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"THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND" AND THE POLITICAL
CRISES IN JUDAH*

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In his basic treatment of "the people of the land" (*'am ha'arez*), E. Würthwein defined the expression as "*die zu einem bestimmten Territorium gehörige Vollbürgerschaft*," i.e., the full citizens of a given territory.¹ He further maintained that the expression "people of the land" of Judah is synonymous with "the people of Judah" (*'am yehûda* or *'anše yehûda*) as the designation of the Judeans in the monarchic period, excluding the inhabitants of Jerusalem.² This point was confirmed by R. de Vaux by distinguishing "the people of the land" from the king or the ruler, his servants, the nobles, the priests, and the prophets, i.e., the monarchic and religious functionaries.³ This thesis seems acceptable as a working hypothesis, although it is

* The nucleus of the present paper has been dealt with in my doctoral thesis, which was carried out under the supervision of Prof. A. Malamat and Prof. B. Mazar: *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, Jerusalem, 1974, pp. 177 ff.

¹ Würthwein, *Der 'amm ha'arez im Alten Testament*, (BWANT IV 17), Stuttgart, 1936, p. 14, (hereafter cited as *'amm ha'arez*); cf. L. Rost, "Die Bezeichnungen für Land und Volk im Alten Testament," (1934), in *Das kleine Credo und andere Studien zum Alten Testament*, Heidelberg, 1965, p. 92

² Würthwein, *'amm ha'arez*, pp. 15 ff.

Prof. B. Mazar suggested to me in his letter of March 8, 1974, that we may assume that both the Hittites in the story of Abraham's purchase of Machpelah (Gen xxiii 7, 12-13) and the inhabitants of the land which Moses made spy out (Num xiv 9) are anachronistically called "the people of the land," since they were also the inhabitants of "the land of Judah."

³ de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, London, 1961, p. 71; *idem*, "Le sens de l'expression 'peuple du pays' dans l'Ancien Testament et le rôle politique du peuple en Israël," *RA* LVIII, 1964, p. 168; cf. J. L. McKenzie, "The 'People of the Land' in the Old Testament," in *Akten des vierundzwanzigsten Internationalen Orientalisten-Kongresses Münchens 28. Aug. bis 4. Sept. 1957*, Wiesbaden, 1959, pp. 207 f.; H. Tadmor, "The People and the Kingship in Ancient Israel: the Role of Political Institutions in the Biblical Period," *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale* XI, 1968, p. 67.

disputed by some scholars.¹ It is not our intention to seek another definition of the expression "people of the land;" rather, we shall re-examine each historical situation of the political crises in Judah, in order to clarify the role of "the people of the land."

The expression "people of the land" appears, for the first time, in the account of the rebellion against Athaliah and the enthronement of Jehoash (2 Kings xi; 2 Chron xxiii). The origin of this political crisis can be traced back to Jehoshaphat's alliance with the Omrides (1 Kings xxii 2 ff., 44; 2 Chron xviii 1 ff.), which was sealed by the marriage of Jehoram, his son, and Athaliah, Omri's daughter.² By making peace with the Northern Kingdom, with which Judah had been in a state of war for half a century since the division of the United Kingdom, Jehoshaphat brought prosperity to his kingdom (2 Chron xvii). His foreign policy, however, was not completely accepted (xix 2).

We learn of the critical condition in the last years of Jehoshaphat's reign by his treatment of his sons. He bequeathed the property to his sons, "but gave the kingdom to Jehoram, because he was the first-born"

¹ E. W. Nicholson, "The Meaning of the Expression 'am hā'areš in the Old Testament," *JSS* X, 1965, pp. 56-66, rejects to regard "the people of the land" "as a technical term designating a specific class or group within the population of Judah" and concludes that "the term has no fixed and rigid meaning but is used rather in a purely general and fluid manner and varies in meaning from context to context." On the other hand, S. Talmon, "The Judean 'Am Ha-'areš in Historical Perspective," in *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, I, Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 71-76, argues that "the 'am ha'areš of Judah cannot be viewed as a democratic or otherwise constitutionally circumscribed institution. Rather is it a body of Judeans in Jerusalem that rose to some power and importance which was ultimately derived from their loyalty to the Davidic dynasty;" cf. also *idem*, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, VI, Jerusalem, 1971, cols. 239-242, (Hebrew).

² According to one tradition (2 Kings viii 26; 2 Chron xxii 2), Athaliah was Omri's daughter, while the other tradition (2 Kings viii 18; 2 Chron xxi 6) regards her as Ahab's daughter. But chronological studies show that she could not be Ahab's daughter, see J. Begrich, "Athalia, die Tochter Omris," *ZAW* LIII, 1935, pp. 78-79; H. J. Katzenstein, "Who were the Parents of Athaliah?" *IEJ* V, 1955, pp. 194-197.

