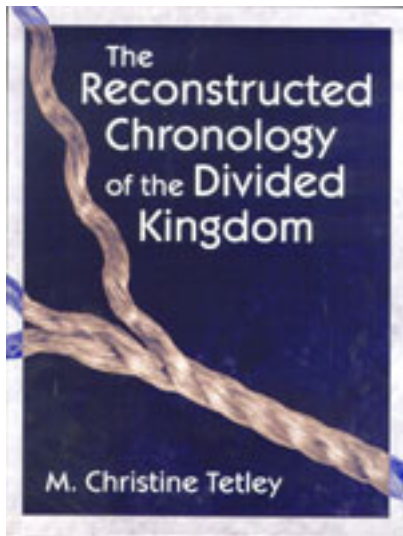


RBL 09/2005



**Tetley, M. Christine**

***The Reconstructed Chronology of the Divided Kingdom***

Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005. Pp. xiv + 194.  
Hardcover. \$39.50. ISBN 1575060728.

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Any discussion of the chronology of Israel during the divided kingdom will involve a discussion of the minutiae and details of the text of the book of Kings (and, perhaps, Chronicles) as well as other sources pertaining to ancient Near Eastern chronology. In this revised doctoral dissertation, Tetley attempts to construct a chronology of the rulers of Judah and Israel based upon her understanding of the data presented in the Hebrew and Greek texts of Kings. Since I have had an abiding interest in such matters, and since the work of others such as Edwin Thiele have brought some light to the issue but have left lingering doubts among many as to the resolution of many of the details of Judean and Israelite chronology, I was hopefully optimistic that Tetley's work would shed further light on some of these details. Unfortunately, such was not the case.

The introductory chapter begins with a short discussion of the extant texts of Kings in Hebrew and Greek and their variant systems of chronological information. Tetley believes that any relative chronology of the divided kingdom must explain all of the variations in these texts and resolve their inconsistencies before attempting an absolute chronology tied to Julian dates by use of synchronisms to other ancient Near Eastern events that are datable. She then explores previous attempts at Israelite chronology that she labels "conventional approaches," noting that they prefer the Hebrew text over the Greek data, use various dating systems such as nonaccession-year reckoning (antedating) or accession-year reckoning (postdating) or a combination of the two, variant calendars

(years beginning in either Nisan or Tishri), and proposed coregencies for several kings. Tetley is critical of these approaches, especially of the system used by Thiele—the most-widely known and used practitioner of the conventional approaches—stating,

they are at variance with the regnal formulas, which are written in clear, stylized statements. Each formula states that a king began to reign *in* the given year of the king of the other kingdom, not that the reigns were calculated from different points according to different dating systems or that the reigns of father and son sometime overlapped.... These systems are not supported by the text itself and are dubious assumptions to make about a text that intends to display chronological detail and synchronicity. (7)

However, while criticizing the “dubious assumptions” of conventional approaches, Tetley reveals her own assumptions that run throughout this work and color both its method and conclusions. One of these is that the chronological formulas are “clear,” by which she seems to mean that a modern reader, who would assume the notices in Kings are giving anniversary-to-anniversary years, much as we would when listing the years when a government official would serve. This is much like the way we count years of life: from birthday to birthday. This is a modern assumption, however. While we cannot be certain what system was used in ancient Israel, we are certain that many surrounding nations used either accession-year or nonaccession-year reckoning for recording reigns. Those responsible for the text of Kings may well have expected the reader to assume something quite different from what a modern reader would have assumed: that the years of a king’s reign were given in one or more of these widely used systems.

A second assumption to which Tetley will repeatedly refer is her complete rejection of use of coregencies to reconcile seemingly disparate data. This is odd considering that Kings opens with the account of a coregency (albeit brief) of Solomon and David. Moreover, several other passages in Kings could be understood as implying a coregency, especially 2 Kgs 15:5. Tetley’s assumption leads her to simply ignore these. She gives no argument against coregencies other than that the authors of Kings never explicitly mention them. Of course, this is no argument at all, since it could have been that the audience of Kings was expected to know about the use coregencies, giving authors no need to explain them.

