

THE TYNDALE BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY LECTURE 1987

THE GOVERNORS OF JUDAH UNDER THE PERSIANS

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Dedicated to the memory of C. J. Hemer

In 1934 Albrecht Alt published an essay on the history of the political status of Judah in the post-exilic period which, like so many others of his writings, set the agenda for scholarly discussion in the ensuing half-century.¹ A major conclusion of this study, and one which has been adopted by many scholars since, was that the arrival of Nehemiah in Jerusalem was accompanied by a major change in Judah's constitutional position. Previously, the Persians had taken over from the Babylonians a system whereby Judah was subsumed within the province of Samaria. Those such as Sheshbazzar and Zerubabel who preceded Nehemiah and who are designated *pehâ*, usually translated 'governor', should be understood rather as special commissioners whose role was restricted to specific and chronologically limited tasks in connection with the Jerusalem cult. Under Nehemiah, however, Judah was granted limited independence with its own governor — limited because, of course, it was still a part of the Persian empire. It now became, in effect, a province alongside that of Samaria within the Satrapy of 'Beyond the River'.² It was this new development, Alt suggested, which provoked the vigorous opposition which Nehemiah at first encountered.

¹ A. Alt, 'Die Rolle Samarias bei der Entstehung des Judentums', *Festschrift Otto Procksch zum 60. Geburtstag* (Leipzig, A. Deichert and J. C. Hinrichs 1934) 5-28 = A. Alt, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, II (Munich, C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung 1953) 316-37.

² At the start of Persian rule, Beyond the River was linked with Babylon. Perhaps as part of Darius I's organization of the empire into 20 satrapies (though this is far from certain) it became a separate province in its own right; cf. O. Leuze, *Die Satrapieneinteilung in Syrien und im Zweistromlande von 520-320* (Halle, Max Niemeyer 1935); A. F. Rainey, 'The Satrapy "Beyond the River"', *AJBA* 1 (1969) 51-78; J. M. Cook in I. Gershevitch (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran. II: The Median and Achaemenian Periods* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1985) 261.

Alt's essay was largely based upon a careful, if sometimes speculative, examination of the Biblical texts. In 1934 there was little enough light of any sort that archaeological research could shed on the often obscure history of the Levant during the Persian period, and of course with regard to so specific a proposal as that which Alt was advancing it would not have been surprising if no trace of it whatever had survived in the archaeological record.³ Nevertheless, with characteristic thoroughness, Alt marshalled in a dozen lines and two footnotes what evidence he could from that quarter, namely the evidence from the Elephantine Papyri that by the year 408 BC, at any rate, Judah was a separate province with its own governor alongside Samaria, and, more significantly, the evidence as known at that time from seal impressions and coins that it was from this period on that the official title of the province — *yhd* — came into common use.

During the half century since Alt wrote, there have been a number of further discoveries of similar material whose relevance to the topic in hand has been contested. My purpose in the present lecture is to explain the main points at issue in the interpretation of this newer data and then to see what bearing they may have on Alt's theory as well as on a wider consideration of the administration of Judah under the Persians.

We may conveniently look first at the work of Ephraim Stern, because he has marshalled some of the evidence from seals in favour of a modified form of Alt's hypothesis.⁴ Whereas most interest has traditionally been focussed on inscribed seals, Stern for the first time examined anepigraphic seal impressions of this period on which are depicted various animals, in particular, lions. All come from the Jerusalem region, with the single exception of one from Shechem.

³It is not my intention to become embroiled in the debate as to whether it is proper for archaeology to look for evidence of specific events; it is enough to observe that many Palestinian archaeologists of the 1930s did.

⁴E. Stern, 'Seal-Impressions in the Achaemenid Style in the Province of Judah', *BASOR* 202 (1971) 6-16; cf. *Material Culture in the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 538-332 B.C.* (Warminster, Aris and Phillips; Jerusalem, Israel Exploration Society 1982) 209-13.

Various considerations led Stern to conclude that these impressions are to be dated to the earlier part of the Persian period: there is a close typological relationship between them and the jar-handles from the end of the Iron Age; the impression from Shechem is to be dated no later than 475 BC on the basis of associated finds within the same stratum; Gibeon, where two of these seals were found, was destroyed at the beginning of the fifth century BC;⁵ and in Jerusalem, Duncan found this type of seal impression at a lower level than those of the *yhwd* type.

Turning then to the motifs which occur on these impressions, Stern succeeded in elucidating one group in the light of known Achaemenid imperial scenes in which a Persian king is in combat with a roaring lion who stands upright on his hind legs because of his pain on being wounded. Those found in Judah represent only part of the motif, and without the find of the whole scene from hoards of Achaemenid seal impressions they would have remained obscure.⁶ Furthermore, a previously unexplained object can best be interpreted as the stylized representation of an Achaemenid fire-altar. Stern concludes not unreasonably in view of this rather clear evidence that the depictions on the other two groups of related seal impressions also show Achaemenid influence, and parallels for them from this quarter are not lacking. Further, it thus becomes plausible to suppose that in Judah as elsewhere such seals were used by officials serving in the administration of the Persian empire.

⁵J. B. Pritchard dated the destruction of Gibeon to the start of the Babylonian exile; cf. *Gibeon — Where the Sun Stood Still. The Discovery of the Biblical City* (Princeton, Princeton University Press 1962) 163 (though to be fair it should be added that Pritchard reckoned with some subsequent habitation precisely on the basis of the *msh* seal impressions, a fact generally ignored by his critics). However, this date has not generally been accepted; cf. the reviews of the two original reports by W. F. Albright, *BASOR* 159 (1960) 37, and by G. E. Wright, *JNES* 22 (1963) 210-11. The suggestion these reviewers advanced to lower the date of Gibeon's destruction to at least the end of the sixth century has received palaeographical support from F. M. Cross, 'Epigraphical Notes on Hebrew Documents of the Eighth-Sixth Centuries B.C.: III. The Inscribed Jar Handles from Gibeon', *BASOR* 168 (1962) 18-23, and support from the character of a number of the other finds from Stern, *Material Culture* 33.

⁶Stern overlooked, however, Avigad's publication of a Judaeon seal which depicts a comparable motif; cf. N. Avigad, 'Three Ornamented Hebrew Seals', *IEJ* 4 (1954) 236-8.