(2 Chron xxi 3). This note on Jehoram's designation is conspicuous. It is absolutely superfluous, because the first-born was usually the successor to the throne in Judah.¹ This reveals, therefore, that Jehoshaphat had a special reason in defending his designation of Jehoram. It is likely that Jehoshaphat could appoint Jehoram as his successor only by suppressing the opposing power.

We can assume that Jehoram's purge of his brothers after Jehoshaphat's death (2 Chron xxi 4) was caused by the confrontation between his regime and the opposing power, with which his brothers were connected.² Undoubtedly, Athaliah, his wife, actively participated in the oppression (cf. 2 Kings viii 18; 2 Chron xxi 6). When he died, Ahaziah, the only surviving son of Jehoram and Athaliah (2 Chron xxi 17), ascended the throne with the backing of "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (xxii 1). The description of Ahaziah's enthronement is also remarkable because of the special mention of his supporters. Since we never hear of supporters of the new king at the normal accession, it must be assumed that there existed a conflict between the regime supported by "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" and the other Judeans.

Ahaziah's monarchy was actually Athaliah's regime, since this young king, who was twenty-two at his enthronement (2 Kings viii 26),³

¹ When the principle of primogeniture was overruled, we frequently hear how and why the irregular succession took place. This kind of additional explanation can be found concerning the succession of the following kings: Solomon (2 Sam ix-xx; 1 Kings i-ii), Abijam (2 Chron xi 21-22), Ahaziah (2 Chron xxi 17; xxii 1), Azariah (2 Kings xiv 21; 2 Chron xxvi 1), Jehoahaz (2 Kings xxiii 30; 2 Chron xxxvi 1), and Zedekiah (2 Kings xxiv 17; 2 Chron xxxvi 10).

² Cf. H. Tadmor, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, III, Jerusalem, 1958, col. 539, (Hebrew).

³ According to 2 Chron xxii 2, he ascended the throne at the age of forty-two. This figure is clearly corrupted, since Jehoram, his father, died at the age of forty (2 Kings viii 17; 2 Chron xxi 5). In the main texts of LXX stands here the number "twenty," while "twenty-two" in minor texts. J. M. Meyers, *II Chronicles*, (The Anchor Bible), Gardencity & New York, 1965, p. 125, assumes that the number "forty-two" resulted from the conflation of the two traditions.

was under the strong influence of the ambitious "Great Lady" (*gabtra*)¹ (cf. 2 Kings viii 26-27; 2 Chron xxii 2-4). However, Jehu's revolution against the Omrides deprived Athaliah of all her support at one blow. The house of Omri, from which she originated, was completely destroyed (2 Kings ix 21-26, 30-37; x 1-11, 17). Moreover, Ahaziah, her son, was killed during his involvement in the revolution (2 Kings 27-28; 2 Chron xxii 7-9). Naturally, she had to prepare to defend herself and her regime from the counterattack of the opponents before they rose up under the impact of the Yahwistic revolution in the Northern Kingdom. She immediately annihilated all the pretenders to the Davidic throne and usurped it (2 Kings xi 1-3; 2 Chron xxii 10-12). This was her pre-emptive attack against the opposing power which had a long confrontation with the regime since Jehoshaphat allied himself with the Omrides.

Did she really seek the life of Jehoash, her infant grandson, as the biblical source relates? H. L. Ginsberg maintains that it is difficult to assume that she sought to destroy Jehoash, who "constitutes the sole claim of her rule to legitimacy."² It seems that she only eliminated some adult members of the house of David who might seek the throne as rivals to the infant Jehoash. It is likely that the biblical writer, out of his hatred for this foreign queen, distorted the account presenting her as a ruthless ruler who seeks even the life of her own grandson. In developing this thesis, H. Reviv argued that Jehoash was actually put in the custody of Jehosheba at Athaliah's request. This meant that Athaliah became the queen regent, although never usurping the throne.³ It is clear that she could not establish her rule without some compromise with the priests of Yahweh headed by Jehoiada.

1 About the office of king's mother (*gabira*) see G. Molin, "Die Stellung der Gebira im Staate Juda," *TZ* X, 1954, pp. 161-175; H. Donner, "Art und Herkunft des Amtes der Königinmutter im Alten Testament," in *Friedrich Festschrift*, Heidelberg, 1959, pp. 105-145; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 11 ff.

2 Ginsberg, "The Omrid-Davidid Alliance and its Consequences," in *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, I, Jerusalem, 1967, p. 92.

3 Reviv, 'al yome 'ataliya wəyō'as," *Beth Mikra* XLVII, 1970/71, pp. 541 ff. (Hebrew).

It is also probable that Jehoash was fostered by Jehosheba, Jehoram's daughter and Jehoiada's wife (2 Chron xxii 11), with Athaliah's consent. However, judging from the fact that Jehoiada eventually plotted against Athaliah claiming that the throne should belong to the house of David (2 Chron xxiii 3), we can hardly accept the view that she actually did not assume the throne.

