century based on architecture alone (Reich 1984).
6.2 Survey of Fortress Characteristics

In line with the label of “fortress,” fortification systems are characteristic of all five sites, but their specific features differ (Figure 22). Ruqeish's buttressed mud-brick walls measuring 5 to 6 m thick encircle the mound and its total length was about 1 mile in level IV and level III. Towers measuring 7.7 m by 11.6 m were attached to the northern part of the tell (known as Tell Aqluq) (Oren et al. 1993:293; Huster 2000:87*). Sheikh Zuweid “was protected by an offset-inset wall, with a stepped base on the outer face,” that sat upon an “earthen fill” (Reich 1984:34; Reich 1993:15; Stern 2001:26). According to Reich, debris later filled in this fortress wall forming a platform (Reich 1984:35). Jemmeh may have had a massive mudbrick wall spanning the 8th to
the 6th centuries at least partially surrounding the buildings (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:169). 77 Tel Sera’ was surrounded by walls measuring 4 to 5 m thick and part of it was probably a casemate wall (Figure 23; Oren 1982:159; Oren and Netzer 1993:1333). Finally, at Haror, a plastered wall and watchtowers that incorporated both header-stretcher ashlar masonry, with alternating gray and red mud-bricks of standard size (52 cm x 31 cm) surrounded the upper tell. These were accompanied by a rampart and kurkar glacis coated with gray clay, and “a massive mud-brick platform” in the corner of the fortification system, which he tentatively dates to the 8th to 7th centuries (Oren, Morrison, and Gilead 1986:62-65; 70). The construction of the walls defines the sites as fortresses and the buildings within the walls provide further insight as to the population living and working within the fortifications.

Figure 23 Part of fortress in Area A at Tel Sera’ (after Oren and Netzer 1993:1333)

The buildings within the walls of these western Negev sites are characterized by mud-brick construction influenced by both local building traditions. Ruqeish, Tel Sera’, and Haror lacked Assyrian influence in their architecture. Along the coast, Ruqeish yielded “structures with thin walls and beaten floors made of brick material, as well as cooking and baking installations”

77 An earlier publication states that the 7th century buildings at Jemmeh were surrounded by a casemate system with the outer and inner walls measuring 2 m apart (Van Beek 1993:670).
Further to the east, Tel Sera's architecture in Area A first consisted of a “citadel” with “long magazine halls and small rooms,” which was destroyed and replaced by a number of large pits. Tel Sera’ Area D yielded a long “rectangular building” with “narrow halls” with floors lined with bricks. Evidence of metal smelting was also located in an area in the form of crucibles, charcoal and iron slag, was in a courtyard paved with baked bricks (Oren 1982:159-161; Oren and Netzer 1993:1333-4). At Tel Haror, “a complex of well-planned storehouses with symmetrical magazines with long halls,” was constructed of plastered mud-brick and sitting atop a platform “rested against the fortification wall” (Oren 1997:583; Oren, Morrison, and Gilead 1986:65, Figure 24).

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78 Oren (1982:159) labels Area D as an “Assyrian” fort, based on the Assyrian small finds within the building rather than the architecture itself, which does not appear to be distinctly Mesopotamian.
Unlike the rather opaque architectural evidence, material culture and small finds found at the western Negev sites reflect the trade opportunities in the area, and Assyria's imperial influence. Ruqesh’s signature pottery, “Ruqesh Ware,” consists of “highly burnished jugs and kraters” (Oren et al. 1993:294). While Ruqesh Ware has some similarities to Late Phoenician Ware, its affinities to Philistine ceramics are more pronounced (Ben-Shlomo, Shai, and Maeir 2004:16). Imports from Cyprus, Greece, and Egypt, as well as pottery similar to Samaria and Phoenician styles, suggest that Ruqesh was integral in an extensive trade network (Oren,
Morrison, and Gilead 1986:86-89; Oren et al. 1993:294). In addition, Phoenician-style burials were present at the site with orientation and material culture that suggests an active knowledge of Phoenician burial customs that were perhaps from northern Levantine peoples living in the southern Levant (Culican 1973). Tel Haror also had a wide array of pottery styles. One of the large buildings built against the fortification wall yielded “a rich ceramic assemblage of 8th century BCE types” and in a later phase, sherds were discovered displaying multiple traditions including Phoenician, Edomite, and Egyptian that share several forms with those of Tel Sera’s Stratum V (Oren, Morrison, and Gilead 1986:75; Oren 1997:583). In addition to the diverse material culture at Tel Sera’, a substantial amount of Assyrian Palace Ware was uncovered in the pits of Area A and in other places on the site. In Tel Sera’ D a bronze crescent-shaped standard was found that has correlates to moon-god worship in Mesopotamia (Oren 1982:159). Other notable finds at Tel Sera' include an Egyptian faience statuette, ostracon inscribed with “North-Arabian names,” and a jug with a Hebrew word on the shoulder, and Greek imported pottery (Oren 1982:159-160; Oren and Netzer 1993:1333-4).

The eclectic nature of the material culture, coupled with local architectural features of Ruqeish, Tel Sera’, and Haror, each deserve a more nuanced label than “Assyrian fortress.” Ruqeish’s architecture and material culture have strong ties to Phoenicia with little to no Assyrian affinities. Haror could also be a product of local or multicultural influence. Of the three sites, Tel Sera’ seems to be a microcosm of the dynamic interactions that took place in the western Negev. While architecture itself at Tel Sera' reflects local traditions, the large Assyrian palace ware ceramic assemblage and the Moon god standard suggest that it possibly could have stronger ties to the Assyrian cause. On the other hand, Tel Sera’ also possessed a rich assemblage of Greek, Egyptian, and Greek material culture. The disparate affiliations evident in the material
culture at Ruqelsh, Tel Sera', and Haror bring into question their function within the Assyrian Empire.

6.3 Assyrian-Style Architecture

Stern and Reich identify an Assyrian temple with rooms for administrative functions in Sheikh Zuweid, but architecture rather than material culture leads them to determine this. These remains are dated to the late 8th to early 7th centuries by architecture alone because the material culture was too difficult to tease out (Reich 1984:33, 38; Reich 1993:15). “A series of rooms” made of sun-dried mud-brick “laid around a central court” was identified as an Assyrian temple at Sheikh Zuweid built in Langraum style common to other Assyrian buildings from the 9th-7th centuries BCE (Reich 1984:34-38; Stern 2001:26). This building identified as an Assyrian temple had baked brick paving of the floor and steps of the cella with bricks measuring 40.5 cm x 40.5 cm (Reich 1984:36, 38). This is only one of two Assyrian temples identified in the southern Levant besides one in the Transjordan in Buseirah. Still, the date of this building is solely based on brick size and architecture. Two pedestals were present in the Sheikh Zuweid cella, which is a “widespread feature in Assyrian temples” (Stern 2001:32), as well as pottery of Assyrian tradition (Reich 1984; Stern 2001:38).

79 Petrie and Ellis (1937:6) had identified it as a temple from the Babylonian period but with affinities to Nabu temple in Khorsabad Reich (1984) points out that this style is specifically Assyrian and that Babylonians used a different style, which leads Reich to date the temple to an earlier timer period than Petrie.
Figure 25 Plan of Sheikh Zuweid (Abu Salima) Level G (after Reich 1984)

Figure 26 Tel Jemmeh Field IV Phase 5 (after Ben-Shlomo 2014:Fig. 6)
Perhaps the most lauded of western Negev buildings with Assyrian affinities is Jemmeh’s 7th-century building plans of Phase 5 (Formerly Stratum EF), but some questions about the evidence still exist (Figure 26). Though the plans seem to point toward a Mesopotamian style, excavators emphasize that the building is “difficult to reconstruct,” because it is not fully excavated, suggesting some speculation by the interpreters (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:470, 498). Seventh-century Jemmeh buildings are in some ways similar to contemporaneous buildings in northern Mesopotamia, which are “characterized by three or four parallel long rooms with a transverse room across one end and sometimes across both ends; the transverse room is often divided into three small rooms, each connected by a doorway to the adjacent long room.” One six-room building deserves special attention due to its elaborate vaulted ceiling made of “key-stone shaped” mud-bricks (Figure 27; Van Beek 1993:670; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:433ff., 470ff., 495, 519-523). These rooms, identified as a subterranean storage facility, had mud-brick walls of header and stretcher bricks with mud mortar, mudbrick floors and mud-brick ledges over the surface (Van Beek 1993:672; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:472, 518-519, 524). The “particular style” of vaulted doorways in a couple of these rooms correlates only to contemporary sites in Kalah/Nimrud, Arslan Tash, Khorsabad, Zincirli, and Nush-i Jan, though Jemmeh’s building is smaller than its correlates. The technique is most similar to these buildings rather than Jemmeh being an exact replica of one of these buildings closer to the Mesopotamian heartland (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:507, 518). More specifically, at Jemmeh, “no architectural elements at Tell Jemmeh clearly indicate palatial Assyrian architecture,” like the courtyard buildings identified at Megiddo (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:513). Moreover, vaulted architecture is present at Jemmeh earlier, suggesting that it may have come from a tradition adopted by local builders much earlier in the
Iron Age (Van Beek 1987; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:423). Jemmeh serves as an example of a building referenced in many discussions on Assyrian presence in the Levant that still leaves some questions as to its builders and exact time period.