In his original study, Stern let his case rest at this point. 'The difference between these [anepigraphic] impressions and those bearing the name *yhw*d ("Judah") is outstanding. The latter, in my opinion, also belonged to officials serving the administration of the province, but much later in the Persian period' (15). He linked this change with the radical reform in administration proposed by Alt. A later restatement of the theory has slightly complicated the issue.⁷ Not wishing to discount the Biblical evidence that Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel were governors, he now suggests that only after Zerubbabel was removed from office — perhaps under suspicion of plotting an uprising — was authority over Judah transferred to Samaria, returning to Jerusalem with the arrival of Nehemiah some seventy years later.

In examining Stern's theory, it should be emphasized that there is no intention of criticizing his handling of archaeological data as such, for regarding the archaeology of Palestine under the Persians Stern is a leading authority; his elucidation of the motifs in question, which had baffled those who first discovered and published them, stands up quite apart from the historical consequences which he draws from it. As regards the latter, however, we should note the following points:

(i) Whilst arguing for a change in the style of administration of Judah, Stern has not produced any evidence whatsoever which supports the more significant aspect of Alt's theory, namely that in the earlier period Judah was administered from Samaria. Indeed, the brief remarks he makes about the situation in Samaria might be held to point in exactly the opposite direction. He writes

We know of three additional seal-impressions from the satrapy [he must mean 'province'] of Samaria, two from the site of Samaria and one from Shechem. All three are in a pure Achaemenid style, but they differ from those found in Judah in their workmanship. Samaria apparently used imported seals, not local imitations as in Judah (15).

⁷E. Stern, 'The Persian empire and the political and social history of Palestine in the Persian period', in W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein (edd.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism. II: Introduction; The Persian Period* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1984) 70-87 (cf. especially 72 and 82-8).

That there was a general material and cultural similarity between the hill-country of Judah and Samaria in the Persian period (in continuity with the late Iron Age) in contrast to the situation along the coastal plain, for instance, is now well established. In such a situation, it is the differences that stand out as more significant. Stern has not been able to explain why, if the whole area was administered as a single province at this time, there should be any distinction of the kind he has described between Judah and Samaria. In the matter of official seals above all, we should have expected there to be no difference whatever.

(ii) The use of Achaemenid motifs in Judah cannot be used as evidence that Judah was administered as part of Samaria at that time. If anything, it would be more suggestive of 'direct rule', except that the use of such motifs elsewhere shows that this cannot be so.

(iii) Stern in fact presupposes Alt's theory before supporting it. A change in the style of administration — if that is what his evidence suggests — may be the consequence of any number of possibilities, and I have elsewhere suggested an alternative which I regard as more probable.⁸ Without going into detail again here, we should remember that when Nehemiah came to Jerusalem the western provinces of the empire were only just emerging from nearly fifteen years of turbulence — the Egyptian revolt which lasted for several years from 460 BC on, and then the revolt of the western satrapies under the leadership of Megabyzos in about 449 BC.⁹ Now in these circumstances, a 'shake-up' of political power in the west would not be at all surprising, and independent evidence of this may come from Samaria itself. It is known from the Elephantine papyri that when Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, his arch-foe Sanballat was the governor of Samaria.¹⁰ We also

⁸ 'Early Post-Exilic Judaeon History', in Jo Ann Hackett *et al.* (edd.), *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (provisional title; SBL-ASOR publication series on archaeology and the Bible, forthcoming).

⁹ Cf. J. M. Cook, *The Persian Empire* (London, J. M. Dent & Sons 1983) 168-9; R. N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft III/7; Munich, C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung 1984) 127-8.

¹⁰ A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1923) 30:29.

know from the same source and from the Wādī ed-Dāliyah papyri¹¹ that he was succeeded in this office by his direct descendants through four generations until the beginning of Hellenistic rule. His description as 'the Horonite' (Neh. 2:10), however, implies that he was the first in this line of succession. If so, then it becomes attractive to see in his appointment part of a larger attempt by Artaxerxes to reassert control over the region, and Nehemiah's mission a little later might reflect the same policy. This, I suggest, could explain the evidence Stern has adduced without resorting to the hypothesis of a period of Samaritan rule over Judah.

(iv) An important plank in Stern's platform is his claim that no stamps of the *yhwd* type should be dated earlier than the second half of the fifth century BC. When he wrote his initial study, this was a reasonable, though unproved, assumption. It was based largely on the absence of such material from Gibeon, and supported by the fact that no other really reliable stratigraphical data lay to hand. Absence of evidence, however, can hardly be said to constitute proof, and when in his later study¹² Stern dismisses new and potentially damaging contrary evidence from Avigad without, so far as I can see, discussing a single one of Avigad's and others' arguments, it is hard to resist the impression that he has already decided the issue on other grounds, which, as we have seen, include Alt's theory itself.¹³

We may conclude this first part of our discussion by affirming that Stern's attempt to uphold Alt's theory on archaeological grounds has not succeeded, despite the value of his discussion in other, perhaps more important, respects. If Alt were right, his suggestions might provide one possible explanation of the data Stern has advanced, but conversely

¹¹Cf. F. M. Cross, 'A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration', *JBL* 94 (1975) 4-18.

¹²Stern, *Material Culture* 206.

¹³Stern's attempt to link the evidence from coins with the proposed reform is questionable, since there is no reason to suppose that coins would have been minted or widely used in Judah in any case until the second half of the Persian period, regardless of the province's constitutional status. On this matter, though not on a number of others, I should agree with J. W. Betlyon, 'The Provincial Government of Persian Period Judah and the Yehud Coins', *JBL* 105 (1986) 633-42.

these data cannot be used to support the theory in the first place.

It has already begun to emerge from our discussion that an important part of the evidence to be considered focusses on the so-called *yhw*d seals, and so these may be appropriately considered next. By 1976, the year in which Avigad published his important collection of bullae and seals to be discussed later, an element of consensus had been reached about these seals following decades of controversy. First, the reading *yehud* in various spellings, sometimes also including a *têt*-symbol, is generally agreed for seals which had previously been variously read as עריה,¹⁴ יהו¹⁵ and יהעיר.¹⁶ Sukenik was the first to introduce the correct reading of יהו for יה by analogy with the *yhd* coins,¹⁷ and Albright was quick to develop the suggestion to arrive independently from, but simultaneously with, Sukenik's revised reading of the יהעיר stamps as יהו + monogram.¹⁸ This was still not universally accepted,¹⁹ however, until 1960, when Avigad, developing his insight into the correct way of reading the *mwšh* seal impressions (namely in horizontal lines of two letters each), established that those stamps which it had still been possible to read as *h'yr* should now be read as *têt* + *yhd*,²⁰ or even in one case *têt* + *yhw*d (with *plene* spelling, a spelling which Avigad had earlier established for a seal from Jericho²¹), and

¹⁴E.g. W. F. Albright, 'Notes on Early Hebrew and Aramaic Epigraphy', *JPOS* 6 (1926) 75-102.

