

JOSIAH'S REVOLT AGAINST ASSYRIA

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THE date of the death of Aššūr-bān-apal is not known certainly though it can be fixed within narrow limits. It is known that the king ruled at least thirty-six years (669-633 B.C.). A. Poebel established that he cannot have ruled more than five years longer (to 628 B.C.),<sup>1</sup> and in 1944 W. H. Dubberstein, chiefly on the basis of a datum from Berossus, showed that he scarcely can have ruled more than two years longer (to 631 B.C.).<sup>2</sup> Dubberstein further pointed out by another ingenious combination a possibility that Sin-šar-iškun came to the throne of Assyria in 629 B.C.,<sup>3</sup> in which case the chronology is fixed:

Aššūr-bān-apal . . . . .	669-633
Aššūr-ēṭel-ilāni . . . . .	633-629
Sin-šum-lišir . . . . .	629
Sin-šar-iškun . . . . .	629-612

<sup>1</sup> A. Poebel, "The Assyrian King List from Khorsabad," *JNES* II (1943), 88-90. The end of the reign of Sin-šar-iškun is fixed by the Babylonian Chronicle to the year 612 B.C. A minimal reign of twelve years is attested for this king (Poebel, p. 90, n. 35). Four years are attested for the reign of Aššūr-ēṭel-ilāni, but only the accession year of the intervening king, Sin-šum-lišir.

<sup>2</sup> "Assyrian-Babylonian Chronology (669-612 B.C.)," *JNES*, III (1944), 38-42. If we accept the evidence that Sin-šar-iškun appointed Nabopolassar king of the *Sealand*s (as a measure to counter incipient or open revolt by Kandalānu), this would require Sin-šar-iškun's coming to the throne before 626 B.C., the accession year of Nabopolassar as king of *Babylon*, and the date of Kandalānu's death. In turn, Aššūr-ēṭel-ilāni's death would be pressed back to 627 B.C. at latest.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42, n. 31; cf. Poebel, *op. cit.*, p. 90, n. 35. The argument rests on a suggested change of reading of the year formula of a tablet from Uruk from an impossible "year 21 of Sin-šar-iškun" to a plausible "year 3 of Sin-šar-iškun." If the latter reading is correct, the tablet must be dated to the year 626 B.C., and the beginning of the reign of Sin-šar-iškun to 629 B.C., since Nabopolassar came into control of Uruk in early 625 B.C.

The political movements in Judah in the latter part of the seventh century B.C. sensitively reflect the progressive decline of Assyrian authority. The murder of Amon, king of Judah, represented, perhaps, an attempt on the part of the radical anti-Assyrian party to throw off the yoke of Assyria (ca. 640 B.C.).<sup>4</sup> However, the more moderate group gained control of the situation and placed the legitimate heir of David on the throne. The king's advisers now proceeded more cautiously, yet to judge from later events with carefully laid plans to regain the independence of Judah and the restoration of the old Davidic state. With the finding of the Deuteronomic Code in the eighteenth year of his reign (622 B.C.), Josiah launched a full-scale politico-religious program for the re-establishment of the Davidic kingdom, as has been emphasized by the Alt school.<sup>5</sup> This revolt coincides precisely with the end of the last vestige of Assyrian control in Babylonia (assuming Dubberstein's proposed chronology to be correct). By 623 B.C. recognition of Sin-šar-iškun had ceased even in Nippur, probably the last foothold of Assyria in Babylonia.<sup>6</sup> At this time Nabopolassar had thoroughly consolidated his power in the south and was poised to invade Assyria itself. It is not unlikely that Josiah made common cause with the

<sup>4</sup> M. Noth, *Geschichte Israels* (Göttingen, 1943), p. 235.

<sup>5</sup> See most recently *ibid.*, pp. 235-40, and the literature cited there; cf. also Albright, "The Biblical Chronology," in *The Jews*, ed. L. Finkelstein (New York, 1949), p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Dubberstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

Babylonian rebel.<sup>7</sup> It was in fact as the ally of the Chaldeans that Josiah lost his life in a delaying action against the Egyptians at Megiddo in 609 B.C.<sup>8</sup>

In II Chron. 34:3b-7, there is an account of earlier reform activity on the part of Josiah. This material apparently was derived from one of the special sources of the Chronicler, since it does not appear in Kings. The passage commonly has been regarded as of little historical value, merely a reflection of the great reform read into an earlier period. This is unlikely, though the description of the religious aspect of the movement, with the usual Deuteronomic formulas, has obviously been influenced by the record of the later reform. There is mention, however (II Chron. 34:6), of Josiah's activity in the north—in each of the three Assyrian provinces, which had formed the old kingdom of Israel. This note is without precise parallel in the account of the reform of 622 B.C., though religious measures in the province of Samaria (particularly in connection with the Bethel sanctuary) are described (II Kings 23:15 ff.). It would appear, therefore, that in the twelfth year of Josiah, 628 B.C., the king's party assumed control of the Assyrian provinces in the north: Samaria, Gilead, and Galilee. Whether Josiah's action is taken as an open break with Assyrian authority or, it seems more likely, as an internal reorganization within the framework of nominal Assyrian suzerainty (i.e., maintaining the legal fiction of Assyrian con-

<sup>7</sup> In similar fashion Josiah's ancestor Hezekiah had allied himself with the Chaldean freebooter, Merodach-baladan, after the death of Sargon II.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. B. Rowton, "Jeremiah and the Death of Josiah," *JNES*, X (1951), 128-30.

<sup>9</sup> Noth assumes that this was a more gradual extension, never entirely successful (*op. cit.*, pp. 235-40). But the evidence does not support this view. It is clear that at Megiddo in 609 Josiah was defending an area which had been secured previously.

trol, since Josiah was a vassal king), it is clear that a drastic change in the Palestinian situation had taken place. Assyria was losing effective control both of Judah and of the northern provinces; at the same time Josiah was making good the ancient claim of the house of David to these territories.