At Tell Jemmeh, a “mass of Assyrian palace ware” was found in the rooms of the vaulted building as well as in other rooms and “rubbish pits” (Van Beek 1993:672; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:526ff., 542-543). The Assyrian pottery was primarily from Rooms 1 and 2, suggesting that an Assyrian contingent was most present in these rooms, or that they were used for administrative purposes (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). Engstrom’s petrographic analysis of Assyrian-style pottery from Tell el-Hesi concluded that the clay originated from the area surrounding the site, the Negev near Jemmeh and the southern coastal plain (Engstrom 2004:79-80). Engstrom (2004), Ben-Shlomo, and Van Beek (2014) concur that based on the clay origins of the Assyrian-style pottery that Hesi and other sites were satellite sites of Jemmeh or Gaza. The mixture of local, Assyrian, Phoenician, and Edomite ceramics from all sites, including sites like Jemmeh and Sheikh Zuweid with distinctive Assyrian small finds, further muddles the attempt to define a set of characteristics for these fortresses.

![Arches at Jemmeh](after Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:515)

Figure 27 Arches at Jemmeh (after Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:515)

Finally, epigraphic evidence from Jemmeh and Tel Sera’ also provides clues for Assyrian control and local interaction. Van Beek’s resumed excavations at Jemmeh yielded four ostraca
dated to the 7th century BCE, found outside the vaulted building (Naveh 1985:11, 19). The meaning of the writing on the first three ostraca is enigmatic, and is perhaps a list of personal names, but some of the words are unknown and some of the script is different than one would expect from 7th-century script (Naveh 1985:13, 14). Naveh (1985:14, 21) speculates that those names or words that do not appear to be Semitic are perhaps Greek or Philistine and are possibly associated with mercenaries present in the western Negev. The fourth ostracon found in the vaulted building deals with “the delivery of some goods” (Naveh 1985:19). Naveh (1985:20) concludes that the differences in these scripts suggests that an “Assyrian garrison stationed in the Philistine towns wrote in Aramaic” with a hybrid script that has both local and foreign elements. An Aramaic inscription from Tel Sera’ that is also administrative in nature may have to do with Assyrian control (Oren 1982:160; Cross 2003).

6.4 Summary

Sites in the western Negev during the Iron Age IIC period were fortified with mud-brick walls, except one site which displayed ashlar masonry, and had no uniform fortification wall plan: one wall was offset-inset, while another was a casemate system, while others were solid walls, and in one instance, the wall was plastered (Table 9). The walls were buttressed in two cases, and in at least two cases, towers accompanied the walls. Within the walls, the buildings were made of mud-brick and the plans consisted of long rectangular buildings, buildings with square rooms surrounding a courtyard, or in one case, sophisticated vaulted spaces. Only two sites, Jemmeh and Sheikh Zuweid display architecture that is distinctly Mesopotamian. The floors of the buildings were made of beaten earth, or sun-dried or baked brick. The eclectic material culture reflected the land and sea trade opportunities in the area, and some sites yielded substantial amounts of Assyrian palace ware as well as other Mesopotamian-type objects. Two sites possibly
corroborate with textual sources, but there is no definitive Assyrian mention of any of the sites.

In other words, each site differs from the others enough to question their label as “Assyrian fortresses.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Fortification wall type</th>
<th>Other fortification characteristics</th>
<th>Building materials</th>
<th>Material culture</th>
<th>Public buildings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruqesh IV-II</td>
<td>Coast</td>
<td>7th-6th</td>
<td>Mud-brick wall</td>
<td>Butresses. Towers</td>
<td>Mud brick</td>
<td>Ruqesh ware, Greek and Egyptian pottery, Phoenician-style burials</td>
<td>Cooking and baking installations, buildings with thin walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell el-Sheikh Zuweid</td>
<td>Coast</td>
<td>Iron II</td>
<td>Offset-inset wall</td>
<td>Stepped base, earthen fill</td>
<td>Mud-brick</td>
<td>Pedastals in cella (Assyrian) Assyrian style pottery</td>
<td>Assyrianized cella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell Jemmeh</td>
<td>Nahal Besor</td>
<td>8th and 7th C</td>
<td>Casemate outer and inner walls</td>
<td>Mud brick</td>
<td>Assyrianized vaulted storeroom</td>
<td>“Assyrian ware”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Sera’</td>
<td>Nahal Gerar</td>
<td>7th C</td>
<td>Wall 4-5m thick</td>
<td></td>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>Assyrian ware</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Haror</td>
<td>Nahal Gerar</td>
<td>Iron IIC</td>
<td>Plastered wall</td>
<td>Watchtowers</td>
<td>Header stretcher ashlars, mud brick</td>
<td>Levantine types</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 Characteristics of Western Negev Fortresses

Instead of a string of carefully executed Mesopotamian-style fortresses as the label “Assyrian fortress” suggests, fortified sites in the western Negev prove to be more eclectic in nature, opening up the region for question as to its role in the Assyrian Empire. While Mesopotamian-style architecture and Assyrian Palace Ware at Tel Jemmeh present the most convincing case for Assyrian occupation in the region, the Mesopotamian-style influences on the material culture and architecture at Tel Sera’ and Sheikh Zuweid perhaps also housed Assyrian officials or military personal though the data are not as convincing. The major Phoenician
influences at Ruqeish and local affinities of Haror, however, represent a local Levantine population intermingling within the Assyrian borderland. Some of the local and Phoenician material culture is a result of deportees that settled in the Brook of Egypt during the time or those taking advantage of the trade opportunities opened up during the time of Sargon II. The Assyrian, Phoenician, Greek, and Egyptian influences in the material culture and architecture still do not overshadow the local style still prominent in the region even during Assyrian occupation. Assyrian defense in the region appears to depend on a cast of characters to run its operation with a strong dependence on Levantine locals.

7. Comparative Data

Because of an empire’s propensity for expansion, borderlands are often fluid, causing the fortresses along boundaries to eventually become integrated regions as the empire exceeds their border. For this reason, it is sometimes difficult to detect borderland processes during the expansion of Assyria. Two examples of regions with Assyrian fortresses highlight the differences between fortresses along a region Assyria eventually encompassed and fortresses in a region on the outskirts of the provincial system. Whereas the 9th-century Middle Euphrates is an exemplar of a fortification system that eventually lost its borderland status as Assyria expanded, the middle-Upper Tigris maintained its position as an Assyrian border territory against the formidable enemy Urartu. Similar to Anatolia, the Negev is a region that never became integrated into the Assyrian heartland as indicated by the archaeological record. But like the Middle Euphrates, the western Negev served as a springboard for Assyria to expand into additional territories (Oren 1993b:1392).
7.1 9th-Century Middle Euphrates

The fortresses along the Middle Euphrates share some similarities with those found in the western Negev. As with the 8th- and 7th-century Assyrian kings, Ashurnasirpal was already at work fortifying the zones of recently acquired territories including the Middle Euphrates in the mid-9th century (Figure 28). Both the Negev and the Middle Euphrates are arid zones that could be considered “marginal” areas bordering the desert with few opportunities for agricultural success (Aharoni 1979:26; Young 1983:22). Despite its proximity to the desert and lack of agricultural promise, Young (1983:21) speculates it was important for the Assyrians to fortify the middle Euphrates because it kept that specific area from Babylonian control, and it also “prevented nomads…from coming into settled parts of Mesopotamia.” Similarly, occupation of the western Negev protected one of the significant pathways Egypt could use to encroach upon Assyrian territory, and also allowed for monitoring of the population close to the desert highway. Fortification of both regions also allowed Assyria to monitor and control the trade of luxury items along the “natural” highways of the Euphrates River, and the Nahal Besor and Nahal Gerar (Young 1983:21; Dorsey 1991:200-201).