The rebellion against Athaliah was organized by Jehoiada the priest and was carried out by the royal mercenaries and guards. In addition, "the people of the land" participated in it.¹ Who were "the people of the land," who were differentiated from captains, the royal mercenaries, guards (2 Kings xi 19), nobles, and governors (2 Chron xxiii 20)? From the course of history sketched above we can assume that they were those who were allied with the group which opposed the regime because of its alliance with the Omrides. We can also assume that the designation "people of the land" (*am hā'areš*), stemmed from classifying them as the opponents to "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (*yōšbə yərušalaym*), the supporters of the regime (2 Chron xxii 1).

However, it is misleading to regard these designations as a sign of the antagonism between Jerusalem and Judah. Among the opponents to the regime are mentioned such people as a seer (2 Chron xix 2), Jehoram's brothers, some nobles (xxi 4), and the royal family (2 Kings xi 1; 2 Chron xxii 10). From the geographical point of view, most of them belonged to Jerusalem. Moreover, it seems that those Jerusalemites who were suppressed by the regime acted as the leaders of "the

1 Since B. Stade, "Zu I Kö. 11," *ZAW* V, 1885, pp. 280 ff., it has been widely held that 2 Kings xi is resolved into two sources, i.e., a priestly source (vv. 1-12, 18b-20) and a popular source (vv. 13-18a); cf. J. A. Montgomery, *The Books of Kings*, (ICC), Edinburgh, 1951, pp. 417 f.; J. Gray, *I & II Kings*, (OTL), London, 1970², pp. 566 ff. Against this view, W. Rudolph, "Die Einheitlichkeit der Erzählung vom Sturz der Athalia (2 Kön. 11)," in *Bertholet Festschrift*, Tübingen, 1950, pp. 473-478, argues for the unity of the chapter. In his view, all references to *'am hā'areš* before v. 20 are secondary (p. 477). However, the participation of "the people of the land" in the revolt can be disputed neither by two-source theory nor by Rudolph's argument.

people of the land."¹

The rebellion against Athaliah confirms this situation. It was Jehoiada the priest who took the initiative. Furthermore, he relied mainly on the royal mercenaries and guards to carry out his plot. By contrast, "the people of the land" played only passive role in the rebellion such as the attendance at the ceremony of Jehoash's enthronement (2 Kings xi 14, 19; 2 Chron xxiii 13, 20) and the participation in the covenant-making between Yahweh, the king, and the people through Jehoiada's mediation (2 Kings xi 17; 2 Chron xxiii 16). It is true that they destroyed the temple of Baal and slew its priest (2 Kings xi 18; 2 Chron xxiii 17). Yet, undoubtedly Jehoiada's initiative was behind the banishment of Baalism from Jerusalem. Therefore, we cannot agree with the view that Athaliah's regime was overthrown by "a national revolution."² It was a court rebellion supported by the people. Nor can we find any contrast between "the rejoicing people of the land" and "the quiet city" after the rebellion (2 Kings xi 20; 2 Chron xxiii 21), as Würthwein and Alt maintained.³ It seems that the implication of the sentence, "hā'ir šaqāṭa," is simply that "the city became peaceful" after the rebellion successfully came to an end.⁴

It must be pointed out that "the people of the land" played an important role, though it was passive. The main purpose of the rebellion was the restoration of the Davidic line. From the ideological point of view, it was inseparably connected with the purge of Baalism, since the restoration of the Davidic throne could be legitimized solely

- ¹ According to R. Gordis, "Sectional Rivalry in the Kingdom of Judah," *JQR* XXV, 1934/35, pp. 237-259, there was always friction concerning the high places between the Jerusalemites and "the people of the land," who were the representatives of country; the coalition between them came into being only at the rebellion against Athaliah under the leadership of the Jerusalemites.
- ² Würthwein, 'amm ha'arez, p. 24 f.; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 71; Nicholson, *JSS* X, 1965, p. 62.
- ³ Würthwein, 'amm ha'arez, p. 25; Alt, "Das Königtum in den Reichen Israel und Juda," (1951), in *Kleine Schriften*, II, 1953, p. 127.
- ⁴ Cf. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 71; G. Buccellati, *Cities and Nations of Ancient Syria*, Rome, 1967, pp. 168 f.

by Yahweh who made a covenant with David by promising the eternal rule of the house of David over Israel (2 Sam vii 5-16; 1 Chron xvii 4-14).¹ On the other hand, the house of David was acknowledged as the ruling dynasty over Judah by the covenant which David made with the men of Judah when he established the kingdom of Judah at Hebron (2 Sam ii 4).² This ideological structure of the Davidic rule compelled Jehoiada to perform the renewal ceremony of both covenants in the midst of the rebellion.³ Therefore, the Davidic rule over Judah

