

STUDIA ORIENTALIA  
EDITED BY THE FINNISH ORIENTAL SOCIETY  
55:12

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**HUSHAI THE ARCHITE,  
A GENTILE IN THE KING'S COURT  
(2 SAM. 16:18-19, 17:7-16)**

BY  
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HELSINKI 1984



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HUSHAI THE ARCHITE, A GENTILE IN THE KING'S COURT (2 SAM. 16:18-19, 17:7-16)

The calculations of Rabin and Ullendorf<sup>1</sup> have well revealed the fact that we have only a fragmentary knowledge of the language in which the Old Testament has been written. Although we now have a steadily increasing number of Hebrew inscriptions from Biblical times at our disposal, their contribution to our general view is still very limited. Consequently, any attempt to isolate features which deviate from that which has been called standard Biblical Hebrew must be regarded as hazardous. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that diachronic, stylistic and areal differences do exist in Biblical Hebrew.<sup>2</sup> While these types of variation are quite anticipated in every literary corpus of heterogenous material, a few passages seem to represent deliberately distorted Hebrew. In these cases exceptional or incorrect Hebrew has been employed as a stylistic device to characterize non-Israelis. Good examples of such passages are Isa. 21:11-14 and 2 Kings 6:8-13 in which non-Hebrew words and forms are used to indicate that the speakers belong to other nations, Edomites or Arabs, and Syrian Arameans. Shibboleths which have been embedded in these verses are מְשֻׁלְבֵי, נְחֻתִים (Isa.) as well as בְּעֵינֵי, אֲתֵינִי, הֵתֵינִי, תְּבַעֲיִנִי (Isa.)

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The article goes back to my paper read to the XI Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament in Salamanca 30.8.1983.

1 Ch. Rabin (רַבִּין), ט' 1066-, (ירושלים 1962), ד אֲנַצִּיקְלוֹפֵדִיָּה מִקְרָאִית, 1070; E. Ullendorf, Is Biblical Hebrew a language? *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 34 (1971), p. 241-255 (also in: E. Ullendorf, *Studies in Semitic languages and civilizations*, Wiesbaden 1977, p. 3-17). There are only 7000-8000 different words in the Old Testament, and among them 2000 are *hapax legomena*.

2 See lastly E.Y. Kutscher, *A history of the Hebrew language* (ed. by Raphael Kutscher. Jerusalem - Leiden 1982), p. 12-86 and the literature mentioned there. The Ph.D. dissertation of G.A. Rendsburg, *Evidences for a spoken Hebrew in Biblical times* (School of Education, Health, Nursing, and Arts Professions of New York University, New York 1980. University Microfilms International, Cat. No. 8027479), also includes a large collection of exceptional features in Biblical Hebrew (although interpretations may remain questionable).



inscription 57 from Arad (חשי [בן]).<sup>1</sup>

The statements quoted as Hushai's own words are not long. Nevertheless, in his *vocabulary* at least the following ones demand consideration: וְהִשְׁנִית (16:19), בְּקָרְבֶּךָ (17:11), וְנַחֲנֶנִּי (17:12), וְהִשְׁעִיאוּ (17:13), וְסַחֲבֶנִּי (17:13) and צְרוּר (17:13).

השניית (16:19) is the only Biblical example of an ordinary number used to continue a discourse in this way.<sup>2</sup> It has a counterpart in the el-Amarna tablets where *ša-ni-ta<sub>5</sub>* occurs often after an introductory phrase with the adverbial significance 'secondly', 'further'.<sup>3</sup> The article of השניית may have an "accusative" function which lends similar meanings of 'then', 'further' to the expression, cf. הַפְּעִים 'this time', 'now'.<sup>4</sup>

It may be plausible that the last word קָרַב 'battle' in the phrase וּפָנִיָּהּ הַלְכִים :בְּקָרְבֶּךָ 'you go to battle in person' (17:11) should be read וּבְקָרְבֶּךָ / וּבְקָרְבֶּם 'in its/their midst', cf. Ex. 33:14 and 33:15.<sup>5</sup> However, the Masoretes did not

1 Y. Aharoni, *Arad inscriptions* (Jerusalem 1981), p. 87.

2 Possibly besides וְשִׁנִּית in Mal. 2:13, see Ch. Conroy, Absalom, Absalom! (*Analecta Biblica*, 81, Romae 1978), p. 133, fn. 75, and p. 149.

