Book Reviews

***Ancient Place Names in the Holy Land: Preservation and History*, by Yoel Elitzur. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2004. xiv + 446 pp. Cloth. $59.50.**

This timely book is the work of Yoel Elitzur, a young scholar who promises to be a leader in toponymic research in the 21st century. The work is a revision of his doctoral dissertation written under the guidance of the late Professor Shlomo Morag, one of Israel's distinguished linguists.

The approach of this research is focused on the preservation of ancient toponyms in their Arabic form. The author has based his analysis on a corpus of 177 place names for which the identification is positive or almost positive. Such a cautious approach is essential to insure that the ensuing deductions will be founded on real information, names that have survived on the ground. Sixty of the toponyms chosen have been reviewed in depth, utilizing all documented attestations in all language contexts.

The avowed goal is to establish a more reliable set of linguistic criteria for the transmission of the ancient (mainly Canaanite, Hebrew, or Aramaic) names to the forms noted for the Arabic settlements or geographical features recorded by explorers during the 19th and 20th centuries. The previous work of Kampffmeyer (1892–1893) is critiqued, often severely, especially his explanation that many divergences in the linguistic preservation of toponyms result from the difference between immediate adoption of some names by the Arab invaders in the seventh century C.E. and the gradual transition of the indigenous population from Hebrew/Aramaic to Arabic. Elitzur mentions the Arabic form Muḫmâs several times and notes that the Hebrew *ḵ* has become Arabic *ḥ,* which is a straight phonetic borrowing, but he does not try to explain it. Kampffmeyer's explanation seems the most likely. On the other hand, Elitzur notes that the Hebrew *k* with or without *dagesh*, appears in Arabic as *k*. He has no satisfactory explanation for why the local speakers gave up the aspirated pronunciation of *ḵ* in favor of the common Arabic realization. His discussion of the sibilants *š* (*shin*) and *ś* (*sin)* and also *s* (*samekh*), in relation to ʾEsdûd (biblical Ashdod), on pp. 108–19, musters considerable evidence of great value, but reveals a basic misunderstanding of certain factors. For one thing, the transcriptions into cuneiform by Assyrian scribes often differ from those of Babylonian scribes because Assyrian realized these phonemes like Arabic, while Babylonian matched the situation in Hebrew. As for Phoenician, the final *š* in transcriptions of Greek forms is a reminder that Phoenician had only one grapheme for *tha*, *shin*, and *sin*, and the most likely Phoenician pronunciation of all three was *s*. Egyptian transcriptions of *samekh* show that it had a clearly discernible realization unlike that of *sin*; the Egyptians used signs for *tj* (which the Egyptologists maddeningly transcribe by *ṯ* used by Semitists for *tha*), to transcribe *samekh* (occasional exceptions are for *samekh* in final position). By the seventh century B.C.E., the Hebrew and Aramaic *samekh* had lost its distinctive realization and thus could be used as an *alternate grapheme* to help distinguish *sin* from *shin*. In later Rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic, the *sin* was restored (even in places where it was not original).

The influence on some of the toponyms by Christian Aramaic, adduced by Elitzur, might be a partial explanation, but apart from that, he does not really present a clear alternative to Kampffmeyer's theory. At present, there is really no obvious explanation for these transformations. Incidentally, with regard to Ashkelon, Elitzur rejects the etymology of this toponym from the root *ṯql*, but this is a serious mistake. He seems unaware that the Semitic *tha* is always realized graphically in Egyptian transcriptions by signs with *s.* Just as **ʿAṯtartu* (compare the Ugaritic divine name *ʿṯrt*) is written in Egyptian *ʿ-s-tá-ar-tu* (Thutmose III's topographical list No. 28), the Amarna transcription is *Aš-tar-ti* (EA 197:10). The presence of an original *tha* in the name Ashkelon and also Ashdod is unequivocal. A more thorough mastery of the rules of phonetic transcription of Semitic place names in Egyptian texts is a necessary requisite for future editions.

The most important component in Elitzur's research is his impressive mastery of the Arabic sources. As he notes, the 20th century had seen the publication of important editions of many sources not available to modern scholars before.

In most cases, Elitzur gets down to the nitty-gritty that most people choose to ignore. He seeks to find rational linguistic explanations and, in doing so, he shows a vast range of knowledge in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Arabic. His experience in Akkadian is perhaps more limited. For example, the geminated consonants in Amqarrūna (biblical Ekron) and Isqillūna (Ashkelon) are apparently a late convention for representing a vowel after a CVC cuneiform sign (Hämeen-Anttila 2000: 5). For some reason, the gemination of such a consonant usually precedes a long vowel.