- ¹ Despite the lack of the word "covenant" (*berit*) in Nathan's prophecy, this divine promise of the Davidic dynasty is mentioned as a "covenant" in biblical references to it (2 Sam xxiii 5; 1 Kings viii 23; Is lv 3; Jer xxxiii 20-22; Ps lxxxix 4, 29, 35, 40; cxxxii 12; 2 Chron vi 14; vii 18: xiii 5; xxi 7). Moreover, we can find in the same chapter (2 Sam vii) terminologies representing the covenant relationship such as "the father-son relationship" (v. 14), "the steadfast love" (*hesed*) (v. 15), "the promise" (*dabar*) (vv. 21, 25, 28), and "the good thing" (*ṭobā*) (v. 28); about the *hesed* in the father-son relationship between Yahweh and David's descendants as a covenant see N. Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible*, Cincinnati, 1967, pp. 75 ff.; the *ṭobā* in this chapter was first recognized as a synonym for "covenant" by A. Malamat, "Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy," (1965), in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, III, 1970, p. 197; cf. D. R. Hillers, *Covenant. The History of a Biblical Idea*, Baltimore, 1969, p. 113.
- ² The term "covenant" is missing from the text, but we can hardly doubt that a covenant was established between David and the men of Judah at that time, just as between David and the people of Israel, when they offered the kingship to David at Hebron (2 Sam v 3), see Alt, "Die Staatenbildung der Israeliten in Palästina," (1930), in *Kleine Schriften*, II, 1953, p. 41; cf. also G. Fohrer, "Der Vertrag zwischen König und Volk in Israel," (1959), in *Studien zur alttestamentlichen Theologie und Geschichte* (1949-1966), (BZAW CXV), Berlin, 1969, pp. 332 f.
- ³ Opinions are variously divided on the parties between whom Jehoiada made the covenant. A single covenant between Yahweh on the one side and the king and the people on the other is maintained by G. von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, London, 1953, pp. 65 f., while M. Noth, "Old Testament Covenant-Making in the Light of a Text from Mari," (1953), in *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh & London, 1966, pp. 115 f., holds a single covenant between the king and the people only. According to D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, Rome, 1963, pp. 142 f., n. 4, the covenant was twofold, i.e., one between Yahweh and the people and the other between the king and the people. A double covenant between Yahweh and the king on the one side and between the king and the people on the other is suggested

could not have been restored without the support and participation of "the people of the land."

We must conclude that "the people of the land" who took part in the rebellion against Athaliah were none other than the people of Judah. Judging from the situation, it is reasonable to suppose that only a part of the people participated in it. We do not know whether they were the formal representatives or not.¹ In any case, they acted under the name of the whole people. Out of loyalty to Yahwism as well as the house of David they opposed the regime under the foreign queen supported by "the inhabitants of Jerusalem." The initiative for this revolt was taken by Jehoiada the priest of the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem.

Jehoash, who was enthroned by Jehoiada with the help of "the people of the land," met a violent end as a result of a conspiracy of his servants (2 Kings xii 20-21). This was the revenge of the priests who were enraged at the king's violence against Zechariah the son of Jehoiada (2 Chron xxiv 25), which was the culmination of the conflict between the king and the priests caused by the king's intervention in repairing of the temple (2 Kings xii 4-16; 2 Chron xxiv 4-14) and

by K. Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 78 ff., and Malamat, in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, III, p. 166. A triple covenant between Yahweh and the king, between Yahweh and the people, and between the king and the people is argued by Gray, *I & II Kings*, p. 423, and Mazar, "*hamōlūkā boyiṣra'el*" in *Types of Leadership in the Biblical Period*, Jerusalem, 1973, p. 32, (Hebrew). It seems to us that this was a double covenant between Yahweh and the king and between the king and the people, since the covenant of David gave the position of mediator between Yahweh and the people to the Davidic kings.

¹ M. Sulzberger, *Am Ha-Aretz. The Ancient Hebrew Parliament*, Philadelphia, 1909, argues that "the people of the land" were nothing but the national council which served as the representative body of the people in the political as well as the judicial spheres; cf. *idem*, "The Polity of the Ancient Hebrews," *JQR* III, 1912/13, pp. 1-81; N. Sloush, "Representative Government among the Hebrews and Phoenicians," *JQR* IV, 1913/14, pp. 303-310. On the other hand, de Vaux, *RA* LVIII, 1964, p. 171, is of the opinion that the elders (*zōqēnim*) acted as the representatives of "the people of the land."

his plundering of the temple treasury (2 Kings xii 18).¹ Amaziah, however, succeeded Jehoash in the normal way (2 Kings xiv 1; 2 Chron xxiv 27b). There was no Judean king but Amaziah, whose father died an unnatural death, however, he ascended the throne without any intervention. A. Malamat suggested that the intervention of "the people of the land" was not mentioned on this occasion due to the fact that Amaziah was already an adult, i.e., twenty-five years old, at his accession (2 Kings xiv 2; 2 Chron xxv 1).² But Jehoahaz was also an adult of twenty-three, when "the people of the land" helped him ascend the throne (2 Kings xxiii 30-31; 2 Chron xxxvi 1-2). Therefore, Malamat regards Jehoahaz's case as exceptional on the basis of his assumption that a *coup d'état* had been carried out by "the people of the land."