3 Fr.M.Th. Böhl, *Die Sprache der Amarnabriefe mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Kanaanismen* (Leipzig 1909), p. 40 m: "ungemein häufig...Es dient im Allgemeinen dazu, von einem Gegenstand der Behandlung zum anderen zu überzuleiten..."

W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Band III, Wiesbaden 1981, p. 1164, s.v. *šanītu(m)* II): "Akk. adv. *šanīta(m)* 'Anderes', 'etwas anderes', oft nach Einleitung."

See also Sh. Izre'el, The Gezer letters of the El-Amarna archive - Linguistic analysis, *Israel Oriental Studies*, Vol. 8 (1978, p. 13-90), p. 67.

4 F. Langlamet (Ahitofel et Houshai. Rédaction prosalomonienne en 2 S 15-17? *Studies in Bible and the ancient Near East presented to Samuel E. Loewenstamm on his seventieth birthday*. Ed. by Y. Avishur - J. Blau. Jerusalem 1978, p. 57-90) is inclined to see in השניית an answer to Absalom's first question "Is this your loyalty to your friend? (16:17): 'Quant au deuxième point...' (p. 62-83). Langlamet admits that וְהִשְׁנִית may be translated with an adverb or adverbial construction although וְשִׁנִּית added with the article cannot be called an adverb; in addition, he presents a survey of different interpretations found in the literature (p. 63, fn. 12). - The boundary between nouns and adverbs is by no means clear in Semitic languages - *šenīt* is a feminine form 'second' and the article does not change its *syntactical* status. The terminology depends more or less upon the view point of Indo-European languages.

5 וּבְקָרְבֶּךָ appears e.g. in the critical apparatus of *Biblia Hebraica*<sup>3</sup> (1 c GSV) but has disappeared from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* which only lists the renderings of ancient versions. Commentaries and dictionaries [incl. *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament* (= HAL), Lieferung III, Leiden 1983, p. 1059] correct וּבְקָרְבֶּךָ into וּבְקָרְבֶּנִי or וּבְקָרְבֶּנִי; a recent exception is F. Stolz who in his commentary *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel* (Zürcher Bibelkommentare, Zürich 1981) renders the passage "du musst persönlich mit in den Kampf gehen" (p. 260). Although the ancient versions do not know a battle in this

(cont.)

follow this reading (as *q<sup>e</sup>re*), and thus we have to conclude that in certain traditions, at least, the Aramaic ܩܪܝܢ was approved to represent the genuine text form.

ܩܪܝܢ (17:12) has called forth different interpretations in ancient versions as well as among commentators, both medieval and modern.<sup>1</sup> In this context it is not completely impossible that the word would reflect an intentional contamination of Hebrew and Aramaic meanings of the roots  $\sqrt{nrw}$  'to rest', 'to settle down upon',  $\sqrt{nr}$  'to encamp', and  $\sqrt{nr}$  'to descend', 'to go down' (cf. ܩܪܝܢ in Jer. 21:3 as a military term)<sup>2</sup>; later in Syriac *nhet<sup>c</sup>al* means 'to march against' and *nhet<sup>c</sup>darrā* 'to join a battle'.<sup>3</sup> Also ܩܪܝܢ mentioned above (p. 3) as "Syrian" jargon in 2 Kings 6:9 is worth of note here.<sup>4</sup>

The *qal* stem of the root  $\sqrt{ns}$  means 'to lift', 'to bring', 'to carry'. Its *hif<sup>c</sup>il* would signify 'to cause to bear' as it does in Lev. 22:16 which is the only certain occurrence of *hif<sup>c</sup>il* besides our case ܩܪܝܢ (17:13) here.<sup>5</sup> In Aramaic this root vanished, being replaced by verbs like *sleq*, which in *p<sup>c</sup>al* means 'to go up' but 'to lift' only in the *haf<sup>c</sup>el* stem. Accordingly, the peculiar *hif<sup>c</sup>il* ܩܪܝܢ could well be a *calque* moulded in accordance with Aramaic *hassiqu* or some other similar causative.