In the remainder of this first chapter Tetley introduces other relevant topics, including the Assyrian Eponym Canon and its importance of establishing absolute dates for Israel’s kings. Tetley also signals her doubt about the Canon’s reliability prior to 763 B.C.E. She also questions the identification of Tiglath-pileser III with the Pul to whom Menahem paid tribute, thereby challenging an important synchronism to a known date. These will

be treated in more depth in later chapters. Finally, Tetley proposes an alternative approach based upon use of the Greek Text of Kings as suggested by James Shenkel's Harvard thesis published in 1968. She will seek to examine the witness of the Greek text along with the Hebrew text of Kings, construct a relative chronology, and then correlate that chronology to Julian calendar years to provide an absolute chronology.

The second chapter examines the history of the text of Kings and relies largely on the model developed by Cross for the textual development the Hebrew Bible. Tetley's main interest here is the various Greek versions of Kings, especially the *kaige* recension, which she views as based upon a proto-Masoretic text and the Old Greek and Lucianic versions, which she treats as allied texts whose *Vorlagen* were similar. She concludes that the Old Greek/Lucianic (OG/L) tradition is older and more likely retains original data when compared to the MT/*kaige* tradition. Finally, she criticizes Thiele's chronological work on Kings because he lightly dismissed the Greek data for Kings without consulting critical texts of Kings in Greek.

In her third chapter Tetley discusses the chronological data in Kings for the divided kingdom. She compares the MT/*kaige* tradition to the Old Greek/Lucianic tradition, noting differences in the years of the reigns of Abijam and Jehoram in Judah and Jeroboam and Pekahiah in Israel. Her examination divides the history of the divided kingdoms into two periods: early divided kingdom (EDK), which ends with the reign of Ahaziah of Judah and Joram of Israel (since both kings died within months of one another); and late divided kingdom (LDK), which covers the balance of the two kingdoms until the fall of Samaria. (She made this distinction already in the first chapter.) For the EDK the OG/L data for both Judah and Israel suggest a period of one hundred years, whereas the MT/*kaige* data yields ninety-five years for Judah but ninety-eight years for Israel (by simple addition of the total years reigned by the various kings). In the LDK the MT/*kaige* and L both agree on 165 years for Judah, but MT/*kaige* attributes almost 144 years to Israel whereas L's data totals almost 152 years. Tetley concludes that the OG/L tradition is demonstrated to be more reliable than the MT/*kaige* since its totals for the EDK agree. Yet attempts by later copyists of the Greek manuscripts to align them with the MT and other tinkering arising from attempts to make the data in the text consistent may have affected the data currently found in the OG/L manuscripts. Her conclusion does not necessarily follow, however. The alignment in the OG/L tradition could be viewed as secondary to the MT tradition by positing that it arose in an attempt to reconcile the apparently contradictory data of the proto-MT. Tetley gives no coherent argument for favoring one of these options over the other.

Tetley once again criticizes Thiele's treatment of the regnal years of the kings, objecting to his use of coregencies as well as accession-year and non-accession-year reckoning,

labeling them “dubious methods.” Tetley next examines the accession synchronisms for the kings of Judah and Israel in the MT, OG and L, and, occasionally, Josephus. Through a series of timelines and accompanying discussions, she examines these synchronisms for accuracy, assuming that each king’s reign was coterminous with those of his predecessor and his successor and that the total years attributed to each king may have been rounded up or down by a few months to the nearest whole year. Tetley’s method is to examine all of the lengths of reigns and synchronisms in this manner and to note which data are consistent with her method and which are not. In a number of cases, she notes that all of the data (MT and OG/L) appears to be corrupt. For instance, she aligns the total years for LDK by attributing twenty-nine, not twenty, years to Pekah, although no extant text gives this figure for Pekah’s reign. Once again Tetley examines and criticizes Thiele’s methods. In some cases her criticisms are valid, pointing to the weakest points of Thiele’s analysis. Other of her criticisms, however, simply present her alternative interpretation of the data without giving a compelling reason to favor her interpretation over Thiele’s. Thus, when Thiele claimed that L lost or discarded several apparently contradictory synchronisms that point to L’s secondary nature, Tetley counters that the MT’s data should be attributed to the fact that it contains two textual traditions, which eliminates the need to attribute the apparently contradictory data to coregencies or a shift between accession-year and nonaccession-year reckoning.