In certain cases, it is necessary to express an objection to Elitzur's linguistic interpretations. A glaring case is that of Πελλα = Pella. There is no reason whatever to doubt that the Hellenistic-Roman form is the name of the original capital of Macedonia, the birthplace of Alexander the Great. It belongs to the group of similar names such as Philadelphia (Rabbat bene Ammon) and Scythopolis (Bethshean). It was chosen because it resembled the Semitic name (that remained in use by the local population), viz.

*Paḥ^{ə}l '(young) male horse or donkey.' The Egyptian forms from the New Kingdom usually reflect *Pə-ḥí-il* or *Pə-ḥí-la* (references in Aḥituv 1984: 153), and the syllabic cuneiform orthography is *Pí-ḥī-lì* (EA 256:8, 13, 34). If Elitzur intends to use cuneiform examples, he should explain to the nonspecialist the intricacies of cuneiform transcription. For example, *bi* signs can be transcribed *pí*, signs with *ḫ* are used to represent West Semitic consonants absent in native Akkadian (in this case *ḫi* is used for the syllable *ḥi*), and the sign *ši* has the alternate values *lim* and *lì*. Mimation was generally not employed in the Amarna dialects.

The attested Arabic forms vary between *faḥ^{ə}l* and *fiḥ^{ə}l*. As for the latter, it was evidently the real name in the Middle Ages as witnessed by Yāqût (III, 853). Yāqût points out that Fiḥl is not an Arabic word! So he brings us testimony that the name of the ancient Canaanite city had survived among the local inhabitants in a non-Arabic form. The transformation to Faḥl is simply the accommodation to a known Arabic word by later generations.

Another factor that must be reckoned with in topomynic study is the fact that there are many ghost forms in the Massoretic Hebrew Bible. Among them is *ʿEqrôn* which was never used by residents of the town, neither the city of the Iron Age nor the village of the Byzantine Age. The Massoretes in the ninth century C.E. apparently thought that ancient Ekron had been originally located at the Tower of Straton which later became Caesarea. They were seemingly unaware of the original location or the possible connection with the nearby Arab village of *ʿAqar* which is at least a faint reflection of the original **ʿAqqarôn* as attested by the syllabic cuneiform attestations and also the Greek.

Another place name on the same grammatical pattern was **Gabbaʿôn* as attested by the Greek Γαβαων. By the ninth century C.E. the actual antiquity site was a village with the name *el-Jîb*, regardless of how that developed. The same is true of the Hebrew *Yarkôn* which appears in the LXX as Ιερακων. The gemination of the second radical is often not reflected in the Greek orthography, but the presence of a vowel after the second radical confirms the more ancient **qattalon*/**qittalôn* pattern that was the original.

By the same token, no one ever lived in a town or village where the name was pronounced *Migdāl* as in the MT. In the seventh century C.E., the pronunciation of the many places with this name was **Magdāl* as attested by the Akkadian and the Greek orthographies (also the Egyptian). The local names became *Májdal* (*Méjdel)* in Arabic. Incidentally, this is an Arabization that Elitzur needs to account for. But the main point is that the sound shift in Hebrew of unaccented short *ă* vowels in closed syllables to short *ĭ*, the so-called attenuation, took place after the seventh century C.E. but before the ninth century C.E. During those centuries, Hebrew was still a living language used especially by Aramaic- and Arabic-speaking Jews in religious worship and instruction. The sound shifts that took place in that context found expression in the synagogues and schools, but elsewhere in the country, many of the ancient towns and villages were occupied by people who were either Arabs or others who had lost any connection with previous Hebrew roots.

These are only a few of the many aspects of the study of the ancient toponymy of the Levant. Yoel Elitzur has demonstrated his potential as a researcher in this field. He must be encouraged to expand the scope of his work so that ultimately he may provide scholars of the 21st century with a corpus of authentic ancient place names. From such a corpus, he can contribute much to the linguistic and social history of Canaan/Israel and Judaea/Palestina of the Hellenistic/Roman period.

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A History of Potters and Pottery in Ancient Jerusalem: Excavations by K. M. Kenyon in Jerusalem 1961–1967, by H. J. Franken. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2005. xvi + 216 pp., 81 figures, 37 tables. Cloth. £85.00. [Distributed in North America by The David Brown Book Company]

In 1978 Kathleen M. Kenyon died without publishing the results of her excavations in Jerusalem. Although H. J. Franken did not dig with Kenyon in Jerusalem, following her death he sought permission to publish the results of her excavations in areas of the City of David that yielded, *inter alia*, significant remains from the Bronze and Iron Ages: Areas A, H, and P. In 1982 Franken recruited Margreet L. Steiner, a beginning archaeology student, to make Kenyon's stratigraphy in those areas the subject of her dissertation, thus freeing him to concentrate on the pottery (Steiner 2001: xv, 1). Franken's *A History of Potters and Pottery in Ancient Jerusalem: Excavations by K. M. Kenyon in Jerusalem 1961–1967* is the last in a series of three reports prepared from the material entrusted to him