![Map of 9th-Century Forts on the Middle Euphrates](Young 1983: Fig. 1)

The need for Assyria to protect its newly acquired territories from both Babylonians and nomads, while still allowing trade led, to the construction of several fortified sites along the
Assurnasirpal “established major fortifications a day’s march apart,” such as Bijan and Sur-Tilbis, medium-sized mudbrick fortresses Glai’a and Sur Jur’a as well as small fortresses such as Yimneyeh and Abu Thor “to act as watch points and as signal points” (Young 1983:30-32). Of particular interest for the western Negev are the smaller forts, such as Yimneyeh. The site of Yimneyeh, which Young (1983:26, 28) identifies as a “small hilltop Neo-Assyrian fortress” is protected by a steep cliff on one side and a wall and remnants of a gate on the other. An “inner fortress” was located on the eastern edge of the hill, made partly of fieldstones (Young 1983:26). Excavation of this fortress revealed a series of rooms, a casemate wall, and a large tower with “massive foundation stones” that perhaps reached a height of 15m (Young 1983:28). The fine ware from the excavation comes from the inner fort whereas the everyday ware was found in the rooms of the casemate walls, suggesting stratification of individuals at the site (Young 1983:28). Sites like Yimneyeh and Abu Thor were in contrast to Bijan and Sur-Tilbis with massive walls 15 m to 9 m thick. According to Young, this network of sites ensured Assyrian mobility and safe trade along the river corridor.

Despite its similarities, comparison between the western Negev and the Middle Euphrates still poses challenges. Scholars have pointed out the different nature of early Assyrian expansion versus that of the later kings in the 8th and 7th centuries, suggesting ideological differences between the early campaigns to regain lost territory and later campaigns designed to expand the kingdom beyond its known limits (Liverani 1979; Liverani 1988:81; Van de Mieroop 2007:240). The western Negev serves as a borderland of a peripheral Assyrian territory whereas fortification of the Middle Euphrates protected regions in close proximity to the Assyrian heartland. This issue of proximity perhaps influenced the style of fortresses found in both regions. Whereas the fortresses in the Middle Euphrates took on a Mesopotamian style because they are indeed located
in Mesopotamia, the Negev fortresses have a Levantine flavor. While this point may seem obvious, it does highlight the effort taken to create the Assyrian-style buildings found at Megiddo, Hazor, Ayyelet HaShahar and Kinneret. In this light, the province of Magidu might serve as a better analog to the Middle Euphrates than does the western Negev where the diverse nature of architecture and material culture calls for further investigation of fortresses along borderlands.

7.2 8th-century Middle-Upper Tigris

The Middle-Upper Tigris and the western Negev are both labeled as “buffer zones” in the Assyrian Empire on account of their position along Assyrian frontiers and their close proximity to Assyrian enemies (i.e., Urartu and Egypt, respectively) (Burdajewicz 2003:30; Parker 2003:551). They also serve as contemporaneous analogs as they experienced building projects that integrated them into the Assyrian military system during late 8th-early 7th centuries (Parker 1997; Parker 2003:51). They both lacked the substantial population growth that the Assyrian provinces in the heartland experienced (see chapter 2, Comparative Data), but instead maintained local traditions amidst the new Assyrian material culture (Parker 2003:551). Ultimately their main similarity is that they both had a small string of fortresses dotting riverbeds that served as corridors to more Assyrian territories (Parker 2003).

An additional similarity between archaeologists in the western Negev and Parker’s work is that they both tend to label fortresses as “Assyrian” without distinct architectural characteristics. Parker identifies other sites as Assyrian fortresses in the Middle-Upper Tigris based on the fact that they are single-period sites (8th-7th century BCE) and larger than other sites in the region, even though some yield no Assyrian-style pottery. The identification of Assyrian fortresses in both regions is based upon time period and fortification. In both cases, Neo-Assyrian pottery traditions or architectural traditions are helpful, but not mandatory to identify a site as an Assyrian fortress.
One Assyrian fortress Parker (2003:551) identifies in the Middle-Upper Tigris region is Cattepe, which sits along the Bohtan River Valley. The identification of the fortress at Cattepe is based on its status as the largest site in the region during the late Iron Age, and the site possessed remnants of a wall, the presence of Neo-Assyrian type pottery traditions, and the presence of bitumen, which most likely was imported from Mesopotamia (Parker 2001: 117,138). Parker (1997; 2001:137; 2003:51) suggests that Nimrud Letter 67, most likely written during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, addresses the construction of Cattepe as an Assyrian fort along the Garzan tributary of the Tigris in a “volatile frontier.”

The population of the Upper Tigris River Valley, which is not considered an Assyrian province, remained static while neighboring Assyrian provinces experienced major population increase (Parker 2003). The differences that the buffer zone in southeastern Anatolia experienced compared to an Assyrian province are described by Parker (2003:55):

1. Lack of Assyrian settlement except in one key location.
2. “Only a handful of small village or hamlet-sized sites” with primarily indigenous ceramic assemblage
3. No “abrupt change” in settlement pattern or material culture during the Assyrian imperial period

These characteristics do not precisely coincide with that of the western Negev, which housed fortresses and material culture of a more diverse nature.

Just as Parker’s proposed characteristics of Assyrian provinces require some modification when describing Assyrian provinces Magidu and Ashdudu in the southern Levant (See Chapter 2, Analysis), Parker’s characterization of an Assyrian “Buffer Zone” also calls for additional clarity when looking at the western Negev. The differences between Assyria’s
incorporation of southeastern Anatolia and the southern Levant have to do with population increase or decrease in provinces, and population homogeneity or diversity in buffer zones. Magidu and Ashdudu did not experience the population increase introduced to southeastern Anatolian provinces (see Chapter 2, Comparative Data). Similarly, the western Negev shows more diverse interactions within an Assyrian frontier zone than the strictly local and Assyrian material culture present in the Middle-Upper Tigris. Further consideration of frontier models is required to clarify the dynamics of how Assyria incorporated the western Negev into its imperial system.

7.3 Southeastern Inka Frontier

The Inka Empire in South America provides an illustrative example of another documented frontier zone that sheds light on the situation in the western Negev (Alconini 2004). In her work on Inka imperial borderlands, Alconini focuses on two regions, Oroncota and Cuzcotoyo, both on the southeastern Inka frontier in Bolivia. The first region, Oroncota, had a diverse population with “limited agricultural potential” (Alconini 2004:396-397). During Inka control, a “high-prestige” Inka building familiar to the Inka heartland was present in this region. This style of building did not occur along other Inka borders, suggesting that the Inka wanted a clear symbol of their power to exist in this region. When creating the imperial political infrastructure, the Inka also took advantage of “already existing settlement trends,” although their buildings replaced smaller sites rather than the “local center” (Alconini 2004:403). Two other sites identified as Inka fortresses were within a day’s radius of the first one; both had architectural elements similar to the “high-prestige” building, but did not adhere strictly to the blueprints (Alconini 2004:405). This is in contrast to the very few Inka artifacts in the way of ceramics and other items,
suggesting that the Inka were more concerned with monitoring the region than interacting in the local economy (Alconini 2004:408).

The second region, Cuzcotuyo, was occupied by “semi-mobile tropical groups,” and the region maintained a low population density during the time of Inka control (Alconini 2004:408, 411). Here were military complexes attributed to the Inka empire that are similar to those found in other parts of the empire (Alconini 2004:410). These complexes did not yield much evidence of occupation, leading Alconini to hypothesize that they were lookout forts with the capacity to house a brigade in case of invasion, rather than buildings that housed permanent garrisons (Alconini 2004:411-414).

Alconini concludes that Inka involvement in the Oronconta and Cuzcotoyo frontiers cannot fit in either of the two “idealized frontier models” of military barrier or cultural frontier (Alconini 2004:413). Rather than finding evidence that would completely fulfill the requirements of either model as suggested in previous scholarship, Alconini finds “an extensive zone of sociopolitical interaction” (Alconini 2004:413). Dissatisfied with the other two models, she introduces a third model that she calls a “soft military perimeter,” which consisted of:

1. A perimeter dictated by topography, rather than a straight line
2. The formation of outposts for temporary troop accommodations, rather than permanent garrison cities
3. The creation of disembedded centers, rather than use of established local centers

A “soft military perimeter” is formed when “external threat is sporadic,” creating a means by which to defend territory while also establishing a small but intimidating imperial presence amongst a local population (Alconini 2004:414). Alconini detects food storage facilities in both

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81 See further discussion of these two models in Chapter 1.
local and Inka enclaves that points toward a “modest surplus” meant to support this small “local Inka administration” (Alconini 2004:414). The Inka presence in the frontiers also served as “advance points into new territories” which would take away the frontier status of these regions (Alconini 2004:414). Those loyal to the imperial cause maintained a presence both in administrative and military buildings that warned off potential invaders as well as provided a means by which to conquer new frontiers.

Alconini’s soft military perimeter model informs an understanding of the western Negev fortresses. The western Negev fortresses are dictated by the geography of the river beds in order to monitor both local and Egyptian movement. The fortresses may have housed temporary or permanent Assyrian garrisons that emphasized the fact of Assyrian control. Finally, the western Negev fortresses that served as Assyrian military outposts were made more prominent by the demise of Tel Beer Sheba. While Assyria could have taken advantage of the clout that Beer Sheba had established in the region, they left the site as a squatter occupation and instead most likely focused their building efforts in Jemmeh (Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2016:26). Alconini’s model would also allow for Assyrians to use a diverse population to serve the Assyrian cause.