¹⁵E. Sellin and C. Watzinger, *Jericho. Die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen* (Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung 1913) 158-9 and 188-9.

¹⁶E. L. Sukenik, 'The "Jerusalem" and "the city" Stamps on Jar Handles', *JPOS* 13 (1933) 226-31.

¹⁷E. L. Sukenik, 'Paralipomena Palaestinae', *JPOS* 14 (1934) 178-84.

¹⁸W. F. Albright, 'Light on the Jewish State in Persian Times', *BASOR* 53 (1934) 20-22; Sukenik, *JPOS* 14 (1934) 183, n. 4.

¹⁹Cf. L.-H. Vincent, 'Les Épigraphes Judéo-Araméennes Postexiliques', *RB* 56 (1949) 274-94, followed by S. J. Saller, 'Stamped Impressions on the Pottery of Bethany', *LASBF* 3 (1952-53) 5-36. Saller's main argument is that the proposed *têt* symbol raised difficulties which the reading *h'yr* does not. However, the five-letter stamps *t* + *yhw*d discussed by Avigad (see next note) completely invalidates this objection.

²⁰N. Avigad, 'Yehūd or Ha'ir?', *BASOR* 158 (1960) 23-7.

²¹N. Avigad, 'A New Class of Yehūd Stamps', *IEJ* 7 (1957) 146-53; cf. W. F. Albright, 'The Seal Impression from Jericho and the Treasurers of the Second Temple', *BASOR* 148 (1957) 28-30.

which confirms beyond doubt the correctness of his interpretation of the *h'yr* stamps.

Secondly, a measure of agreement was also reached by 1976 over the general dates to which these and other post-exilic seal impressions should be assigned. The *yhd* + symbol together with the *yršlm*²² impressions are to be dated last on several grounds. Ceramically, they have close parallels as to both form and ware with pottery from Shechem of the third quarter of the third century BC.²³ Palaeographically, they fall together in the Hellenistic period as being inscribed in Palaeo-Hebrew rather than the lapidary Aramaic of the other impressions.²⁴ Archaeologically, the evidence from Jerusalem,²⁵ Bethany (where only these two types of impression were found, and that in association with typically Hellenistic pottery) and from Ramat Raḥel agrees in this later dating.²⁶ Finally, these two classes of stamp combine against those of the others (except those of the *phw*' type yet to be considered) in having their impression near the top of the handle.²⁷

At the upper end of our period, it is also generally believed that the *mwšh* impressions should be dated earliest,²⁸ primarily because they alone were found at Gibeon, which was destroyed at the beginning of the fifth century BC.²⁹ This

²²This group of seals has the letters of *yršlm* written between the points of a star. Although this reading was suggested early, it was established definitively by Sukenik, *JPOS* 13 (1933) 226-31.

²³P. W. Lapp, 'Ptolemaic Stamped Handles from Judah', *BASOR* 172 (1963) 22-35 (see especially 22-5), and cf. H. N. Richardson, 'A Stamped Handle from Khirbet Yarmuk', *BASOR* 192 (1968) 12-16.

²⁴F. M. Cross, 'Judean Stamps', *EI* 9 (1969) 20-7 (and *apud* Lapp, 26, n. 20).

²⁵N. Avigad, 'More Evidence on the Judean Post-Exilic Stamps', *IEJ* 24 (1974) 52-8.

²⁶G. Garbini, 'The Dating of Post-Exilic Stamps', in Y. Aharoni, *Excavations at Ramat Raḥel: Seasons 1959 and 1960* (Rome, Università di Roma - Centro di Studi Semitici 1962) 61-8; cf. Aharoni, *ibid.*, 29-30, and *Excavations at Ramat Raḥel: Seasons 1961 and 1962* (Rome, Università di Roma - Centro di Studi Semitici 1964) 20 and 43.

²⁷Lapp, *BASOR* 172 (1963) 30.

²⁸So Stern, *Material Culture* 207-9, *contra* J. Naveh, *The Development of the Aramaic Script* (Jerusalem, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Proceedings, V, 1, [1970]) 61-2. For a summary of previous discussions of this class of stamp, cf. N. Avigad, 'New Light on the MSH seal Impressions', *IEJ* 8 (1958) 113-19.

²⁹See above, n. 5.

leaves the various Aramaic *yhd* impressions which a majority of scholars assigned to the second half of the Persian period, though not on particularly strong grounds, as we shall see.

Finally, when we turn to enquire after the significance of these seal impressions, we find less agreement. Cross assigned them very little direct historical significance, seeing in them no more than formulae for inscribing wine bottles of official measure. This conclusion he based primarily upon some jars from Shiqmona, whose inscriptions read, for example:

1. Ben Mattōn 25 royal measures (= *lmk*)
2. wine of Gat Karmel
3. *têt* symbol³⁰

According to Cross, the use of a number before *lmk* shows that it is an indication of units according to the royal standard, and the *têt* symbol, here together with *lmk*, came in time to replace it altogether. Of particular importance is line 2 which, being written here in full, shows that the place name signifies the location of the vineyards from which the wine came. By analogy, this then is also the explanation of the name *yhd* in our post-exilic seal impressions.³¹

Cross's theory is not without its difficulties, however. (i) Whilst the names of towns such as Mošah may be explained in the way Cross suggests, the various forms of the provincial name cannot be classed in the same category. The whole force of Cross's argument is that it is the precise locality of the origin of the wine that is significant, and for this purpose the name *yhd* is far too general. (ii) The letters *yhd* also occur on some coins of the Persian period.³² In this case, the association with the administration of the province is clear. Since often on the jar handles *yhd* occurs alone, without any indication of capacity and so on, the analogy with the coins may be considered quite as close as the Shiqmona jar inscriptions. (iii) Cross does not

³⁰F. M. Cross, 'Jar Inscriptions from Shiqmona', *IEJ* 18 (1968) 226-33, and cf. *EI* 9 (1969) 21-2.

³¹The place names on wine jars have the same sense: wine of *Gib'eon*, *Mošah*, *Yehūd*, Thasos, Rhodes, and indeed on the old Judahite stamps, wine of *mmšt*, *hbrn*, *zlyp*, and *swkh'*, *IEJ* 18 (1968) 232.