We may assume, however, building on this suggestion, that Amaziah had been designated as the heir apparent long before Jehoash was murdered, so that his succession left no room for a question which would bring about intervention. On the other hand, the intervention of "the people of the land" in Jehoahaz's succession to Josiah was caused by lack of the official designation of the successor at Josiah's unexpected death. Josiah was still a young, ambitious king of thirty-nine, when killed in battle (2 Kings xxii 1; 2 Chron xxxiv 1). Apart from his relatively young age, it appears that the political antagonism at the court between the pro-Egyptian party and the anti-Egyptian faction postponed his decision about the appointment of the heir apparent.³

It must be mentioned, however, that "the people of the land" perhaps felt no need to intervene in Amaziah's succession because this political crisis (which resulted from the conflict between the Davidic king and the priests of Yahweh) did not affect either Davidic

¹ Cf. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 377; Gray, *I & II Kings*, p. 590; Reviv, *Bch. Mikra* XLVII, 1970/71, pp. 545 ff.

² Malamat, "The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem," *IEJ* XVIII, 1968, p. 140, n. 6.

³ About the political conflict at Josiah's court see Malamat, *IEJ* XVIII, 1968, p. 140.

succession or Yahwism. Moreover, "the people of the land," whose power was not strong enough to take the initiative in the political change at that period, could not intervene in Amaziah's succession without an invitation from one of the parties in the capital city.

Amaziah also fell a victim to a conspiracy (2 Kings xiv 19; 2 Chron xxv 27). Owing to lack of direct information, the motive of this conspiracy is very obscure. Some scholars assume that the same conflict between the royal and the sacerdotal authorities caused the conspiracy.¹ A closer examination of the biblical sources indicates a different situation. Amaziah took revenge for his father's death upon the conspirators, when he consolidated his rule (2 Kings xiv 5; 2 Chron xxv 3). Yet, we do not hear of this sort of revenge taken by Azariah, who succeeded Amaziah, his father. It has been suggested, on the grounds of chronological studies, that Azariah ascended the throne not after Amaziah was killed but when Amaziah was taken captive by Jehoash king of Israel at Beth-shemesh (2 Kings xiv 13; 2 Chron xxv 23). This took place at least fifteen years before Amaziah's assassination (cf. 2 Kings xiv 17; 2 Chron xxv 25).² On the basis of these observations we may suppose, as H. Frumstein (Tadmor) has suggested, that Amaziah's assassination was caused by a conflict between Azariah, the regent, and Amaziah, the deposed king.³

If this is the case, we should reconsider the identity of "all the people of Judah" (*kol 'am-yohûda*) who helped Azariah ascend the throne instead of Amaziah (2 Kings xiv 21; 2 Chron xxvi 1). It has been widely held that "all the people of Judah," who intervened in Azariah's enthronement, were none other than "the people of the

1 See de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 377; Reviv, *Beth Mikra* XLVII, 1970/71, p. 548. However, Gray, *I & II Kings*, p. 613, prefers a military rising.

2 See J. Lewy, *Die Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda*, Giessen, 1927, pp. 11 ff.; H. Frumstein (Tadmor), in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, I, Jerusalem, 1950, col. 439, (Hebrew); *idem*, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, IV, Jerusalem, 1962, col. 282, (Hebrew); E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Grand Rapids, 1965², pp. 84 ff.

3 Frumstein (Tadmor), in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, I, col. 439, (Hebrew).

land."¹ However, if Azariah was made king to fill the vacant throne left by the defeated king who was taken captive, those who elevated him to the throne must have been those who were fighting against the enemy. Thus, we must assume that "all the people of Judah," who supported Azariah, included not only "the people of the land" but also the royal officials, the noble men, the military people, and other men of rank and influence. We can conclude, therefore, that the designation "people of Judah" does not always signify "the people of the land," but it was used in the wider sense as the designation of the whole nation of Judah including the officials in Jerusalem.

When Azariah became a leper, Jotham, his son, administered public affairs as the regent. His office is described as "over the palace and governing the people of the land" (2 Kings xv 5; 2 Chron xxvi 21). "The people of the land" are contrasted here with "the palace." In a similar way, the offering of "the people of the land" is distinguished from that of king Ahaz (2 Kings xvi 15). In both cases, it appears that the expression "people of the land" is used simply as a synonym for the people of Judah under the monarchic rule. Accordingly, it is difficult to deduce from these passages any specific political role assigned to "the people of the land" in that period.² This means we have virtually no information at all on the political activity of "the people of the land" during the two hundred year period from Athaliah's overthrow to Josiah's enthronement.