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verse, their translations do not accord mutually (LXX: ἐν μέσφ αὐτῶν = Vulgate: *in medio eorum*, Pešitta: *b-ms<sup>c</sup>t*', Targum: ܒܪܝܫܢܐ, ܒܪܝܫܢܐ, ܒܪܝܫܢܐ).

1 LXX: καὶ περιεμβαλοῦμεν ἐπ' αὐτὸν ('and we will encamp upon him' = חנה), Vetus Latina (L<sup>115</sup>): *et turbauimus eum et inruemus super eum* ('and we will terrify him and pounce upon him' = ?), Vulgate: *et operiemus eum* ('and we cover him' = ?), Pešitta: *w-šrynn<sup>c</sup> lwhy* (= חנה), Targum: ܘܢܫܪܝ ܥܠܘܗܝ (= חנה); Rashi: ܘܢܢܘܢ ܥܠܝܘ ܠܫܘܢ ܚܢܝܐ, R. Isaiah: ܘܢܢܘܢ ܥܠܝܘ.

Commentaries hesitate between  $\sqrt{nrw}$  (which does not provide grammatical difficulties but is questionable semantically) and  $\sqrt{nr}$  (which demands a textual correction) while HAL III (p. 651) has returned to *nḥnū* 'we' (cf. Stolz 1981, p. 260: "dann sind wir über ihm").

2 HAL III, p. 653, s.v.: "militär. t(erm.) t(ech.) 'hinabziehen'".

3 K. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* (editio secunda, Halis Saxonum 1928), p. 424; J. Payne Smith, *A compendious Syriac dictionary* (repr. Oxford 1967), p. 336.

4 The vocalization correction *noh<sup>a</sup>tīm* (see W. Baumgartner, *Zum Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt*, Leiden 1959, p. 228, fn. 3, and HAL III, p. 654, s.v.) may well be appropriate; on the other hand, we may surmise that the peculiar Masoretic vocalization has been intentional in order to stress the non-Israeli nature of the speech.

5 ܩܪܝܢ in Ez. 17:9 is questionable, see HAL III, p. 686. חשא in Sirach 4:21 (ܩܪܝܢ חשא - ἔστιν γὰρ αἰσχύνῃ ἐπάγουσα ἀμαρτίαν) is a similar causative as that of Lev. 22:16.

In addition to Hushai's speech the verb  $\text{חָבַח}$  occurs only four times in the Old Testament, in Jeremiah (15:3, 22:19, 49:20, 50:45). In Jeremiah the verb is associated with hounds and asses ('to drag about') or a deportation of people. Deportations have been described with this verb also in the Moabite Stele of Mesha. The root  $\sqrt{\text{shb}}$  is unknown in Aramaic but usual in South West Semitic languages where it has the meaning 'to drag along'. A city as the object of this verb ("we shall drag it about / deport it into the wadi") seems to deviate from the semantic range of the verb in Hebrew.

$\text{צָרוּר}$  (17:13, elsewhere in OT only in Amos 9:9) is obscure with respect to both etymology and meaning. While it has been traditionally interpreted as 'a small stone', 'a pebble', the Syriac  $\text{ṣeṣṣrā}$  'cricket' in the Pešit̄ta may imply that we have here another word the meaning of which has been forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