³²They now also occur on a number of bullae (see below), though Cross could not have known that when he wrote.

apparently try to explain the later *yršlm* stamps by his theory, and in fact they pose problems for it, both because it is implausible to suppose that Jerusalem only entered the wine trade at a very late stage and because the way the letters of *yršlm* are written between the points of a star seems to single it out from other place names on jar inscriptions. It is clear, then, that we must seek an alternative explanation for the occurrence of *yhd* (and *yršlm*).

Though other possibilities have been proposed,³³ the majority opinion is that these stamps were used in connection with the collection of taxes, a view that can be subdivided into two possibilities: (i) that the jars were used for the collection of secular taxes for the governor, and (ii) that they were used for contributions to the temple alone (cf. Neh. 10:32-9; 13:10-13). When in the later period these needed to be distinguished from the secular taxes, the new *yršlm* impression was adopted for this temple tax. This second suggestion is not very likely, however; to propose that in the Ptolemaic period jars formerly marked *yhd* were replaced by jars marked *yršlm* whilst *yhd* came to be used for something else is unconvincing. The former suggestion, that these jars were used throughout for the collection of general taxation is clearly more plausible and enables the name to carry the same significance as it does on the coins, that is to say, a reference to the official administration of the province.³⁴

While the various points I have just outlined represented the consensus of opinion a decade or so ago, it is

³³Naveh, *Development* 61, for instance, has suggested that the name indicated a standard quantity as agreed by the provincial administration.

³⁴This fits well with Lapp's view regarding the situation later in the Ptolemaic period, and suggests that secular and religious authority were kept distinct throughout the post-exilic period. It means that for the Persian period we do not have (or have not recognized) direct evidence for the collection of revenue in kind for the temple. It is not difficult to think of reasons why this might be so. The situation may appear to have been complicated by D. Barag's proposal (cf. 'Some Notes on a Silver Coin of Johanan the High Priest', *BA* 48 [1985] 166-8) to read *yhnln/ hkh*, 'Johanan the priest', on a coin of similar type to those inscribed *yhzqyh hphh* (see below). Does this indicate that by the late Persian period secular and religious authority had become completely fused? Not necessarily; since there is no evidence that this situation continued, it seems likely at present that this was simply a 'one-off' case in circumstances about which we are completely in the dark.

apparent that these data have only a very limited bearing on our topic. The date in the second half of the Persian period assumed for the *yhd* impressions meant that they could not contribute directly to the issue of Judah's status earlier on.

In 1976 the matter was taken a dramatic step further with the publication of N. Avigad's *Bullae and Seals from a Post-Exilic Judean Archive*.³⁵ In this volume, Avigad published two seals and more than seventy bullae (that is to say, small lumps of clay which had been used to seal letters or documents and which were then stamped with a seal). The find-spot of this material is unknown, but its homogeneity as a collection seems to be assured by the facts that a number of the bullae were impressed with the same seal and that 'one of the seals (No. 14) is directly connected by its legend to one of the bullae types (No. 5)' (1). Many of the bullae and one of the seals are inscribed with the name of the province, *yh(w)d*; some additionally have a personal name, whilst others have only a personal name with or without an official title.

Before proceeding to discuss the date of this material, it will be helpful first to take note of some of the names and titles, for these relate to a further controversy which was far from resolved in 1976. Amongst a large number of seal impressions previously found by Aharoni at Ramat Rahel, a few bore the names of individuals as well as that of the province, others had a name plus title, and uniquely several impressions of a single type had *yhw*d + personal name + title.³⁶ The most controversial aspect of these finds was the title. Aharoni read it as פִּחוּחַ, 'the governor', an apparently anomalous form linguistically (see further below), but one which Kutscher had endeavoured to explain as a back-formation from the plural פִּחוּחִים.³⁷ Cross, however, observed that after about 500 BC the letter *wāw* was no longer written with a 'peaked right shoulder' and that even before

³⁵Qedem 4 (Jerusalem, The Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University 1976).

³⁶Cf. Aharoni, *Ramat Rahel Seasons 1959 and 1960* 7-10 and 32-4; *Ramat Rahel Seasons 1961 and 1962* 21-2 and 44-5.

³⁷E. Y. Kutscher, 'פִּחוּחַ and its Cognates', *Tarbiz* 30 (1960-61) 112-19 (Hebrew). He cites as an identical parallel the development in Syriac of *mhw'* from *mḥ'*.

that it was becoming rare. Since there was no reason to date the Ramat Rahel material earlier than the fifth century BC, Cross affirmed that the letter in question must be a *reš*, and that the word should thus be read as פֹּדֶרָא, 'the potter'. This was not an unreasonable conclusion in the light of the evidence which was available at that time, and Naveh in particular lent it his support.³⁸

The material which Avigad has published, however, confirms that *phw'* was the correct reading after all. The word occurs on one bulla (No. 5) following the personal name Elnathan. It is also almost certainly to be restored through comparison with No. 5 as the damaged last word on one of the two seals (No. 14), which reads in full

Belonging to Shelomith
maidservant of Elna-
than *ph* . .

לְשִׁלְמִית
אִמְתּוֹ אֵלְנָתָן
חֵן פֹּה . .

The reasons for favouring the reading *phw'* include the following: (i) The horde as a whole seems clearly to have come originally from some kind of official archive. This is suggested not only by the number of documents which must have been included but also by the presence of an actual seal (No. 13) inscribed *yhd* as well as a large number of impressions which bear the name of *yh(w)d* and the use of a title such as *hspr* (cf. No. 6 — ten bullae all with an identical inscription). In such a context we expect an official title. (ii) Whilst a potter's name is conceivable on a jar, it is highly improbable on a bulla used for sealing a document. (iii) In the case of seal No. 14, quoted just above, the reading 'potter' would be ridiculous. By extension, therefore, it is equally inconceivable in the case of bulla No. 5. (iv) Elsewhere in the horde there are a number of clear examples of the letter *wāw* written with the 'peaked right shoulder', for instance in *yhw'd* at plate 5, nos. a, b, and d, and in *lbrwk* at plate 8. There can thus be no palaeographical

³⁸Cross, *EI* 9 (1969) 24-6; Naveh, *Development* 61; see also S. A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Assyriological Studies 19; Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press 1974) 82.

objection to what is contextually so obviously a superior reading.