8. Analysis

The diversity of finds labeled as Neo-Assyrian constructions in the southern Levant suggests two obvious possibilities. Either archaeologists such as Stern (2001:3), Oren (1993:294), Reich (1984:33), and Van Beek (1993:372), are too liberal with their identification of Assyrian fortresses and their lack of consensus on the material allows for the same interpretation of a number of sites. Or, Assyrian fortresses and constructions took on a number of characteristics depending on factors such as place, specific time, trade opportunities, proximity to other points, available craftsmen, etc. A look at a quotation from Fantalkin and Tal concerning Tell Qudadi as
an Assyrian fortress echoes a theme in labeling a fortress as “Assyrian” in the western Negev and greater Levant.82

But must we assume that attributing the fortress to the Neo-Assyrian network means it was actually built and maintained by Neo-Assyrians? While some of the architectural components discerned in the fortress may point in that direction, in our opinion this was not the case. Rather, both the construction and maintenance of the fortress were likely to have been carried out by a local vassal of the Neo-Assyrians on orders from the sovereign, as had been common practice in the frontier zones of the Neo-Assyrian Empire… we need not seek standard Mesopotamian construction or even Neo-Assyrian pottery-types there. If our proposed date for the functioning of the fortress is accepted, its attribution to a certain ruling authority should be based on a wider historical perspective rather than construction style or ceramics. (Fantalkin and Tal 2009:200)

Fantalkin and Tal articulate a theme present in the identification of “Assyrian” fortresses, and the act of attributing the construction of any building to a specific political program (see also Thareani 2016:90). As discussed above, southern Levantine sites labeled as “Assyrian” constructions may or may not exhibit Assyrian architectural and pottery traditions. However, if the site lies within the time period and parameters of Assyrian control, archaeologists tend to label them as Assyrian-influenced construction whether or not Assyrian-style architecture exists at the site.

A more nuanced interpretation of the archaeological record suggests an alternative possibility in which the material culture displays a unique interaction between Assyria and the local populations in Assyrian frontiers. The dynamic interactions between local populations, Mediterranean seafarers, Assyrian administration, and Egyptians threatening encroachment, better explains the eclectic, sometimes enigmatic, material culture left behind in the southern Levant. Though scholars probably take all of these characteristics of the 7th-century western Negev into account, they often fail to present the full scale and diversity of interaction.

82 See Chapter 3 for more information on Tel Qudadi.
Much like the problem with labeling a fortress as Assyrian, scholars label the western Negev as a buffer zone without supplying criteria or a working definition (Oren 1990; Burdajewicz 2003:30). Perhaps they have in mind that its function is to reduce “interaction and conflict between competing and antagonistic groups through the simple mechanism of spatial distancing” (DeBoer 1981:365). This defined function would emphasize the hostility between Assyria and Egypt and the convenience of the greater Negev to block one another from their respective territories. Further, labeling the western Negev as a Buffer Zone does not fully explain the diverse interactions that took place in the region as evidenced in the archaeological record. DeBoer (1981) describes three possible scenarios of a population expanding into a buffer zone. First, a polity could “gradually expand into a buffer zone” while the “second polity retreats” so that though the buffer zone moves, there is still space in between two polities. In this case, the displaced population could move, perhaps into another buffer zone potentially setting in “a chain-reaction” on several borders. Second, a polity expands into a buffer zone without an initial retreat from the other polity until the distance becomes too minimal, in which case the second polity retreats and the displaced polity would settle again in regions “flanking the polity.” Third, one polity swiftly and violently overtakes the buffer zone and encroaches on the other polity’s land, in which case the displaced polity would be enslaved (DeBoer 1981:371).

Within this framework, it becomes clear that the western Negev might not fit its label as a buffer zone. In all three of DeBoer’s scenarios, the story of the western Negev becoming a buffer zone would have been a long process beginning with Assyria’s initial expansion into the southern Levant. With every newly annexed territory, the former territory was no longer considered a buffer, but rather a region within the political system, hemmed in on all sides: i.e., Megiddo would have been a “Buffer zone” until Samaria was fully absorbed; Samaria would
have been a buffer until Philistia was conquered, etc. Egypt and locals loyal to Egypt would have been the retreating polity, creating further distance between them and the new Assyrian territories. From the Assyrian point of view, the seizure of the Philistine coast meant pushing the Egyptians back to their homeland, with the intervening expanses of Sinai preventing any immediate threat to their holdings in Philistia. From the outset of the Assyrian campaigns to Philistia, Egypt was the main threat to Assyria from the south (Na’aman 1979:83). In most cases, this would be a violent takeover as outlined in DeBoer’s third model. However, not everyone retreated and Assyria was able to subjugate a local population whilst keeping Egypt at bay. In this way, DeBoer’s model does not accurately describe interactions in the western Negev.

DeBoer himself admits that these are “idealized” scenarios (DeBoer 1981:371), and the western Negev proves that it went through a much more complicated process. Labeling the western Negev as a buffer zone fails to consider that the people group on the border or in the buffer zone is culturally and politically different than the two main polities on either side of the buffer zone (DeBoer 1981:371). The unique case of the western Negev illustrates how a local population negotiates space and power between the Assyrians, in whose territories they exist, and the Egyptians, who were enemies of the Assyrians but at the time allies to the local population.

Further, the fortresses in the area as well as the Assyrian ceramic traditions and texts show that Assyria was operating within the region, contradicting the idea that a buffer zone separates two populations. In this case, Assyria was interested in extending its borders while at the same time preventing Egyptian encroachment. Taking these factors into account, the western Negev looks less like a “Buffer Zone” and more like a zone allowing only one of the two clashing states (i.e., Assyria) to operate in the region with the objective being further expansion.
Alconini (2004) also objects to the idealized models of frontier zones in her studies; neither southeastern Inka frontier nor the southern Levantine Assyrian frontier fit concisely within the models for a hard military border or a soft cultural zone. Indeed the western Negev shares characteristics of both: its fortresses along a perimeter suggest a hard military border but its diverse makeup is more in line with a soft cultural boundary. Alconini’s (2004:414) proposal of a third option, a “soft military perimeter” seems to be congruent with what we find in the western Negev.

The western Negev does mostly comply with the “soft military perimeter” as outlined by Alconini. The fortresses are not set in a solid line of defense as would be suggested by a hard military border, but rather they follow the curvatures of the river beds, which provide the best routes for transportation (Dorsey 1991:67-68, 199-201) and available water sources. While the size and type of population in these fortresses is somewhat unclear, it appears that Jemmeh could have housed a small Assyrian enclaves or mercenaries (Oren 1974; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). The size of both of this sites as well as the vaulted building in Mesopotamian style and Assyrian administrative artifacts such as seals and ostraca suggests an Assyrian political leader was present at the site (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:507, 513). While Tel Sera’ and Sheikh Zuweid have yielded Assyrian artifacts such as palace ware, and Assyrian religious artifacts and architecture, they do not have enough material to understand without a doubt how they were situated within the Assyrian political landscape (Oren 1974; Reich 1975). It is unclear from the architecture and material culture that an Assyrian presence was located at Ruqueish and Tel Haror (Oren, Morrison, and Gilead 1986; Huster 2000). Either way, the local population would have been loyal or at least subject to the Assyrian cause, as Alconini (2004:414) suggests some locals were in the southeastern Inka frontier. The idea that a dearth of Assyrian material culture at a site
does not necessarily mean that the Assyrians were not involved in the site would be in line with Fantalkin and Tal’s (2009) assertion that fortresses within assumed Assyrian territory were still strategic to the Assyrian Empire. Moreover, these eclectic fortresses reflect a shifting population exploring economic opportunities within the new framework of the Assyrian Empire.

Some or all of these fortresses within this “soft military perimeter” were perhaps overseen by the “village inspector” (rab ālāni), who would in turn answer to a higher official, located at Jemmeh or to the provincial governor at Ashdod (Postgate 1979:216). Sources that deal with other parts of the empire provide further information on the interactions between local populations and Assyrians on the outskirts of their territories. Texts suggest that Assyrian officials had both the responsibility of “civilian affairs” as well as “military duties,” so the combination of the two in a place like the western Negev would be vital to Assyrian and local interactions (Postgate 2007:334). In addition to local civilians were military personnel, such as the “Aramean mercenaries” who were used to monitor and defend the outskirts of the empire (Postgate 1979:210). Although texts do not explicitly state that this was the case in the western Negev, the diversity of material culture in the region suggests the possibility of a “police-force” housed in one or more of the fortresses (Postgate 1979:210).