Tetley’s fourth chapter is a discussion of the Greek manuscript  $c_2$  of Kings (ms 127 in the Göttingen system). Since this L manuscript along with the others that comprise L (boe<sub>2</sub> or 19, 108, 82 and 93 in the Göttingen system) share readings with 4QSam<sup>a</sup>, but  $c_2$  contains a somewhat different system of regnal years and synchronisms than the other L manuscripts, Tetley seeks to explain these differences. Her examination leads her to conclude “that the  $c_2$  data ... arise from a year-for-year alignment based predominantly on L data where L differs from the MT” (61).

Chapter 5 examines the various formulas in Kings used for the beginning and end of reigns as well as the Greek translation of the Hebrew verb *mlk*. Tetley notes two patterns in opening formulas for a king’s reign: pattern 1 places the synchronism with a reigning king in the sister kingdom before the name of the king whose reign is being discussed; pattern 2 reverses this. Closing formulas also exhibit two patterns, one for all the kings of Judah and most of the kings of Israel (pattern A), and another for assassinated kings who were not succeeded by a son (pattern B). When examining the distribution of opening formulas, Tetley notes that OG/L employs formula 2 for only three kings, Nadab, Joram, and Shallum, and that for Shallum the pattern in both KR and L is irregular. From this she concludes that Shallum’s opening formula was altered from an original pattern 1 formula. The MT, however uses formula 2 not only for these two kings but also for all

kings from 1 Kgs 22:41–2 Kgs 3:1. From this she concludes that formula 2 must be secondary in all cases.

In addition, Tetley notes that closing formulas sometimes include “supplementary notices” giving additional events from a king’s reign. These appear to interrupt the flow of the narrative from the closing formula of one king to the opening formula of the next. Thus, whenever a closing formula is not immediately followed by an opening formula or a supplementary notice is present, Tetley considers this a sign of a reworked text.

Once again, Tetley’s assumptions, though not stated, are driving her conclusions. She assumes that the author of Kings was concerned with strict consistency in his narrative framework. However, this assumption is not necessarily correct. Perhaps the author was not concerned about strict consistency. Perhaps he was more concerned about reflecting his sources (instead of making them “clear” for his audience). If the annals of the king of Israel and Judah that are constantly referenced in Kings were compiled by a number of royal scribes over the years, then there may have been variations in the reporting of king’s reigns. Thus, pattern 2, though used less often, may have been used by some scribes in the annals. Likewise, the supplementary notices may have been simply lifted from the annals and placed into closing formulas. However, the annals may not have had these for every king. The occurrence of pattern 1 in place of pattern 2 in the OG/L tradition may have arisen from later scribal efforts to regularize an irregular pattern in the source material. Therefore, while Tetley’s conclusion about which opening formulas (and therefore the regnal data within them) are original and which are not is one *possible* explanation, it is not the obvious and only viable explanation, though she treats it as if it were.

Chapter 6 lays out Tetley’s method for reconstructing a chronology. She once again rejects the use of accession-year and nonaccession-year reckoning or whether official regnal years began in Nisan or Tishri, since “a king’s accession does not appear to be dated to the beginning of the calendar year in either Judah or Israel or aligned with the beginning of the regnal year of the king of the other kingdom.” However, does it follow that what does not “appear” is the same as what does not exist? More valid would be pursuing what the writers of Kings would have expected their audience to know or, if they were less audience-driven than modern writers, what they assumed to be true. Or perhaps the data reflected their commitment to fidelity to what their sources reflected despite what a reader may have understood. That is, the writers of Kings may simply have assumed certain ancient practices without feeling any need to state what they were, or they may have had commitments to their sources that overrode their concern for clarity for the reader. Yet Tetley never considers these possibilities nor justifies her own

assertion that the authors of Kings were intending to supply a coherent, interlocking set of data by which a reader could reconstruct divided kingdom chronology.