If this reading has found a widespread measure of agreement in recent years, the same cannot be said for its precise significance. It has long been known that the Hebrew and Aramaic word *phh* (from Akkadian [*bēl*] *pīhātu*) has a broad range of meaning; within Biblical texts referring to the Achaemenid period alone it can refer to a satrap (Ezra 5:3) as well as a provincial governor (e.g. Neh. 5:14b), whilst as we have noted Alt maintained that it could also be used for those commissioned to a specific task, such as Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel. Further afield, the occurrence of the plural form *𐤏𐤓𐤁𐤀* in the Migdol Papyrus I 4 appears to refer to junior officials acting in a judicial capacity.³⁹ This ambiguity is exploited in a general way by McEvenue⁴⁰ and rather specifically by Naveh and Greenfield to cast doubt on the translation 'the governor' as a title for Elnathan in the Avigad collection and for Yehoezer and Ahzai in the seal impressions from Ramat Raḥel.⁴¹ Their argument is that the Aramaic word for governor is *pehā*, which in the emphatic state should be *pahṭā*'. Our *pahwā*', therefore, they take to be a backformation specifically from the plural *pahwātā*' of the Migdol Papyrus and therefore to mean not a governor but a lower governmental official. They conclude

³⁹E. Bresciani, 'Papiri aramaici egiziani di epoca persiana presso il Museo Civico di Padova', *RSO* 35 (1960) 11-24; J. A. Fitzmyer, 'The Padua Aramaic Papyrus Letters', *JNES* 21 (1962) 15-24, revised in *A Wandering Aramean. Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS 25; Missoula, Scholars Press 1979) 219-30; J. Naveh, 'Old Aramaic Inscriptions (1960-64)', *AION* ns 16 (1966) 19-36; J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions. VI: Aramaic Inscriptions* (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1975) 143-7.

⁴⁰S. E. McEvenue, 'The Political Structure in Judah from Cyrus to Nehemiah', *CBQ* 43 (1981) 353-64. In this article, McEvenue seeks to defend Alt's thesis against the criticisms of Smith (below, n. 59) and of G. Widengren, 'The Persian Period', in J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller (edd.), *Israelite and Judaeon History* (London, SCM Press 1977) 489-538. A number of the matters discussed above are intended to suggest a different evaluation of the evidence from that offered by McEvenue. Here, however, we should note in particular that he fails to discuss the relevant coins, that his treatment of Avigad is less than fair (as we have already noted, the damaged seal No. 14 needs to be read in association with bulla No. 5) and that his appeal to Cross's reading *phr*' is no longer acceptable.

⁴¹J. Naveh and J. C. Greenfield, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period', *CHJ* I (above, n. 7) 115-29.

These texts were clearly from an archive which belonged to Shlomit who was the maidservant/concubine of Elnathan. The sealings belonged either to the participants in the affairs recorded in the papyri or to the witnesses. The *yhw*d sealings reflect the interest of the government in these proceedings and therefore we find among the participants Elnathan 'the official'. There is no need to assume that this was an official archive (123f.).

In the course of a recent publication of some Hebrew pre-exilic bullae, Avigad has made a partial response to these arguments by emphasizing again the evidence that this was indeed an official archive, and adding the further considerations that it is unlikely that the 'maidservant' of a low-ranking official would have a formal seal or be the owner of so large an archive.⁴² Furthermore, in his original publication he had sought to dismiss the relevance of the Migdol Papyrus by suggesting that the word in question should not be vocalized as the emphatic plural of *phh*, but rather as an otherwise unattested abstract noun *paḥūtā'* meaning 'prefecture'.⁴³ This is quite unconvincing, however, for the word occurs in a well-attested fixed legal formula in which in every other case a personal title is to be expected at this point.⁴⁴ There can be no serious doubt that in this case, at least, the plural of *phh* is used for officials lower than the rank of governor.

Acceptance of this point, however, by no means involves agreement with Naveh and Greenfield over the meaning of *phw'*. First, for their argument to work, they would have to establish that the plural *paḥwātā'* was only ever used of junior officials so that a backformation from it to the singular *paḥwā'* could be used somewhat artificially to mean 'the (junior) official' in distinction to the regular emphatic *paḥtā'* meaning 'the governor'.⁴⁵ This, however, is manifestly not the case; the

⁴²N. Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the time of Jeremiah: Remnants of a Burnt Archive* (Jerusalem, Israel Exploration Society 1986) 122, n. 149.

⁴³Avigad, *Bullae and Seals* 6, n. 5.

⁴⁴For references, cf. Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramean* 223.

⁴⁵There is, in fact, no evidence at all that *paḥtā'* was the 'regular' emphatic form in Judah. So far as I can see, the form is only attested anywhere once — namely in the Aramaic version of the Behistun inscription (line 31 = line 18 of Cowley's edition) found at Elephantine. This text is so badly preserved that one might be inclined to query the reading, but the most recent photographs quite clearly show a *t*; cf. J. C. Greenfield and B. Porten, *The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great: Aramaic Version* (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum I.v.1; London, Lund

Aramaic plural *paḥ^awātā* at Dan. 3:2, 3 and 27 must refer to senior officials on the basis of their position in the list, and the same is probably true for Dan. 6:8. The Hebrew plural forms *paḥōt* and *paḥ^awōt* are of relevance as showing that in a closely related language the plural form with the meaning 'governors' was well-known; cf. especially Ezra 8:36 and Neh. 2:7, 9 (and further Est. 3:12; 8:9; 9:3). There can thus be no objection in principle to *phw*' being a backformation from the plural with the meaning governor.

Secondly, therefore, we need to ask which is the more probable meaning in the context. Here, three factors tip the balance in favour of 'governor'. One is Avigad's point that we should not expect the wife or female subordinate of a junior official to have a seal which, in addition, was in use in the context of an official archive. The second factor which in my opinion emphatically endorses Avigad's position is the analogy which cries out to be drawn with a small group of coins which have only recently been definitively read. Alongside the fourth century BC silver coins stamped simply *yhd*, there are three which are inscribed instead *yḥzqyh hphh* (= *yehēzqīyā happehā*), 'Hezekiah the governor'.⁴⁶ Though these inscriptions are in Hebrew, the parallel with our Aramaic material is exact, and since it cannot be supposed that anyone other than the provincial governor is being referred to on the coins, the same is likely to be true in the case of the earlier seal impressions.⁴⁷ A third factor which deserves consideration is

Humphries 1982) plate ix; note also A. Yardeni's reconstruction, plate iv, and the text of the new edition, 34.