Like the Inka fortresses, the western Negev fortresses served as both a threatening deterrent against local rebellion as well as turnkey facilities to house more troops in case of substantial military conflict (Alconini 2004:414). If Jemmeh is the regional hub, as some scholars suggest (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014), it should be considered a site chosen by Assyria for a special purpose, chosen over an already-established Philistine or Judean city, just as Alconini observed that the Inka used established cities that were not local capitals (Alconini 2004). These interactions may have been overseen by the “village inspector” (rab ālāni), who
would in turn answer to a higher official, perhaps at Jemmeh or to the provincial governor at Ashdod (Postgate 1979:216). In addition, the grain sacks, granaries, and storage facilities found at Jemmeh could have been to provide a modest surplus to Assyrian administrators as Alconini (2004) suggests in the Inka frontier (Reich 1996; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014:507, 545). Finally, the southwestern Negev no doubt served as a “springboard” into Egyptian territory, the next region of Assyria’s military focus (Oren 1990; Alconini 2004).

Naveh argues that texts from Tel Jemmeh provide evidence for Assyrian control but do so in a way that embraces the diversity in the region. First, the texts are written in Aramaic, a language most likely more accessible to Levantine peoples than Akkadian (Naveh 1985:11,19). Second, Naveh (1985:21) does not recognize some of the names in the texts and guesses that they could be Greek or Philistine, hinting at a foreign contingent otherwise not represented in the southern Levant. It is interesting that this multiculturalism is prevalent during a time when Assyrians are in control; rather than denying access to those wishing to take advantage of economic opportunities, the Assyrians welcomed and maybe even assisted foreigners in the region.

Pottery traditions present in the region during the 7th century also suggest a diverse population maneuvering in a new environment. The increase in Greek pottery in the region coincides with the 7th century, and Assyria’s expansion throughout the Mediterranean (Waldbaum and Magness 1997; Lanfranchi 2000:11). Further, Lanfranchi (2000:31) found that in 8th and 7th century Greece, “foreign trade was tolerated or even encouraged” following initial conquest, then when Assyria sorted out its political structure for the newly annexed region, “foreign settling was allowed.”
This could also be true for the increase in Greek, Edomite and Phoenician material in the Negev during this time.\textsuperscript{83} Thareani suggests that “in the desert frontier, in times of ever-growing interaction with the outside world, when serving, eating, and ritual vessels were decorated in a distinctive style, the phenomenon reflects a sharpening of tribal identity” (Thareani 2010:52). Along with Assyrian ware, this new pottery reflects the diversity within the region. This is in contrast to Thareani’s (2016:93-94) assessment that the western Negev fortresses have more Assyrian characteristics (though only Abu Salima is listed), than those in the central coastal plain (Qudadi and Rishon le-Ziyyon). As this chapter shows, a strong local signature is also evident in the western Negev material culture that is intertwined with the two Assyrian-style buildings, similar to that in Philistia as presented in Chapter 3. However, Thareani (2016:94) does is probably correct in suggesting that the western Negev fortresses represent a “physical presence of Assyrian administrative, economic, and military personnel,” amongst the diverse population.

Though a diverse material culture was present, little is known about the commodities that were traded. Elat (1978:30-31) surmises from few Akkadian documents that the most traded goods from the region were horses, silver, linen, other fabrics, and dried fish, papyrus rolls, elephant products. One of the main challenges developing an understanding of Assyria’s economic impact on the southern Levant is that less is known from texts concerning village and city economy, non-state labor, crafts and industries, and trade. These topics are the least documented (Postgate 1979:195; Bedford 2001:75). We are left with the archaeological record that is silent in some ways, though Lipiński (2006:74) identifies Ruqeish as a large trade

\textsuperscript{83} Further east, Edomite pottery also seems to increase in the Negev. For instance, Therani found that in Aroer, 90% of the identified pottery in a style considered as Edomite was found outside the city’s fortifications in adjacent areas of the tell, and the majority of vessels most likely functioned within the context of “food preparation and consumption and ritual activities” (Thareani 2010:44,46,51). The appearance of Edomite pottery in Aroer in the 8th century reached its zenith in the 7th century, and though most of the pottery in the area remained Judean, its presence suggests an “extramural” Edomite neighborhood (Thareani 2010:46,51). This neighborhood led Therani to suggest that the purpose of the Edomite neighborhood was that of trade (Thareani 2010:52).
emporium established during the time of Tiglath-pileser III (see also Thareani 2016:95). Sargon II recorded that he made Egyptians and Assyrians trade together at the sealed Kāru of Egypt. If this is indeed a site in the western Negev, then it appears that we have some textual evidence to support trade in the region. The Neo-Assyrian kāru was unlike those from the Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian period, both instances were agreements between locals and colonizers. Instead Neo-Assyrian kāru was “established in places whose economies could not be exploited through regular administrative means” and instead Assyria monitored the trade networks on the coasts and in the desert (Elat 1978:27). The incorporation of semi-nomadic populations in the network connected to a kāru aided Assyria in dominating the trade network (Elat 1978:30). The small number of sites in the region suggests that trade of luxury items took place, but not necessarily in large numbers. Assyria’s main focus was instead on defense of their Levantine territories by means of reliance upon their vassals.

9. Conclusion

The preceding study has explored the question of imperial incorporation of frontiers abutting formidable territorial states, and has specifically addressed the question of Assyrian constructions in the western Negev through the lens of other sites in the western Negev, and the greater southern Levant, as well as information from the Upper-Tigris River Valley, and anthropological models introduced by Parker and Alconini. In the case of the southern Levant, the disparate data initially suggest that either archaeologists have been too liberal in identifying sites as Assyrian fortresses, or that the Assyrian Empire did not institute a uniform site plan or material culture signature at each site that they controlled. A more nuanced interpretation of the diverse material culture moves toward detecting the complex political, economic, and military system(s) in which both local populations and Assyria participated. I utilize Alconini’s models to
suggest that Assyria's small-scale interaction with the western Negev constitutes a “soft military perimeter” in which foreign and local populations participated in a lucrative trade system. But in large-scale interaction of the Assyrian Empire, the western Negev was intended to function as a hard military boundary in order to prevent Egyptian encroachment, and most likely to enable further Assyrian expansion, or, as Oren puts it, the western Negev was “a springboard for the conquest of Egypt” (Oren 1990:102). In order to dissuade Egyptian encroachment as well as prepare for their own eventual conquest of Egypt, Assyria most likely entrusted locals and other Levantine mercenaries and tradesmen to secure the western Negev (Thareani 2016:95).
Chapter 5: Conclusion

1. Introduction

This dissertation has analyzed material culture and settlement patterns in three case studies, Megiddo, Philistia, and the western Negev in order to understand the nature of Assyrian occupation in the southern Levant. While researching this topic, I found that a mischaracterization of the archaeological record from the time of Assyrian occupation was apparent both in Assyrian texts as well as in several academic works both concerning specific sites and on the regional level. Further investigation of the material culture leads to an alternate view of the archaeological record presented in this dissertation. Data from Megiddo, Ashdod, and the Western Negev suggest that the small number of sites with evidence of destruction and even fewer sites with evidence of Assyrian imperial control are a product of a strategy that allowed Assyria to annex the region with less exertion than their annals claim. Furthermore, Assyria’s network of imperial outposts monitored international highways in a manner that allowed a small local and foreign population to participate in trade and defense opportunities that ultimately benefited the Assyrian core.

84 For instance, see Assyrian texts describing military campaigns into the region (e.g., Grayson and Novotny 2014:143) as well as several works claiming large-scale devastation in the southern Levant (Na’aman 1991:49; Broshi and Finkelstein 1992:55; Cline 2000:85; Stern 2001:7; Faust 2015:363).
2. Summary of Reviewed Literature

A comprehensive literature review of Assyrian occupation in the southern Levant would encompass Assyrian and Biblical texts, site reports and settlement surveys as well as synthetic works characterizing the nature of Assyrian occupation. Assyrian texts, specifically annals, letters and eponym lists from Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon, as well as Biblical passages in 2 Kings 15-17, 1 Chronicles 5, Psalms, Isaiah, and Joel, served as the primary sources describing Assyrian occupation in the region. Site reports of major excavations including Tel Dan, Hazor, Ayyelet HaShahar, Kinneret, Megiddo, Ashdod, Ekron, Ashkelon, Sheikh Zuweid and Jemmeh as well as literature on numerous minor sites provide details on the depth of Assyrian impact. Numerous settlement surveys supply the scope of Assyrian impact by listing smaller sites with the presence Iron Age and Persian pottery to gauge the impact of Assyrian expansion in the southern Levantine countryside. Previous synthetic works dealing