The long reign of Manasseh was followed by Amon's short-lived rule. When Amon was murdered by his servants in the second year of his reign, "the people of the land" slew all the conspirators and elevated Josiah to the throne (2 Kings xxi 19, 23-24; 2 Chron xxxiii 21, 24-25). Since we have only this terse report, it is extremely

1 Würthwein, *'amun ha'arez*, p. 15; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, p. 71; Alt, in *Kleine Schriften*, II, p. 127; Malamat, *IEJ* XVIII, 1968, p. 140; Tadmor, *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale* XI, 1968, p. 66. According to Talmon, in *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, I, 1967, p. 74, the expressions *'am ha'arez* and *'am yohûda* are two different abbreviations of the same full designation of a political body: *'am ha'arez; libnê yohûda*.

2 Cf. Nicholson, *JSS* X, 1965, pp. 62 f.

difficult to clarify the situation.¹

Both international and domestic conditions must be considered as the background of this political change. As for the international political sphere, it was the time of dramatic changes. About 656 B.C. the Egyptians succeeded in expelling the Assyrians from Egypt.² This was the beginning of the rapid decline of the Assyrian empire. At the same time, the Egyptians, as an ambitious heir to the Assyrians, began to influence Syria-Palestine. This situation seems to be reflected in Manasseh's change of religious policy and his fortification of the city of David and the citadels in Judah (2 Chron xxxiii 14-16). This was an attempt to recover the sovereignty from the Assyrian rule. The time, however, was not yet ripe. Because of this rebellious attempt, Manasseh was punished by the Assyrians (xxxiii 11).³ We can assume that the Judean king was caught between the anti-Assyrian movement supported by the awakening people and the Assyrian pressure in the last years of his reign.

Twenty years ago, A. Malamat argued that Amon was assassinated by an anti-Assyrian party, but a counter-revolution was achieved by "the people of the land," who were afraid of Assyrian punitive

1 Scholars once regarded the conspirators as the priests of Yahweh who tried to reform the foreign cult supported by Manasseh and Amon, see E. Sellin, *Geschichte des israelitisch-jüdischen Volkes*, I, Leipzig, 1924, p. 282; R. Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, II, Stuttgart, 1925⁷, pp. 401 f. But it is difficult to assume that "the people of the land," who opposed the conspirators, were anti-Yahwist.

2 About the historical vicissitude in this period see F. K. Kieritz, *Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens vom 7. bis zum 4. Jahrhundert vor der Zeitwende*, Berlin, 1953, pp. 11 ff.; *idem*, in *Fischer Weltgeschichte*, IV, Frankfurt a/M. & Hamburg, 1967, pp. 256 ff., 265 f.; K. A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100-650 B. C.)*, Warminster, 1973, pp. 400 ff.

3 See J. Liver, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, V, Jerusalem, 1968, col. 43, (Hebrew); cf. Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, London, 1966, p. 346. However, some scholars argue that the fortification was made against Egypt with the Assyrian consent, see W. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher*, (HAT), Tübingen 1955, p. 317; J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, London, 1972², p. 313.

action.¹ Recently, by slightly modifying this theory, he has put the stress on the Egyptian instigation behind the courtiers' revolt against Amon.² It is very likely that around 640 B. C., when Amon's assassination took place, there was a conflict between a pro-Assyrian group and a pro-Egyptian party at the Judean court, because in that period the Egyptians tried to take over the Assyrian domination in Western Asia.³ On the other hand, Amon's yielding to the foreign cult (2 Kings xxi 20-22; 2 Chron xxxiii 22-23) would show his submissiveness to the Assyrian rule. Therefore, it is possible to assume that the Egyptians urged conspirators to murder their pro-Assyrian king.

It seems, however, that this political conflict was interwoven with domestic antagonism. When Manasseh died at sixty-seven, Amon was a young prince of twenty-two (2 Kings xxi 1, 19; 2 Chron xxxiii 1, 21). Amon was born to Manasseh when he was forty-five. Judging from the fact that almost all the Judean kings were born when their

1 Malamat, "The Historical Background of the Assassination of Amon, King of Judah," *IEJ* III, 1953, pp. 26-29; cf. *idem*, "The Last Wars of the Kingdom of Judah," *JNES* IX, 1950, p. 218; cf. also Noth, *The History of Israel*, London, 1960², p. 272; F. M. Cross & D. N. Freedman, "Josiah's Revolt against Assyria," *JNES* XII, 1953, p. 56; Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 315. According to K. Galling, *Die israelitische Staatsverfassung in ihrer vorderorientalischen Umwelt*, (AO XXVIII 3/4), Leipzig, 1924, pp. 33 f., pp. 59 f., an ultra-pro-Assyrian party, which doubted Amon's pro-Assyrian stance and tried to replace him by a foreigner, was responsible for his assassination.