⁴⁶L. Mildenberg, 'Yehud: a Preliminary Study of the Provincial Coinage of Judaea', in O. Mørkholm and N. M. Waggoner (edd.), *Greek Numismatics and Archaeology. Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson* (Wetteren, Editions NR 1979) 183-96; cf. L. Y. Rahmani, 'Silver Coins of the Fourth Century B.C. from Tel Gamma', *IEJ* 21 (1971) 158-60; Stern, *Material Culture* 224-27 (with discussion of earlier opinions); Betlyon (above, n. 13), *JBL* 105 (1986) 633-42.

⁴⁷E. Lipiński, *BiOr* 42 (1985) 164, has attempted to press Naveh's and Greenfield's suggestion even further. He writes, 'There is little doubt, however, that *phw* is not the same word as *phh*. *Phw* occurs above all in legends of stamps impressed on jars. This indicates . . . that the official called *phw*' should be identified with the *pēḥū ša karpātī*, mentioned in the lexical series Aa A = *nāqu* II/3, Section B (*MSL* XIV, 277, B, 8'), after the "locksmen", *sēkeru ša mē* . . . he is no "governor", but the official "who seals" the jars'. My colleague, J. N. Postgate observes, however, that these words should be taken as infinitives, not

the parallel which may be drawn with the practice in Samaria. Like the coins just mentioned, the evidence comes from late in the Persian period, but it is striking nonetheless. One of the clay seals discovered in the Wādī ed-Dāliyah is inscribed

[] yhw bn [sn]
błt pht šmr[n]

[Belonging to Yēša'lyahū, son of [San]
ballat, governor of Samaria⁴⁸

This seal is written in Hebrew (and in palaeo-Hebrew rather than Aramaic script) and the force of *pht* here is therefore not in doubt. The reference to Sanballat further underscores the word's significance. The fact that a seal of this sort could be affixed to a contract relating to the sale of a vineyard shows that seals even of the governor were used in the course of regular transactions. This fits extremely well with the material published by Avigad and makes it attractive to understand it in similar terms.

We have arrived at the probable conclusion that Elnathan was indeed a hitherto unknown governor of Judah. The question which was previously held over, but which can now no longer be avoided, is that of date.

In his original publication, Avigad argued that the bullae should be dated in the sixth century BC. In the absence of any archaeological context or the identification (as he thought) of any of the persons named with characters known from elsewhere, he was obliged to base his conclusions entirely on palaeography. On the one hand he finds evidence of a number of 'classical' or 'archaic' forms which cannot be later than the sixth century and on the other of several letters which in lapidary script had not developed the forms which they take here before the sixth century BC. The kind of arguments

as participles (*pehū* and *sekēru*), and that the only example of the process in question relates to the smearing of bitumen on ships. This is hardly appropriate to the context in hand, and it would leave Elnathan as a very junior workman, not an 'official' at all — and certainly not one whose *'mh* we should expect to have a seal of her own.

⁴⁸F. M. Cross in P. W. and N. L. Lapp (edd.), *Discoveries in the Wādī ed-Dāliyah* (ASOR Annual 41; Cambridge, Mass., ASOR 1974) 18.

involved have already been noted above in connection with the letter *wāw*. Avigad's conclusions have since been upheld by Herr's independent (though not always completely accurate) study of *The Scripts of Ancient Northwest Semitic Seals*.⁴⁹

So far as I am aware, no one has refuted Avigad's palaeographical analysis, although some have rejected his conclusions without further discussion. The problem is that in material of this kind it is difficult to escape the impression that the palaeographer's date, which may well be typologically correct, can never be more than a *terminus post quem* in absolute terms. The retention of older forms of script should cause no surprise in the case of official seals, and seems in fact to be certain in the case of the *wāw* of *phw'* from Ramat Raḥel already discussed. Indeed, on palaeographic grounds, Herr states that there would be nothing to prevent us dating a few of Avigad's seals to the seventh or eighth centuries if we did not know better — a further indication of the conservatism of official and perhaps provincial seals. Thus although we may be inclined towards Avigad's sixth century date, we are not obliged to accept it.

Perhaps, however, his date can be supported — though again not decisively established — on other grounds. Apparently independently, both Lemaire and Meyers have proposed identifying the Shelomith of Seal No. 14 with the Shelomith of 1 Chron. 3:19, a daughter of Zerubbabel.⁵⁰ (Avigad had observed the coincidence of names, but no more.) In favour of this identification, they point out that both in Biblical genealogies and on seals the names of women are comparatively rare. In the case of the Biblical genealogy, the curiosity of having a woman mentioned might be explained if in fact she held some official position. And the dates of the two named may plausibly be held to have coincided.

⁴⁹L. G. Herr, *The Scripts of Ancient Northwest Semitic Seals* (HSM 18; Missoula, Scholars Press 1978) 24-9, dates the collection to the late sixth–early fifth centuries.

⁵⁰A. Lemaire, *Syria* 54 (1977) 129-31; E. M. Meyers, 'The Shelomith Seal and the Judean Restoration: Some Additional Considerations', *EI* 18 (1985) 33*-38*. Lemaire goes on to propose two further identifications (*ḥnnh*, cf. 1 Chron. 3:19; and *šm'y*, cf. 1 Chron. 3:19) but then rightly admits that 'ces deux identifications restent assez hypothétiques'.

It is not clear quite what significance we should ascribe to Shelomith's title *'mt 'Intn*. On the one hand it has been suggested that this means no more than 'wife' as the counterpart to *b'l* in the sense of husband.⁵¹ There are a few Ammonite seals which use the same word, whilst in earlier Hebrew seals we find the more prosaic *'št*.⁵² On the other hand, we might suppose a little more adventurously that *'mh* here is in some way the counterpart of *'bd*⁵³ which occurs on a number of pre-exilic seals either in the title *'bd hmlk* or with a personal name of someone who was in fact a king. This title, it is agreed, was a high ranking official in the circle close to the king,⁵⁴ so that if *'mh* were its female counterpart it would again point to the importance of Elnathan's status. Either way, the translation 'maidservant/concubine' is misleading.⁵⁵ Whether by marriage or in her own right, Shelomith was a woman to be reckoned with, and it is by no means unreasonable to identify her with the daughter of Zerubbabel of the Davidic family.

It should be emphasized at this point that in order to affirm that Elnathan was a governor of Judah a generation or so after Zerubbabel, we have to rely either upon palaeographical dating or upon the identification of a name on a seal with one in a Biblical genealogy or on both points. In the nature of the case, neither argument can be regarded as absolutely compelling, but the balance of probability seems to me to lie in favour of the position I have been arguing for. If this is accepted, then the likelihood that the ascription of the title *phh* to Sheshbazzar

⁵¹E.g. Lipiński, *BiOr* 42 (1985) 165; Lemaire, *Syria* 54 (1977) 130.