Further, the employment of the word  $\text{גַּם}$  deserves attention. The combination  $\text{לֹא...גַּם...אֵין}$  (17:12) may have a parallel only in Psalm 14:3 (and in its duplicate Ps. 53:4).<sup>2</sup> A similar case of absolute denial is  $\text{לֹא...גַּם...צָרוּר}$  'not even a pebble(?)' here in 17:13.<sup>3</sup> In verse 17:16  $\text{וְגַם}$  serves to express the idea of 'but' or German 'sondern' in the phrase  $\text{וְגַם...עָבַר הָעֵבֶר}$ .<sup>4</sup> Also  $\text{וְהוּא גַם-בֶּן-חֵיל...הִמָּט יָמָט}$  (17:10) is peculiar but perhaps more with respect to  $\text{וְהוּא}$  than to  $\text{גַּם}$ .<sup>5</sup>

1 For different interpretations, see HAL III, p. 987 s.v.

2 So Conroy 1978, p. 150. However, Ps. 14:3 (53:4) has  $\text{אֵין גַּם-אֵין}$  instead of  $\text{לֹא}$ .

3 Among the numerous occurrences of *gam*  $\text{לֹא-הִיְתֵה לֹא}$  (Joel 2:3) and possibly  $\text{וְלֹא יָדַע גַּם-שָׁמַשׁ לֹא-רָאָה}$  (Eccl. 6:5) may be compared with these cases of absolute denial 'not even'. The examples given by C.J. Labuschang (1 Sam. 28:20, Eccl. 7:21, Prov. 19:24, Cant. 8:1) in his article The emphasizing particle *gam* and its connotations (*Studia biblica and semitica Theodoro Christiano Vriezen...dedicata*, Wageningen 1966, p. 193-203) (p. 200) are more distant.

4 Cf. e.g. Stolz 1981 (p. 260): "Bleib heute Nacht nicht...sondern geh sofort über", and the New English Bible: "not to spend the night...but to cross the river". As far as I know, there is no obvious parallel of this usage in OT. On the other hand, this *gam* as well as other occurrences dealt with here might be called an emphasizing particle in accordance with the terminology of Labuschang 1966 ("do not spend the night...! Indeed, you have to cross the river"). The solution depends on the reader/translator and his (European) literary taste to a high degree. Significant, however, is the accumulation of these "emphasizing" cases in Hushai's speech.

5 S.R. Driver (*Notes on the Hebrew text and topography of the Books of Samuel*. Second edition, Oxford 1913) reads  $\text{וְהִיא}$  instead of  $\text{וְהוּא}$  (p. 322).  $\text{גַּם}$  in the significance of 'although', 'even though' occurs in Jer. 36:25, Ps. 95:9, Ps. 119:23 and Jer. 8:12, at least (cf. Labuschang 1966, p. 201); similarly  $\text{וְאֵין}$  in Isa. 46:7. Cf. Aramaic  $\text{וְלֹא יָצֻדְקוּן בִּדְיִן}$  (A. Cowley, *Aramaic papyri of the fifth century B.C.* Oxford 1923, Text 10, line 19, p. 30).

On the basis of these lexical observations a number of *features pertaining to morphology* gain additional value as evidence. Hushai "considers" that עיר 'city' is of masculine gender (in 17:13 אֶת־אֵתֶר refers to the city), מְקוֹמָה 'places' is feminine in 17:12 (בְּאַחַת הַמְּקוֹמוֹת; q<sup>l</sup>rē: באחד) and also פְּתַח is feminine in 17:9 (בְּאַחַת הַפְּתָחִים). In addition to them, manuscripts vary with respect to the gender of 'place' and 'city' in verses 17:9 and 17:13 (בְּאַחַד vs. בְּאַחַת הַמְּקוֹמוֹת, resp. הַעִיר הַהִיא vs. הַהוּא, see the critical apparatus of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia). All these words *look* like Hushai would be right: עיר has no feminine ending, the plural of מְקוֹמִים is seemingly feminine, and the n- ending of פְּתָחִים could be interpreted as a sign of the feminine.<sup>1</sup> Thus Hushai's mistakes are typically pseudo-correct forms of the type produced by every student of a foreign language.<sup>2</sup>