2 Malamat, "Josiah's Bid for Armageddon. The Background of the Judean-Egyptian Encounter in 609 B. C.," in *The Gaster Festschrift, JANES* V, 1973, p. 271. The identity of Amon's assassins with Egyptian agents had been suggested by N. M. Nicolsky, "Pascha im Kulte des jerusalemischen Tempels," *ZAW* XLV, 1927, pp. 241 ff.; E. Auerbach, *Wüste und Gelobtes Land*, II, Berlin, 1936, p. 159; cf. also Gray, *I & II Kings*, pp. 711 f.

3 According to the study of Malamat, in *The Gaster Festschrift, JANES* V, 1973 pp. 270 ff., esp. p. 273, while expulsion of the Assyrian rule from Egypt took place between 656 and 652 B. C., the alliance between Egypt and Assyria against the Chaldeans came into being between 622 and 617 B. C.; thus, the Egyptian activity of taking over the Assyrian rule in Palestine must have been limited to the years between 652 and 622 B. C.

fathers were about twenty,¹ it is likely that Amon was neither the first-born nor the eldest surviving son. If this is the case, we can assume that some court intrigue helped Amon ascend the throne, as is usually the case when the principle of primogeniture is overruled.² On the other hand, the biblical source testifies to a bloody antagonism among the inhabitants of Jerusalem under Manasseh (2 Kings xxi 16; cf. xxiv 4). Although we are not informed of the situation, it is not unlikely that it was the beginning of the clash between the pro-Assyrian party and the pro-Egyptian faction. The former backed Manasseh's rule and Amon's succession, while the latter tried to overthrow the pro-Assyrian regime by supporting Amon's elder brothers under Egyptian instigation.

It appears that "the people of the land" avoided this struggle in Jerusalem. Judging from the political development under Josiah and his successors, it is clear that "the people of the land" belonged neither to the pro-Assyrian party nor to the pro-Egyptian faction. But when Jerusalem fell into chaos at Amon's assassination, they intervened in the conflict on their own accord. By taking advantage of the confusion among the ruling people in the capital city, they were able to carry out "a national revolution," in order to bring about nationalistic reform under a Davidic king.

In contrast to the rebellion against Athaliah, it is remarkable that "the people of the land" played the leading role in this political change. We do not know exactly how they came to dominate in this period. Possibly, the collapse of the military power as a result of the Assyrian invasion at Hezekiah's time weakened the authority of the central government.³ The severe domestic struggle in Jerusalem under Manasseh and Amon also undermined the control of the central authority. In addition, we can assume that the northern tribes, who

1 Cf. Tadmor, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, IV, cols. 303 f., (Hebrew); Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, p. 206.

2 See above p. 25, n.1.

3 Cf. E. Junge, *Der Wiederaufbau des Heerwesens des Reiches Juda unter Josia* (BWANT IV 23), Stuttgart, 1937, pp. 24 ff.

took refuge in Judah from the catastrophe of Samaria in 722 B. C. and the subsequent disturbances, brought with them the strong tradition of the popular sovereignty and strengthened the people's voice in political affairs. In any case, "the people of the land" are mentioned most frequently in the Old Testament in the last days of Judah. Moreover, the fact that they are mentioned side by side with people of the ruling class, such as the kings, the royal servants, nobles, the priests, and the prophets (Jer i 18; xxxiv 19; xxxvii 2; xliiv 21; Ez vii 27; xxii 24-29), testifies to the influential position they occupied in this period.

Evidently, "the people of the land" acted as the driving force of Josiah's policy of national independence from foreign rule in the political as well as religious spheres. "All the men of Judah" mentioned first together with the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the religious functionaries, who participated in the covenant-making of Josiah's reform (2 Kings xxiii 2; 2 Chron xxxiv 30), were doubtless the same "people of the land" who enthroned Josiah.¹ When Josiah was killed during a battle at Megiddo in 609 B. C., "the people of the land" intervened again in the question of the succession to the throne and elevated Jehoahaz, the second son of Josiah, to the throne by overruling the principle of primogeniture (2 Kings xxiii 30; 2 Chron xxxvi 1). Apparently, Jehoahaz was connected with the nationalistic party supported by "the people of the land," while Jehoiakim, his elder brother, was backed by the pro-Egyptian faction. It is clear that by this intervention "the people of the land" attempted to continue their nationalistic policy which started with their enthronement of Josiah.²

However, Neco, the Egyptian king, who killed Josiah, deposed Jehoahaz and appointed Jehoiakim as his puppet king (2 Kings xxiii 33-34; 2 Chron xxxvi 3-4). As Neco's royal vassal, Jehoiakim imposed

1 A close relationship between "the people of the land" and the Deuteronomic reform under Josiah is argued by von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, pp. 60 ff.; cf. J. A. Soggin, "Der jüdische 'am ha'areš und das Königtum in Juda," VT XIII, 1963, pp. 187-195.