⁵²For examples (not exhaustive), see conveniently Herr, *Scripts* 63 and 98. This has caused G. I. Davies to speculate privately with me on the outside possibility that Elnathan might have been a governor of Ammon.

⁵³This suggestion seems first to have been advanced in connection with other seals by W. F. Albright, 'Notes on Ammonite History', in R. M. Díaz (ed.), *Miscellanea Biblica B. Ubach* (Scripta et Documenta 1; Montserrat 1953) 131-6, and it has been tentatively applied to our seal by Avigad, *Bullae and Seals* 11-13, and Meyers, *EI* 18 (1985) 35*.

⁵⁴Cf. R. de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf 1958) 184-5 (*ET Ancient Israel. Its Life and Institutions* [2nd edn; London, Darton, Longman & Todd 1965] 120).

⁵⁵In this connection it is worth emphasizing the distinction between the use of this word on a seal and in literary texts or funerary inscriptions (for an example of the latter, cf. N. Avigad, 'The Epitaph of a Royal Steward from Siloam Village', *IEJ* 3 [1953] 137-52).

and Zerubbabel is to be taken in the same way becomes irresistible, and with at least three governors of Judah prior to Nehemiah,⁵⁶ Alt's case with which we started this lecture collapses. That is not to say that the arrival of Nehemiah in Jerusalem did not herald any change in the administration of Judah; I have argued elsewhere⁵⁷ (and therefore shall not set out the evidence again here) that between the abortive wall-building effort recorded out of chronological order in Ezra 4 and the appointment of Nehemiah it may well have been that Tobiah acted as a caretaker governor under the supervision of Samaria, and when discussing Stern's theory above we noted hints that in fact there may have been some administrative reforms at about this time throughout the Levant. But that is a far cry from asserting that prior to Nehemiah Judah was but another district within the province of Samaria.⁵⁸

Before concluding, we may profitably glance briefly at Neh. 5:14-19, a passage which comes closer than any other to addressing directly the issues with which we have been concerned. Indeed, it was from verse 15 that Morton Smith derived his most telling literary argument against Alt, namely that Nehemiah's whole apologia in this paragraph would collapse if he were not comparing like with like.⁵⁹ Thus, when Nehemiah compares himself favourably with 'the earlier governors who came before me', he ought to be referring to governors of Judah, whereas Alt, of course, was obliged to suppose less plausibly that governors of Samaria were in view.

⁵⁶Avigad, *Bullae and Seals* 35, would also include Yeho'ezer and Ahzai, known from Ramat Rahel, as governors before Nehemiah. Because the Ramat Rahel stamps come from a refuse dump, however (cf. Aharoni, *Ramat Rahel: Seasons 1959 and 1960*, 28, and *Ramat Rahel: Seasons 1961 and 1962*, 19 and 43), the date of this material is even less certain than in the case of Elnathan, and so cannot be used as evidence at this point.

⁵⁷Cf. note 8 above.

⁵⁸There are, of course, literary and historical arguments leading towards the same conclusion, but they lie beyond the scope of the present lecture. In particular we might ask how the situation in Ezra 4: 7-23 could have developed if Jerusalem were under Samaritan control; the whole exchange of correspondence seems clearly to presuppose Judah's relative autonomy.

⁵⁹M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (New York, Columbia University Press 1971) 193-201.

So far as it goes, our discussion and Smith's are heading in the same direction.

There is, however, a prior textual issue to be resolved, one on which the material we have examined may possibly shed some light, but one which North has exploited in developing his case that Nehemiah was never governor of Judah at all, but rather a 'charismatic building-contractor'.⁶⁰ The MT of 5:14a as it stands reads

גַּם מִיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה אֹתִי לִהְיוֹת שָׂרָם בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה

which the Revised Version renders, 'Moreover, from the time that I was appointed⁶¹ to be their governor in the land of Judah'. The principal difficulty here, of course, is the word *pehām*, on which North comments, 'even strong defenders of the governorship like Rudolph admit that the reading *pehām* is impossible. It is taken by the Septuagint to mean "their governor", which would require emendation to *pehātām*. But in the absence of any antecedent for the plural pronoun, Rudolph like Gesenius-Brown accepts rather the emendation *pehā*' (393). North's counter-proposal is to read בְּנֵהֶם, and thus to eliminate all reference to Nehemiah as governor;⁶² he translates, 'Even from the day when it was commanded me to be among them in the land of Judah' (394).

It seems likely to me on other grounds that the normal emendation is more probable than North's, but is it in fact necessary? We have argued at length in favour of the view that in Judah at about this time there was an Aramaic singular emphatic formation *phw*' beside what is assumed to be the regular *pht*' (but cf. note 45 above); it may hesitantly be

⁶⁰R. North, 'Civil Authority in Ezra', in *Studi in Onore di Edoardo Volterra*, VI (Milan, Giuffrè 1971) 377-404 (380).

⁶¹A more literal translation would be 'from the day that one/he appointed me . . .', either an impersonal construction, which would be unusual in the singular, or with 'the king' understood as subject. Alternatively, many run the words *šwh* and *ty* together to give *šw'ty* = *šwyty* (pual) = 'I was appointed'; cf. W. Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia* (HAT; Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr 1949) 132. The meaning is not greatly affected either way.

⁶²He appears to overlook Neh. 12: 26, however. He would presumably minimise its impact on the ground that it is not from Nehemiah's first person account but only from a subsequent editor who might not have been aware of the true situation.

proposed that a similar situation prevailed in Hebrew, or at least in Hebrew that was so heavily influenced by Aramaic as was Nehemiah's and as was the language of official administration.⁶³ Whether to avoid the feminine overtones of the grammatically anticipated form⁶⁴ or whether for some other reason, analogy with the seal impressions suggests the possibility of a form *phm* beside the regular *ph̄tm*. The suffix which bothered North will, of course, be anticipatory — a standard construction in Aramaic and so possibly another hint of influence from that quarter.

Further on in this same verse, Nehemiah boasts that neither he nor his brothers have eaten the *leḥem happehā*, 'the bread of the governor'. Unlike earlier governors who burdened the people in this way, Nehemiah provided generously out of his own resources not only for himself and 150 of his officials, but also for visiting foreign delegations. The fare was rich, but, Nehemiah re-emphasizes in v. 18, 'for all this I did not claim "the bread of the governor"'.