85 See Luckenbill 1926, SAA Volume 2, and Grayson and Novotny 2014 for English translations of several relevant works.

86 Several site reports were used in this dissertation (e.g., Biran 1974; Yadin 1972; Kletter and Zwicke 2006; Fritz 1999; Fritz 1993; Finkelstein, Ussishkin, and Halpern 2006; M. Dothan 1971; T. K. Dothan and Gitin 2012; Stager, Schloen, and Master 2011; Petrie and Ellis 1937; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). Several other encyclopedia and journal articles were helpful for the region around Megiddo (Stern and Arieh 1979; Ben-Tor 1993b; Lipschitz 1990; Ben-Tor 1993a; Ussishkin and Woodhead 1997; Gal, Alexandre, and Baruch 2000; Zangenberg, Münger, and Pakkala 2005; Kletter and Zwicke 2006; Kochavi and Yadin 2008), Philistia (Jacob Kaplan 1969; Zeev Herzog, Negbi, and Moshkovitz 1978; Blakely and Toombs 1989; Amiran and Eitan 1993; M. Dothan 1993; Fargo 1993; Kogan-Zehavi 1993; Levi and Pielstocker 1993; Wolff and Shavit 1993; Wolff 1999; Dagot 2002; Arb 2004; van den Brink 2005; Fantalkin and Tal 2009; Torge 2010; Fantalkin 2014), and the western Negev (Biran 1974b; Oren and Netzer 1974; Aharoni and Ben-Arieh 1974; Na’aman 1979; Oren, Morrison, and Gilead 1986; Hooker 1993; Oren 1993a; Oren et al. 1993; Oren and Netzer 1993; Gus Willard Van Beek 1993; Reich 1996; Oren 1997; Huster 2000; Ben-Shlomo 2014).

87 Several surveys from the Israel Antiquities Authority were helpful (Ronen and Olami 1978; Gal 1991; Dagan 1992; Fisher and Beitz-Arieh 1994; Gophna and Beitz-Arieh 1997; Gal 1998b; Gophna and Ayalon 1998; Olami and Gal 2003; Ariel Berman, Stark, and Bard 2004; Ariel Berman and Bard 2005; Olami et al. 2005; Olami, Sender, and Oren 2005; Ariel Berman et al. 2005; Beitz-Arieh and Ayalon 2012; Bard 2013; Gophna 2015b; Gophna 2015a) as well as compilation works (Shavit 2008; Ras 2010; Pierce 2015).
with Assyrian occupation provide different interpretations of the data that I have tested against my findings (e.g., Stern 2001).

3. Methods

In order to test the literature that I reviewed in this study, I reevaluated the textual and archaeological material traditionally associated with Assyrian occupation in the regions of northern Palestine, Philistia, and the western Negev. First, I reevaluated the evidence of sites mentioned in publications as having evidence of Assyrian destruction in order to determine the probability and nature of the destruction. Second, sites listed as having signs of Assyrian occupation in the literature reviewed were reevaluated to determine if they had Mesopotamian-style architecture and material culture associated with them. Third, I considered the geographical location of sites exhibiting plausible Assyrian impact that might suggest imperial strategy. Finally, I assessed the settlement pattern following Assyrian destruction to determine the changes in the landscape that took place during the time of Assyrian occupation.

4. Summary of Evidence

I found three types of evidence to support a reevaluation of the nature of Assyrian occupation in the southern Levant, specifically in the regions of Megiddo, Philistia, and the western Negev according to the archaeological record. This evidence centered on the destructions associated with Assyrian campaigns, the nature of Mesopotamian-style buildings traditionally associated with Assyrian control, and changes in settlement pattern. In each case, a closer look at the data revealed a more complex relationship between the Assyrian Empire and the local population.

A closer look at the material culture associated with the Assyrian destruction in Megiddo and Philistia reveals a discrepancy in the understanding of destructions caused by Assyrian
campaigns. Within the scope of this study, 21 sites are listed in various publications as having destructions dating to Assyrian occupation. Moreover, settlement surveys often state that all villages within their respective regions were destroyed.\textsuperscript{88} Contrary to these claims, I found that only eight sites indeed have a strong indication of late Iron Age destruction that could be attributed to Assyria. In addition, of the sites that do have evidence of destruction, no site-wide destruction is evident. Instead, one or two administrative or domestic buildings had evidence of destruction at Beth Shean, Kinneret, Tel Dan, Hazor, and Megiddo (Yadin 1972:287; Stern and Arieh 1979:5-6; Davies 1986:197; Gal 1992:44; Fritz 1999:197; Zangenberg, Münger, and Pakkala 2005:200; Mazar and Amitai-Preiss 2006:33), and Hazor, Kadesh, Karnai Hattin, Kinneret and Tel Dan show signs of destroyed gates or fortifications (Yadin 1972:190; Stern and Arieh 1979:6; Gal 1992:244; Biran and Shadur 1994:260; Fritz 1993:200). Although no destruction at any site provides definitive evidence, some clues possibly point toward Assyria as the culprit. While the general regions in which these sites are located are mentioned in Assyrian campaign annals, only Ashdod and Hazor are specifically mentioned by name and also have the correct corresponding level of destruction.

Several publications also claim that sites have evidence of Assyrian building projects in Megiddo, Philistia, and the western Negev. In the region of Megiddo, four sites have remnants of Mesopotamian-style architecture in the form of courtyard buildings thought by many to be markers of Assyrian political control. Megiddo has three courtyard buildings and is recorded as housing an Assyrian governor (Peersman 2000, SAA 5 292), suggesting its status as a provincial capital. Hazor, Kinnereth, and Ayyelet HaShahar also had Assyrian courtyard buildings but these are not mentioned in Assyrian texts (Yadin 1972; Fritz 1999; Kletter and Zwickel 2006).

\textsuperscript{88} See chapters 2 and 3 Destrucions attributed to Assyria for full catalog.
Megiddo also possessed local architecture and at least one building had local elements in addition to Mesopotamian-style elements. Hazor, Kinnereth and Ayyelet HaShahar all have partially excavated buildings identified as courtyard buildings by scholars. No Assyrian material culture is present in any of the buildings in this region.

In Philistia, two buildings have evidence of Assyrian architecture, though others are thought to be Assyrian construction projects. Ashdod, the site mentioned to have an Assyrian governor in eponym lists has a Mesopotamian-courtyard building (Dothan 1971). Another site, Rishon le-Ziyyon, also possessed Assyrian-style construction in the form of a small fortress that resembled a courtyard building (Levi and Pielstocker 1993; Levy, Peilstöcker, and Ginzburg 2004). The fortress at Tel Qudadi is also thought by some to be part of an Assyrian construction plan, but lacks any material culture to confirm this conclusion (Fantalkin and Tal 2009). Scholars also attribute the large olive oil production facility at Ekron to Assyrian economic interest (Gitin 1987), although Schloen (2001), Faust (2011) and Stager (2011) refute this by showing that the material culture suggests a more local or Phoenician interest, or that the olive oil facility actually dates to a time following Assyrian expansion. The identification in academic literature of Assyrian influence in places with and without Mesopotamia-style architecture and material culture also occurs south of this region in the western Negev.
Figure 29 Sites with varying degrees of Assyrian material culture
Several sites in the western Negev are also labeled as Assyrian constructions, despite the disparate nature of the material culture. One building with vaulted ceilings at Tel Jemmeh and the chapel at Sheikh Zuweid both possess architectural features with Assyrian correlates (Petrie and Ellis 1937; Reich 1984; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). While Tel Sera, Ruqeish and Haror all are listed as Assyrian constructions in academic literature, they resemble local and Phoenician architecture rather than Assyrian (Oren et al. 1993; Oren et al. 1993; Oren 1993a). The material culture at Tel Sera yielded artifacts that have affinities to Assyrian cults and administration, as do Jemmeh and Sheikh Zuweid (Petrie and Ellis 1937; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). These five sites exemplify the eclectic material culture found in the region.

In combination with larger sites, several surveys reveal changing settlement patterns in smaller sites (Table 30). During Assyrian expansion in the region associated with Magidu, 64 sites were occupied without change, 58 sites were abandoned, and 14 sites declined in size (Gal 1992; Gal 1998b; Frankel 2001; Olami and Gal 2003; Finkelstein et al. 2006). Assyrian occupation is evident at three established sites, Megiddo, Kinneret, and Hazor, as well as a new occupation at Ayyelet HaShahar (Peersman 2000; Fritz 1999; Yadin 1972; Kletter and Zwickel 2006). In the area surrounding Ašdud, ten sites were abandoned and 30 sites declined in size (Dagan 1992; Fisher and Beit-Arie 1994; Berman, Stark, and Barda 2004; Berman and Barda 2005; Berman et al. 2005; Beit-Arie and Ayalon 2012; Barda 2013; Gophna 2015b). The region is also home to Ekron, a site that may have increased or decreased in size depending on the interpretation of the material culture (Gitin 1989; Stager, Schloen, and Master 2011). Ashdod experienced destruction followed by Assyrian architecture (Dothan 1971).