The annexation of the Assyrian provinces by Josiah in 628 B.C. may afford indirect evidence for the confirmation of the proposed chronology. Josiah's bold move in that year seems to reflect a shift in the cautious policy of the moderates, who had opposed such a move previously. It is a plausible inference that the occasion for such a shift was the death of the king Aššūr-ēṭel-ilāni<sup>10</sup> and subsequent disorders in Assyria and Babylonia.<sup>11</sup>

There is yet a third notice in II Chronicles which may be a reflex of an even earlier shift in political policy in Judah. In 34:3 the Chronicler records that in the eighth year of his reign (632 B.C.) Josiah "began to seek the God of David his father." That is to say, if the Chronicler is following reliable source material, it would appear that Josiah as early as 632 B.C. had repudiated the gods of his Assyrian overlords—immediately following the death of Aššūr-bān-apal in 633 B.C. (following Dubberstein's chronology).

Thus the Chronicler records a progres-

<sup>10</sup> The tendency of vassal states to revolt after the death of a strong king is well known. Compare, e.g., Merodach-baladan's revolt after the death of Sargon in 705 B.C. (above n. 7), or the general revolt following the death of Cambyses in 522 B.C. Two familiar examples from biblical history are the secession of Israel after the death of Solomon and Meša's revolt after the death of Ahab (II Kings 1:1 and 3:5).

<sup>11</sup> Sin-šum-lišir, who succeeded next to the throne, was not a prince of the royal line. Moreover, it is unlikely that he reigned beyond his accession year, and it is possible that he never held an uncontested throne. Sin-šar-iškun, a son of Aššūr-bān-apal, then secured the throne, perhaps after a period when rival claimants contended for the kingship. About the same time Kandalānu appears to have initiated revolt in Babylonia.

sive sequence of moves for religious—and therefore political—independence in Judah in the years 632, 628, and 622 B.C.

These dates admirably correlate with major shifts in the Assyro-Babylonian political situation as reconstructed in the chronology of Dubberstein. It may be, of course, that the Chronicler's dates are unreliable or have no political significance. Moreover, the Dubberstein chronology

may require revision (though it can scarcely be wrong by more than a year or two). Tentatively, however, the suggested synchronisms tend to confirm both the sequence of events in Judah and the proposed chronology for the last kings of Assyria.

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## UNE SCÈNE DE SACRIFICE RITUEL CHEZ LES ANCIENS ÉGYPTIENS

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PARMI les nombreux et superbes reliefs qui décorent les murs intérieurs de la tombe de Ptah-hotep à Sakkarah, on peut encore admirer un épisode d'un sacrifice de taureau qui mérite toute notre attention.<sup>1</sup> A cette époque les Égyptiens avaient inauguré l'habitude de représenter ce genre de sacrifice dans toutes ses phases, d'abord comme on prenait le taureau par les cornes pour lui

l'a démontré le Dr. G. Conteneau un autre ordre d'idées qui présidait aux sacrifices en Égypte.<sup>2</sup>

La scène de la tombe de Ptah-hotep dont il est question ici, représente un taureau déjà couché et immolé par terre. Les bouchers actifs à en trancher les morceaux destinés à être apportés en offrande. L'un de ces bouchers a probablement la main couverte du sang de l'animal;

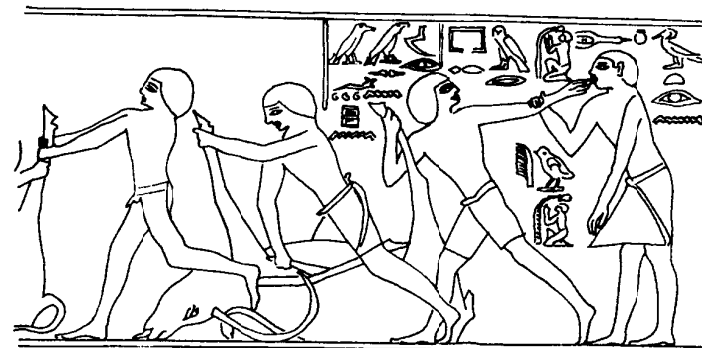


FIG. 1.—Sacrificial scene from the tomb of Ptah-hotep at Sakkara

tourner la tête et la poser à terre entraînant ainsi la chute de son corps, puis comme on lui ligotait les pattes, comme les bouchers, ayant la pierre à aiguiser attachée à la ceinture, égorgeaient l'animal et le dépeçaient en tranchant la tête, les cuisses, les côtes et l'on voit parfois aussi les serviteurs en emporter les pièces détachées. En Assyrie et en Babylonie, le sacrifice se rapproche davantage de l'envoûtement car la magie et les incantations y jouaient un rôle prépondérant, comme

cette main vers le nez d'un médecin, le bout près de lui en lui disant, seigneur, la légende qui accompagne son geste: « garde ce sang! » Le médecin lui répondit après en avoir senti l'odeur ou examiné la couleur: « Il est pur », c'est-à-dire qu'il pouvait, à son avis, continuer à dépecer la victime. Nous avons ici, sans aucun doute, une scène de sacrifice rituel unique

<sup>2</sup> G. Conteneau, *La médecine en Assyrie et en Babylonie* (Paris, 1938), p. 140.

<sup>1</sup> R. F. E. Paget et A. A. Pirie, *The Tomb of Ptah-hotep* (London, 1898), p. 31 et pl. XXXVI.

<sup>3</sup> Voir par exemple, la scène de boucherie dans la tombe de Mererouka, dans *The Mastaba of Mererouka* (Chicago, 1938), pl. LIV.