When treating divergent numbers in the various traditions Tetley will examine reasons that these variants arose, including accidental confusion of numbers and attempts by scribes to correct what they perceived to be erroneous data. Using her assumptions Tetley will examine by means of timelines and discussion whether each text-type contains data that is not internally consistent. If it is not consistent, the presence of a variance could be indicated. "Further analysis might explain why the variant arose and what number it might have replaced" (94).

Moving to the subject of establishing an absolute chronology by tying the divided kingdom to an outside source, Tetley examines the widely used Assyrian Eponym Canon (AEC). This is a list of years aligned to the reign of each Assyrian king. Each year is labeled with the eponym of a high Assyrian official. A canon, or master list, has been reconstructed by scholars based upon the collected surviving Assyrian records. Tetley challenges reliance on the AEC in two respects. First, she notes a problem with the AEC for the reign of Adad-nirari. Since the four tablets from this period do not completely agree, there is some uncertainty concerning one eponym. From this Tetley concludes that a number of years could be missing from the AEC and that dates prior to 763 B.C.E. cannot be held to be accurate. Second, she challenges the widely held synchronism of Adad-nirari's fifth year with the payment of tribute by Joash. She notes several stelae that speak of tribute being paid to the Assyrian king. One stela notes that the kings of Damascus, Samaria, and Tyre and Sidon paid tribute but does not give a year. Another states that Damascus paid tribute in Adad-nirari's fifth year, when the AEC indicates a campaign against Arpad in northern Syria. Other stelae seem to indicate that a coalition of kings, including those of Damascus and Samaria and led by the king of Arpad, was forced to pay tribute as a result of a single year's campaign. Therefore, Tetley equates this single year with Adad-nirari's fifth year (808 B.C.E.), making Thiele's reconstruction impossible, since Thiele has Joash ascending to the throne in 797 B.C.E. However, she does note that there was another Assyrian incursion into Syria in 796 B.C.E., which Thiele relied upon for his dating. Although the AEC indicates that the Assyrians went to Mansuate, not Arpad, in 796, it is not at all impossible that this was a second time that some kings paid tribute to Adad-nirari and that the coalition, though led by Arpad was defeated at Mansuate. Thus, Tetley's insistence that the payment of tribute by Samaria must have taken place in 805 B.C.E. is not proven, though it is possible.

In this chapter Tetley also presents once again her main arguments against Thiele's system. She argues that his system of coregencies and year reckoning is not needed to explain the data, especially the OG/L traditions.

Chapters 7 and 8 lay out Tetley's revised chronology in relative form (i.e., without being fixed to Julian dates), first for the EDK, then for the LDK. Here she argues for constructing a chronology by looking at all of the data from MT and OG/L, explaining how they could have arisen and then proposing which is correct. However, in some cases none of the data is correct. In these cases Tetley suggests what the original number may have been. Some of these probably arose from graphic confusion of letters that were used to indicate numbers, with ten and twenty and four and seven often being interchanged. The result is that Tetley proposes following the data for the duration of the reigns of Abijam, Jeroboam I, and Joram from OG/L. For Jehoram, Baasha, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah, she proposes figures not found in any tradition. The rest of the reigns follow figures where both MT and OG/L are in agreement. Moreover, in the LDK she proposes that the correct year of the reign of the king in the sister kingdom given in synchronisms for Joash of Israel, Azariah of Judah, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Hosea has been altered in all traditions, so she has calculated the correct year (i.e., Azariah came to the throne in Jeroboam II's fourteenth year, not in his seventy-seventh year, as all texts of 2 Kgs 15:1 read). In addition, the synchronism of Hosea's accession at 2 Kgs 15:30 in the MT was caused by the incorrect twenty years assigned to Pekah (instead of Tetley's theoretically derived twenty-nine years).