Preliminary data in the regions around Samaria, Dor, Judah, and the greater Negev, suggest similar findings to those found in Magidu, Ašdud, and the western Negev (Figure 29).
Samaria, recorded as a province in Assyrian texts, experienced an overall decrease in population, suggesting that it was also a Transit Corridor Province (see Appendix B). Though the city of Samaria is listed as a provincial capital, the site does not have remnants of Assyrian-style architecture (Crowfoot, Kenyon, and Sukenik 1942:5-20). Dor also experienced a decrease in population (see Appendix A), and the city of Dor did not have distinct Assyrian-style architecture either, but it did possess a substantial amount of Assyrian-style pottery (Gilboa 1996; Stern 2000:140). Scholarship concerning the greater Negev exhibits the same issue as the western Negev in that archaeologists attribute a number of local characteristics to Assyrian building practices. This is prevalent in evaluation of sites such as Kadesh Barnea (Na’aman 1991:48, Finkelstein 2010:122), En Haseva and Tel el-Kheleifeh (Finkelstein 2010:121). Further consideration of the dynamic interactions between Assyrians and locals in the greater Negev would most likely lead to a greater understanding of Assyria’s interactions with its borderlands. Finally, the region of Judah experienced palpable destruction and a shrinking of its territory during Assyrian expansion. Though Judah was not fully incorporated into the provincial system, it was subject to Assyria and surrounded by regions with Assyrian military occupation.
Several limitations in gleaning data for this study became evident as I investigated the material. First, the settlement surveys mainly provide surface material information that may not represent findings had the site been excavated. It is not clear if a site was occupied for the entire duration of the time period assigned (see Dewar 1991; Kintigh 1994). Second, most sites with site reports have only been partially excavated, so there is much more information to uncover about the nature of the Iron Age II material. Furthermore, site reports are often only available for larger sites along perceived important routes, which lays bare a gap in the archaeological record, especially as this dissertation is interested in the overall impact of the Assyrian occupation. Third, some of the excavations date to a time prior to modern excavation methods, or lack full publications, making it difficult to build a clear picture of the time period. Based on the material that has been reviewed, there is still sufficient evidence to support a general hypothesis about Assyrian occupation in the southern Levant.
Overall, the reevaluation of data demonstrated in chapters 2, 3, and 4 shows differences in the dataset that have led to mischaracterizations of the Assyrian impact in past publications. Whereas site reports, settlement surveys, and synthetic works cite several destructions and overall devastation attributed to Assyria, my findings indicate minimal evidence of destruction that can be dated to the Late Iron Age. Similarly, some sites said to indicate a strong Assyrian presence in the Levant do not possess strong affinities to Mesopotamian-style architecture or material culture. Additionally, settlement patterns indicate that several sites from the Iron II did not continue into the Persian period, suggesting changes in settlement and a decrease in population around the time of Assyrian occupation. These observations prompt a reevaluation of Assyrian occupation in the southern Levant.

5. Assyrian Military Strategies and Occupation

This dissertation approaches the concept of Assyrian occupation from the angle of military strategy. The data suggest that the motivation behind the Assyrian military strategy in the southern Levant was to occupy and defend supply lines for further occupation of regions in Egypt and along the Mediterranean (Thareani 2016:95, Vego 2009:II-26, II-31-32). Based on the limited destructions mainly located along a strategic corridor, it appears that Assyria’s strategy to accomplish these goals was to dismantle the existing local political system by surgically destroying specific structures at key sites. Following initial campaigns, the Assyrian architecture along the same routes suggests that Assyria’s goal was to develop military outposts that ensured their continued hegemony over the supply lines. Despite these changes in the landscape, local Levantine interactions are still evident within the imperial network of control. Assyrian military strategy was comprised of tactics on assault, consolidation and ultimate occupation in the southern Levant.
5.1 Military Strategy

With the stated goal of securing military supply lines, Assyria first needed to conquer fortifications vital to local defense. Tiglath-pileser III’s strategy was that of attrition to starve his target Samaria of its ability to defend itself. This is also probably the case with battles conducted by Sargon II and Sennacherib, though some of their battles are outside of the scope of this project, so they cannot be explored completely. In order to starve an enemy, Assyrian campaigns focused military efforts on key sites on the supply lines to Samaria. Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II took more than a decade to consolidate control in the region before the final onslaught to the urban hub of the city of Samaria (Clausewitz 1873:8.4; Vego 2009:II-34). These military campaigns did not require the wholesale destruction of these sites but rather focused surgically on individual structures whose function was that of political governance or defense. This is seen in evidence of destruction focused around large administrative buildings and fortification systems in Dan, Hazor, Kinneret, Megiddo, Beth Shean, Ashdod, and Beer Sheva. These destructions suggest that Assyria focused on toppling local administration with the goal of gaining control of the land and its people, who would then serve the imperial cause. By engaging in protracted conquests in northern Palestine, Tiglath-pileser III used the wealth of his enemies toward their own destruction.

89 Assyrian strategy for assault seems to have changed somewhat during the time of Sennacherib. While out of the scope of this dissertation, it is important to point out the battle of Lachish, which is both depicted in an Assyrian palace relief and represented in severe destruction at the site itself (Ussishkin 1980; Ussishkin 1990). Lachish does demonstrate a marked change in Assyrian assault strategies. But during Sennacherib’s campaigns, they seem more accurate. It is likely that Sennacherib took Tiglath-pileser III’s campaign annals for verbatim accounts rather than the hyperbole that they were. Similarly, modern historians have taken Tiglath-pileser III at his word when his texts should be seen instead as political propaganda rather than an accurate narrative of events.
5.2 Military Consolidation and Occupation

Once Assyria achieved its military strategic objectives, it changed its focus toward consolidation in order to secure the newly acquired supply lines. Assyria began construction projects within northern Palestine, Philistia, and the western Negev as a means of consolidating Assyrian control and establishing a presence to discourage opposing powers. This control is manifested in the archaeological record through distinct Assyrian administrative buildings and other hybrid sites with local and Assyrian influences. In addition, distinctly Phoenician sites and local villages existed without Assyrian architecture even though Assyria exerted military domination over the region.

Within the scope of this dissertation, six sites possess Mesopotamian courtyard buildings, in a style which is associated with Assyrian administration (Amiran and Dunayevsky 1958:28). Megiddo is the most prominent, as it is listed as an Assyrian province and possesses three courtyard buildings (Peersman 2000). The three courtyard buildings in similar style to those at Megiddo, Hazor, Ayyelet Hashahar and Kinneret, would have served as outposts on the way to the provincial capital (Yadin 1972:194; Kletter and Zwickel 2006:154; Fritz 1999). Ashdod is also considered a province and possessed a Mesopotamian-courtyard building (Dothan 1971:92, 205). Rishon Le-Ziyyon near Ashdod was a site of a smaller courtyard building and probably served as an outpost as well connected to Ashdod (Levy, Peilstöcker, and Ginzburg 2004).

Other sites, mainly in Philistia and the western Negev, possessed elements of Mesopotamian material culture that could be associated with Assyrian occupation. Tel Jemmeh had an Assyrian-style vaulted building with Assyrian artifacts, but also a number of local elements (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). Similarly Sheik Zuweid had an Assyrian-style temple amongst predominately local architecture (Petrie and Ellis 1937). Though Tel Sera’ did not possess any
Assyrian-style architecture, it did yield a robust corpus of Assyrian-style pottery and other artifacts (Oren and Netzer 1993). The presence of Assyrian architecture and material culture at these sites suggests that they had a minor role in facilitating Assyrian military occupation.

Other key sites both within and outside of the scope of my dissertation are associated with Assyria on account of very minimal Assyrian influence or textual evidence. Tel Dor is often argued to be an Assyrian provincial capital despite the lack of textual evidence mainly based on its location and a 2-chambered gateway somewhat similar to that found in Megiddo III (Stern 2000:131). Samaria is listed as a province in Assyrian texts, but lacks Assyrian architecture at the site, contrary to the Mesopotamian courtyard buildings found at Megiddo and Ashdod. Tel Qudadi is argued as being an Assyrian fortress because of the time period in which it was built and its proximity to Ashdod, though it has no indication of Assyrian involvement (Fantalkin and Tal 2009). In the western Negev, Tel Haror is argued to be an Assyrian fortress despite lack of finds and material culture that would associate it with the empire (Oren 1993a). The olive oil industry at Ekron is also considered a product of Assyrian control based on assumption about the Assyrian agenda in the Levant rather than definitive material culture, though others argue for its relationship to the Phoenician trade network (Faust 2011).