Perfect tenses of כִּי יַעֲצִיחֶיךָ (17:11) and וְלֹא-נִוְתַרְתָּ (17:12) seem to present the result of an activity coincidental, as if already real. Although the usage is not unique in Biblical Hebrew, it is not consistent with the usual employment of tenses in prose.<sup>3</sup> Also נִמְצָא of 17:13 may belong to the same category

1 מְקוֹמִים seems to be feminine in Gen. 18:24 and Job 20:9. However, the suffix in מְקוֹמָה (Gen. 18:24) may refer to עיר instead of מְקוֹמִים, and in Job 20:9 fem. תְּשׁוּרָתוֹ may be due to preceding feminine verbs, cf. K. Albrecht, *Das Geschlecht der hebräischen Hauptwörter (Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 60, p. 41-121)*, p. 53, and Driver 1913, p. 323.

In Syriac *peḥtā'*/*paḥtā'* has become feminine, see Th. Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik* (zweite Auflage, Leipzig 1898 - Darmstadt 1977), p. 57, and HAL III, p. 873 s.v.

2 A reverse case appears in Akkadian texts written by West Semitic scribes who consider *ālu* (URU) 'city' to be feminine as 'city' is in their native languages, see Izre'el 1978, p. 28, fn. 68.

Rendsburg (1980, p. 69-72, 164-178) enumerates cases in which grammatical genders are in disagreement and considers them to represent trends of vernacular Hebrew. While the simplification of verbal gender system is a well known feature of development in Semitic languages (e.g. late Aramaic, modern Arabic dialects), the congruence between nominal forms is, however, well retained.

3 See G. Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik*, II. Teil (Leipzig 1926), p. 27-28 (§ 6 e), and J. Kuryłowicz, *Studies in Semitic grammar and metrics* (Prace językoznawcze 67, Kraków - London 1973), p. 86-87. Many coincidental perfects have God or a king as their subject.

For similar usages in Ugaritic, see C. Brockelmann, *Zur Syntax der Sprache von Ugarit (Orientalia, 10, 1941, p. 223-240)*, p. 229-230.

Stative perfects such as יָדַעְתִּי 'I know' (also here in 17:8) as well as *perfectum propheticum* (see Bergsträsser 1926, p. 28-29, § 6 f-i, and Kuryłowicz 1973, p. 86-87) do not belong to the same group with coincidental perfects.

If נִוְתַרְתָּ were not a perfect but an imperfect or jussive of *hif'il* as suggested by some scholars (see Langlamet 1978, p. 81, fn. 47), the traditional Masoretic vocalization with an *a* in the end of the word would be exceptional, "Aramaic".



with the perfects יַעֲצֵחִי and נֹוֹתֵר. However, the morphological interpretation of this נִמְצָא<sup>1</sup> as well as that of verse 17:12 remains questionable (pf./part. of *nif'al* / *qal*, impf. pl. 1 ?).

One of the explanations of *lamed* in לִמְלֶכֶּה לִיבֹלֵעַ 'lest the king be swallowed up' (17:16) is *lamed emphaticum* (asseverative ל-) used here to emphasize the logical subject, the king. Parallel usages appear especially in Ugaritic, Amorite and Arabic.<sup>2</sup> Otherwise, we have similarly to resort to other Semitic languages in order to explain the meaning of לִיבֹלֵעַ.<sup>3</sup>

The rhetoric ability of Hushai has been acknowledged in many studies.<sup>4</sup> As a special feature I would pick out a couple of *ambiguities* which seem to have escaped the notice they deserve. In v. 16:19 Hushai says in his vow of *fidelity* to Absalom: "As I have served your father, so I will serve you (כִּי אֲשֶׁר עֲבַדְתִּי לִפְנֵי אָבִיךָ כֵּן אֶהְיֶה לִפְנֵיךָ)." This confession of a *deserter* appeases Absalom! A similar case is in v. 17:11 where Hushai advises gathering all Israel עֲלֶיךָ which means either 'to you' or 'against you' (cf. Gen. 34:30, Micha 4:11, Zach. 12:3, Ps. 35:15). Nor does כְּנִפְלֵהוּ (17:9) specify who is the killer and who his victim. I would surmise that these ambiguities are intentional and, within the frame-work of the story, acceptable to Absalom as slips of tongue typical of Hushai.