For North, this is no more than a comment on Nehemiah's life-style; he 'lived like a lord', as we might say. To those familiar with the Persepolis fortification and treasury texts, however, almost every phrase of this paragraph is heavy with the overtones of Persian bureaucracy. These texts, well over two thousand of which have been published,⁶⁵ record receipts and payments in cash or kind at one

⁶³It should be noted that from a linguistic point of view the material published by Avigad is mixed. Of the four words used which allow certain diagnosis, two are Hebrew (*hspr*, No. 6; *bn*, Nos. 7, 8, 9 and 10) and two are Aramaic (*phw*, Nos. 5 and 14; *yhw'd*, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 11 and 13). However, there are seals known from elsewhere which have *yhw'd* written in Hebrew letters (cf. Stern, *Material Culture* 202-3) and so comparable influence from Aramaic on the Hebrew *phh* would not be at all surprising.

⁶⁴For use of masculine forms where feminine are expected, cf. GK §§110k, 135o, 144a, 145p, t, u; R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (HSM 12; Missoula, Scholars Press 1976) 52-4. The reasons seem to vary from case to case.

⁶⁵The principal publication of the Fortification Tablets is R. T. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* (University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 92; Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1969), but see also R. T. Hallock, 'Selected Fortification Texts', *Cahiers de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Iran* 8 (1978) 109-36. It appears that a considerable number remain unpublished. Most of the Treasury Tablets have been published by G. G.

of the Achaemenid capitals during the years 509-494 and 492-458 BC. Being written in Elamite, they are by no means perfectly understood, but their number, together with the fact that there are often only small variations between one text and another, means that there is reasonable certainty about the general situation. So far as I can see, Biblical scholars have almost completely ignored this material. In my view, however, there are a great many points of contact with the administrative procedures underlying not a few passages in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and I hope to be able to explore these more fully elsewhere. Let me therefore here simply list the major comparative points with this paragraph in Nehemiah 5 in order to press the case that *leḥem happeḥâ* should be taken more literally than in North's reconstruction.

(i) Payment of officials at all levels, from artisans to satraps, was generally reckoned in kind, the quantities, of course, varying according to the individual's status. The most regular commodity for salaries was grain or flour, the amounts of which in the cases of senior officials far exceeded what even a large family could consume. Seen in such a context, 'the bread of the governor' is therefore quite simply the governor's salary.

(ii) In the treasury texts, which are the later of the two collections and which stop only shortly before Nehemiah's ministry, we have records of cash payments in lieu of part of the regular payment in kind. This may well help clarify the textually obscure first half of v. 15, rendered in RSV as 'The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens upon the people, and took from them food and wine, besides forty shekels of silver'.

(iii) Many of the texts record payments of goods to officials not only for themselves but also for those working with or under them. I cite here part of one illuminating example relating to Parnaka, a well-known senior official: 'Daily (by) Parnaka together with his boys 48 BAR is received. (By) Parnaka

Cameron, *Persepolis Treasury Tablets* (University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 65; Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1948); 'Persepolis Treasury Tablets Old and New', *JNES* 17 (1958) 161-76; 'New Tablets from the Persepolis Treasury', *JNES* 24 (1965) 167-92. For a helpful introductory discussion, cf. R. T. Hallock, 'The Evidence of the Persepolis Tablets', *CHI* II (above, n. 2) 588-609.

himself 18 *BAR* is received. (By) his 300 boys 1 *QA* each is received' (PFa 4, lines 8-16).⁶⁶ 'Boys' in this context, as the editor of the texts recognizes,⁶⁷ does not refer to age, but to rank; they occur frequently elsewhere and it is clear from the evidence as a whole that they are close assistants of (in this case) Parnaka, and that they are dependent upon him for their salary. The case is similar with the use of *na'ar* in Neh. 5:15, and if they were also directly dependent on the governor's salary for their own sustenance, we can understand why it is said of the former governors that 'their retainers (*na'rêhem*) too used to lord it over the people'.

(iv) When Nehemiah speaks of 150 Jewish officials being 'at my table' (v. 17) it is tempting to read this in the same light.

(v) In verse 18, Nehemiah states what was prepared each day at his own expense: 'one ox, six choice sheep, and some poultry, and, at ten day intervals, wine of every kind in abundance.' As a menu this is somewhat restricted; it is clearly not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to indicate the scale of provision. It is thus illuminated by the fact that Parnaka and others of his rank were in receipt of two sheep per day, but that ox and poultry feature almost exclusively in texts recording specifically royal provisions, e.g. *PFT* 692, 1-5: '1 ox, supplied by Rumada, (at) the storehouse (?), (was) paid to the king (at) Anzamanakka', or *PFT* 698, 1-9, '432 fowls, (included) in them (being): 6 *ippur*, 15 *basbas*, 65 *šudaba*, 346 *kuktukka* fowls, supplied by Iršena, were dispersed in behalf of the king'. Through the texts as a whole it emerges that the quantities used for royal provision were, not unexpectedly, far higher than those for any single official. On this scale, Nehemiah's 'menu' is closer to the range of that of an official in terms of quantity, but its quality was clearly superior.

(vi) The apparently strange statement that whereas provisions were supplied daily wine was supplied at ten day intervals again fits well with our suggested background, where the texts generally specify the time that each commodity

⁶⁶10 *QA* = 1 *BAR*, whatever that may mean in absolute terms. A daily ration of 1-1.5 *QA* of flour for workmen seems to have been quite normal, so that Parnaka's payment was up to 180 times as great.

⁶⁷Cf. Hallock, *PFT* 30 and 39.

should cover, whether monthly salary, daily provision or something in between. As an example of a close parallel to our particular situation we may cite *PFT* 675, 1-8, '24 *marriš* (of) wine, entrusted to Ušaya, Ziššawiš received for rations. For a period of 8 days, in the intercalary (?) twelfth month, 22nd year, (at) Parmadan . . . '.

As I have suggested, these remarks only begin to touch on the kind of illumination which we may expect to come from this largely neglected quarter. As regards Nehemiah 5, however, they leave little room to doubt that Nehemiah voluntarily forewent an allowance or salary to which he was entitled as governor. As such, he takes his place alongside his predecessors of similar status in Judah, even if the evidence from the *yhd* jars is that they were not so generous as he when it came to exacting their dues.⁶⁸

⁶⁸Cf. Avigad, *Bullae and Seals* 35.