The archaeological record suggests that Assyria most likely allowed the existence of a few Phoenician emporia within the realm of its military reach. In the north, Tel Dan was a thriving city with Phoenician and local influence during the time of Assyrian control in the region (Biran and Shadur 1994:261). Tel Ashkelon along the coast possessed Phoenician material culture rather than Assyrian, but was most likely monitored by Ashdod further up the coast (Master 2003). Tel Ruqueish also possess a unique material culture in the western Negev associated with Phoenician style, but was most likely within Tel Jemmeh’s zone of influence (Oren et al. 1993).
These three sites may indicate an agreement between Phoenicia and Assyria that facilitated trade interests. However, Assyria closely monitored the northern Levantine interests within the southern Levant by keeping them in close proximity to Assyrian military outposts.

6. Theoretical Implications

Based on the archaeological record of Assyrian expansion within the scope of this dissertation, the nature of Assyrian occupation appears to exist only as a network of strategic locations along supply lines of future battles; it does not seem to consist of boundaries on a map. In this interpretation of the data, the notion of political provinces is irrelevant in relation to Assyrian expansion, as main function of these territories is to further military conquest. This focus on military occupation is in contrast to the modern interpretation of the establishment of Assyrian provinces ultimately based on a concept developed a century ago by Forrer (Forrer 1920; cf., Otzen 1979; Na’aman 1995). In addition, contrary to Liverani Assyria may still have been engaging in expansion by a network of sites rather than annexation of territories. In the southern Levant, rather than taking over numerous sites to “thicken the mesh” of control, Assyria eliminated the friction between the nodes of communication by deportations and thinning of local population (Liverani 1988:92; Clausewitz 1873:I:23).

Parker’s (2001; 2003) discussion of frontier zones, specifically with regard to the Assyrian imprint in southeastern Anatolia, has furthered our understanding of the different types of functions a region can serve within an imperial system. While Parker’s ideas inspire further investigation of the Assyrian impact on the southern Levant, his characterizations of different zones in southeastern Anatolia do not completely correspond with those found in the southern Levant. Whereas his project found that the Assyrian provinces in southeastern Anatolia
experienced an increase in population (Parker 2003:552), data compiled for this dissertation show that the provinces of Ašdudu and Magidu decreased in population. Further, Parker's (2003:551) findings in the buffer zone in southeastern Anatolia yielded only local and Assyrian material culture. On the other hand, data compiled in the western Negev, also considered a buffer zone, reveal an eclectic corpus of local, Phoenician, Assyrian, Greek, Egyptian, and Edomite finds (Burdajewicz 2003:30).

To understand better the function of provinces and buffer zones in the Assyrian Empire, it is important to add a few distinctions to Parker’s categories. On account of the increase in population in the provinces in southeastern Anatolia, I propose to qualify them as “Production Provinces.” In contrast, the population decreases and attention to Assyrian outposts in Magidu and Ašdudu warrants the label “Transit Corridor Provinces.” The province of Samarina and the region around Dor would fit into this category as well. In addition, Alconini's (2004:414) “soft military border” model fits better with the multicultural nature of the Negev rather than designating it as a buffer zone. This better describes how the Assyrians incorporated the local and foreign population in its cause to present a defense against Egypt with a long-term plan of further imperial expansion into the south.

7. Conclusion

This dissertation analyzed data from three case studies in order to understand better the Assyrian impact in the southern Levant. The archaeological record revealed that there is less evidence of destruction than the Assyrian annals or modern scholarship attest, suggesting Assyria employed a military strategy of specific conquests rather than broad destruction in their initial campaigns into the region. Following the campaigns, Assyrian architecture is minimal, but along major
routes, pointing toward an interest in military supply lines that would protect their newly annexed territories as well as propel them into the conquest of Egypt. This analysis characterizes the provinces in the southern Levant as Transit Corridor Provinces consisting of a network of Assyrian outposts rather than the administration of regional territories. Within the network of Assyrian sites, a diminished local population as well as a Phoenician contingent are present in the archaeological record that appear to have some agency indicating a willingness on Assyria’s part to work with the local populace.
Appendix A: The Province? of Duru

In the region surrounding the city of Dor, only eighteen sites are recorded as having Iron II or Iron III pottery, and all but four of the sites also have Persian-period remains. In the region of Atlit, two sites had Iron II pottery (Ronen and Olami 1978). Tel Atlit continued into the Persian period, and the Harbor of Atlit superseded Dor’s harbor during the 9th or 8th century BCE and continued to be in use through the Persian period (Haggi 2006:56). In the region surrounding the site of Dor, two sites yielded Iron II remains and both continued to be in use during the Persian period (Olami et al. 2005). One of these sites is Tel Dor (discussed below). Tel Mevorekh is one of two Iron II sites and only Tel Mevorekh makes it into the Persian Period (Olami, Sender, and Oren 2005). Tel Mikhmoret was one of two sites from the Iron II and Mikhmoret was the only site that lasted until the Persian period (Neeman, Sender, and Oren 2000). In Hadera, pottery dating to the Iron II or III was found at eight sites, and five of those sites continued to the Persian period (Neeman, Sender, and Oren 2000). These surveys show a minor decrease in Iron Age II sites following Assyrian expansion.

Figure 31 2-chambered gates found at Megiddo (right) and Dor (left) during Assyrian control in the Levant
The most notable site of this region is Tel Dor, argued by some to be a provincial capital, although no ancient texts confirm its status, nor was monumental Mesopotamian-style architecture uncovered at the site. While no Assyrian text has been found that would confirm its provincial capital status, Stern argues that the finds are similar enough to that of Megiddo and Samaria that Dor should be considered a province (Stern 2000:131). Stern (2000:131) attributes the destruction of the 8th-century town to the Assyrians based on Assyrian texts and date of ceramics just below the destruction. Soon after destruction, the east part of the town underwent reconstruction with a fortification system consisting of an offset-inset wall with a massive stone construction and a mason’s mark on an ashlar stone similar to that at Megiddo (Stern 2000:132). The similarity between the walls and gates found at Megiddo and Dor is one main reason that Stern and Na’aman argue for Dor’s status as a provincial capital (see Figure 31); however, the gates are not identical in shape or size and no other Assyrian-style buildings have been excavated at Dor (Stern 2000:138; Na’aman 2009:102). The Israelite four-chambered gate was replaced with a two-chambered gate (Stern 2000:134). One distinctive feature of the city was a the door hinge with a covering stone found “only in Assyrian buildings” (Stern 1990; Stern 2000). A brown agate stamp seal, a cylinder seal and a substantial amount of Assyrian-style pottery were found at the site (Gilboa 1996; Stern 2000:140).

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90 One broken text could be reconstructed to confirm Dor’s provincial status (Stern 1990; Na’aman 2009).

91 Stern (2000:138) suggests that lack of excavation has prevented them from finding Assyrian-style architecture like that at Megiddo. Gilboa (1996:131ff.) also brings up the lack of architecture that can be identified as Assyrian.
Appendix B: The size and population of *Samarina*

The region of Samaria witnessed an overall decrease in population during Assyrian control. Zertal found that in the Shechem syncline, the Iron II to Iron III period experienced a drop in sites from 84 to 40 (Zertal 2004:57). He found the largest decline in population in the valleys that were mostly abandoned whereas in the highlands there was renewed settlement with 12 sites founded on virgin soil (Zertal 2004:58). The Persian period saw an increase of sites from 40 to 137 (Zertal 2004:59). In the eastern valleys and desert fringes, Zertal found a decline in sites from 44 sites during the Iron II period to 25 sites during the Iron III period (Zertal 2007:88,89). All Iron III sites in this area were continuations from Iron II sites, with no newly established sites (Zertal 2007:90). The valleys were more populated than the surrounding areas (Zertal 2007). The area continues to decline in the Persian period to 23 sites (Zertal 2007). In the Nahal Iron to the Nahal Shechem, only ten sites existed during the Iron III period as opposed to 63 sites in the Iron II period (Zertal 2016: 41,42). Finally, Zertal finds, in the Nahal Bezeq to the Sartaba, a severe decline of 103 settlements during the Iron II to 10 settlements during the Persian period (Zertal 2005). In the southern Samaria survey, of the 219 sites date to the Iron II period, only 86 continue to the Persian period (Finkelstein et al. 1997).

Perhaps the most surprising find in Samaria is the lack of Assyrian-style architecture on the site. It is not clear if there indeed was never any Assyrian-style architecture, or if Persian-period and Roman-period remains destroyed any traces of it. Nonetheless, it is curious that an

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92 He dates the Iron III period on pottery such as “decorated wedge-shaped bowls” but admits that some Iron II pottery continued into the Iron II repertoire (Zertal 2004:58).
Assyrian provincial capital does not have any noticeable Assyrian-style remains or artifacts (Crowfoot, Kenyon, and Sukenik 1942:5-20). Several similarities between Megiddo and Samaria before Assyrian expansion are evident in the archaeological record (Crowfoot, Kenyon, and Sukenik 1942:14-15). Perhaps the lack of similarities between the two cities during Assyrian occupation is reflective of Assyria’s determination to keep these two cities disconnected from one another.
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