All of this causes Tetley to propose a date of 719 for the fall of Samaria. This is a problem, however, since 2 Kgs 18:9 states that the siege of Samaria began under Shalmaneser, but according to Tetley's chronology, it began in 721 under Sargon II. Tetley proposes that the text originally had no name for the Assyrian king at 2 Kgs 18:9 and that Shalmaneser's name was later transferred to 2 Kgs 18:9 from 2 Kgs 17:3. Moreover, Tetley notes that the most likely date for Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem is 701 B.C.E., which in the biblical text is Hezekiah's fourteenth year (2 Kgs 18:13). However, in Tetley's chronology it would be Hezekiah's twenty-fourth year. Tetley solves this by proposing a graphic confusion of letters that resulted in twenty-four becoming fourteen years (*yodh* for 10 confused with *kaph* for 20). Ironically, the much-criticized chronology of Thiele has no problem here, since he places the beginning of the siege of Samaria in 725 and its fall in 723, both squarely in Shalmaneser's reign. Moreover, in Thiele's chronology 701 is Hezekiah's fourteenth year.

In the final chapter Tetley lays out an absolute chronology of the divided kingdom. Her chronology leads her to propose that the division after Solomon's death happened in 981 B.C.E., some fifty years earlier than the common accepted date of about 930 B.C.E. Moreover, she proposes on the basis of her chronology that the AEC is missing some twenty-two eponyms during the reign of Shamshi-adad V (for the years 854–833), that the chronology for the kings of Tyre between Hiram and Pygmalion should be reexamined in light of her new chronology for Judah and Israel. She also argues that the

Pul of Assyria to whom Menahem paid tribute (2 Kgs 15:19) was not Tiglath-pileser III, although 1 Chr 5:26 makes this identification and the Babylonian Chronicle 1 identifies Tiglath-pileser as Pul. Instead, since Tetley's chronology ends Menahem's reign over two decades before Tiglath-pileser came to the throne, Tetley proposes that the Pul of 2 Kgs 15:19 was Shalmaneser IV, although no text, biblical or Assyrian, is known to identify him as Pul.

As is obvious from this review, I was skeptical of Tetley's work from the start, since she relies on assumptions (often unexamined) that cannot be sustained. While some of her critiques of Thiele's work are valid and have been raised by others, this does not validate her approach. Indeed, her rejection of coregencies is troubling in light of several passages in Kings that imply that a coregency occurred. In addition, she does not include all the data in her study—especially the ages of the various kings when they began to reign. If she would have included these, she would have noted that her chronology requires that Ahaz was only eleven years old when his son Hezekiah was born! Ahaz must have been a physiological prodigy indeed to sire a son when he was only ten years old.

I suspect that Tetley's work will not find a receptive audience in most quarters, especially since she proposes emending the data in the received Hebrew and Greek texts of Kings. Then on the basis of these emendations she proposes that established chronologies such as the AEC be altered. She also proceeds to make that text-critical decisions about Kings on the basis of her chronology, a procedure will not endear her to most scholars. Tetley's proposed changes to the text of Kings, especially numbers that supply data on the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, can at best be viewed as conjectural emendations or less charitably could be characterized as ideologically driven solutions to problems arising not from the text of Kings but from the consequences of Tetley's own unexamined assumptions and her methods.

In the end I cannot recommend Tetley's work. While it is the result of much diligence in attempting to align the reigns of the various kings of the divided kingdoms, it is beset with so many difficulties arising from questionable assumptions that are never adequately defended or even explored. Its call for radical redating not only of biblical chronology but also of many aspects of ancient Near Eastern chronology is based upon conjectured regnal data for Judean and Israelite kings and is at best ill-advised and at worst foolhardy. This is unfortunate, because good work in Near Eastern chronology of this period could serve to clarify any number of problems. Unfortunately, Tetley's work will not contribute clarity to the chronological enterprise.