2 Cf. Malamat, *IEJ* XVIII, 1968, pp. 139 f.

a heavy tax on "the people of the land" to send tribute to Egypt (2 Kings xxiii 35). Naturally, "the people of the land" refused to cooperate with this Egyptian puppet regime. Even when Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, most of "the people of the land" stayed away from besieged Jerusalem, except "the poorest people of the land" (2 Kings xxiv 14). Under Zedekiah, "the people of the land" changed this negative attitude towards the regime into the positive support.¹

Nebuchadnezzar designated Zedekiah, the third son of Josiah, as the king of Judah (2 Kings xxiv 17; 2 Chron xxxvi 10). He was Jehoahaz's brother by blood (cf. 2 Kings xxiii 31; xxiv 18), whom "the people of the land" once vainly supported. Although Zedekiah was Nebuchadnezzar's appointee, it is understandable that "the people of the land" set their hope on him to restore their nationalistic policy which was frustrated by Neco. We learn of this situation from the impressive presence of "the people of the land" in Jerusalem, when it was besieged again by the Babylonians in the time of Zedekiah (2 Kings xxv 3, 19; Jer xxxiv 19; cf. 2 Kings xxv 12).

Ezekiel also mentions the gathering of "the people of the land" in Jerusalem at that time. However, according to his view, they were gathered to Jerusalem by Yahweh to be punished (xxii 19-22). His equation of "the people of the land" with "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (xii 19) shows that "the people of the land" became the dominant power in the capital city at last. But both Jeremiah (xxxvii 2) and Ezekiel (vii 27; xxii 23-31) directed their severest attacks against "the people of the land" as well as the other national leaders. These prophetic words testify to the tragic fact that the fanatical pursuit of nationalism by "the people of the land" in the last days of the kingdom of Judah only served to contribute to the disastrous end of their country.

1 M. Sekine, "Beobachtungen zu der Josian'schen Reform," VT XXII, 1972, pp. 367 f., regards the co-operation of "the people of the land" with Zedekiah's regime as a sign of the decadence of their ethos, which took place after the frustration of Josiah's reform.

LITERATURSOZIOLOGISCHE BEOBACHTUNGEN ZU DEN ELISAERZÄHLUNGEN

Masao Sekine

1. Zum Methodologischen

Die Literatursoziologie besteht aus zwei Elementen, nämlich "Literatur" und "Soziologie". Da die literatursoziologische Methode, soviel ich sehe, ganz neu in die Bibelwissenschaft eingeführt worden ist, ist es wohl angebracht, im voraus einige Worte zum Methodologischen zu sagen. Es ist gewiss, dass die Bibelwissenschaft sich zur Hauptsache mit der Bibel als Literatur beschäftigen muss. Deshalb ist es wohl begründet, dass man sich nun bemüht, die biblischen Schriften vom sprach- und literaturwissenschaftlichen Standpunkt aus erneut zu betrachten. Dabei fällt mir auf, dass sich der Alttestamentler W. Richter und der Neutestamentler E. Güttgemanns in ihren beachtenswerten Arbeiten als verdienstlich erwiesen haben. Richter hat nämlich in dem Aufsatz "Formgeschichte und Sprachwissenschaft"¹ seinen wissenschaftlichen Entwurf skizziert und in dem Buch "Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft"² seine Literaturtheorie und -methodologie ausführlich entwickelt, während Güttgemanns in seinem geistvollen Buch "Offene Fragen zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums"³ nicht nur die Wichtigkeit der sprach- und literaturwissenschaftlichen Seite in der Bibelwissenschaft hervorgehoben, sondern auch die Relevanz der soziologischen Methode m. E. ganz mit Recht betont hat. Es ist auch beachtenswert, dass der letztere als der Wortführer der sog. "Linguistischen Theologie" interessante Thesen zur "Generativen Poetik" aufgestellt hat⁴.

1 Richter, Formgeschichte und Sprachwissenschaft, ZAW, 1970, S. 216ff.

2 Richter, Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft (Göttingen, 1971).

3 Güttgemanns, Offene Fragen zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums (München, 1971). Vgl. §3. Die Soziologie als Methodologische Grundlage der Formgeschichte und der allgemeinen Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft; 5. Die Zusammengehörigkeit von Formgeschichte und Literatursoziologie.

4 Güttgemanns, "Text" und "Geschichte" als Grundkategorien der Generativen Poetik ("Linguistische Theologie" 1972, S. 38ff.).