Hushai's speech abounds with *metaphors* and *similes* which, in itself, is not at all exceptional. Some themes are unique in the Bible. Such are "whose heart is like the heart of a lion" (17:10), "we shall descend(?) on him as the

1 This perfect may be connected with the conjunction עַד אֲשֶׁר, cf. Gen. 24:19 עַד אֲם כָּלִי and Gen. 28:15 עַד אֲשֶׁר אִם עֲשִׂיתִי.

2 J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative art and poetry in the Books of Samuel*, Vol. I (Assen 1981), p. 457; J. Huehnergard, Asseverative \**la* and hypothetical \**lu/law* in Semitic (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 103, 1983, p. 569-593) with numerous bibliographical references (cf. esp. Ugaritic *lb<sup>cl</sup> npl larṣ* 'indeed Ba<sup>cl</sup> has fallen to the ground' and Hebrew למשפטיך עמדו היום 'your ordinances stand this day' (Ps. 119:91), p. 583 and 591).

3 See HAL I (Leiden 1967), p. 129  $\sqrt{bl}^c$  II (cf. Arab. *baluḡa*, 'ablaḡa) 'mitgeteilt werden', Fokkelman 1981, p. 457 (cf. Syriac *bla<sup>c</sup>*) 'deadly blow shall be dealt the king', and Langlamet 1978, p. 67-68, fn. 22 (list of interpretations).

4 See Conroy 1978, p. 114, Langlamet 1978, p. 62-67, 79-81, S. Bar-Efrat, Some observations on the analysis of structure in Biblical narrative (*Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 30, 1980, p. 154-173), p. 170-172 [Bar-Efrat's The artistic shape of the Biblical narrative (in Hebrew, Tel Aviv 1979) nor his דרכי העצוב 2-1 מלכים א, 20-10 ב פי שמ' על פי שמ' במקרא, (Jerusalem 1975) have been available to me], and Fokkelman 1981, p. 215-222.

dew falls on the ground" (17:12), and "all Israel will bring ropes to that city, and we shall drag it into the valley, until not even a pebble(?) is to be found there" (17:13).<sup>1</sup> While these might belong to the general repertory of a wise man (cf. e.g. Aḥiqar and the woman of Tekoa<sup>2</sup>), the simile which compares King David to "an angry wild sow on the field" sounds non-Israeli indeed. This compliment appears only in the Septuagint (17:8)<sup>3</sup> but, I believe, there is no reason to assume that the translators of the Septuagint would have wanted or dared to embellish the memory of King David with this kind of invention of their own. As the sow has disappeared here from the Masoretic text, so they have been cleaned out from the pool of Samaria [1 Kings 21:19 (= LXX 20:19) and 22:38] and left only in the Septuagint (αἰ ὄρες).<sup>4</sup>

I am not convinced that all of these exceptional features necessarily go back to foreign starting points. Textual slips or genuine trends of Hebrew otherwise unknown to us may explain at least a part of them. On the other hand, the list presented above is not a short one when compared with the paucity of verses dealt with. Thus I believe that the cumulative evidence is strong enough to show that Hushai appears in the story as a person whose idiom is exceptional and foreign. The peculiarities, however, do not tally in their entirety with any other language known to us. We could conclude that there existed a tradition of Hushai's non-Israeli origin, of his rhetoric skillfulness and of a foreign sound of his "Archite" Hebrew. This material attracted narrators to incorporate typical foreign expressions and linguistic errors in his speech. Later, these features could be added, reduced or replaced with new peculiarities according to the inventive ability of tradents.

1 Conroy 1978, p. 125-127.

2 According to Langlamet (Pour ou contre Salomon? La rédaction prosalomonienne de I Rois, I-II, *Revue biblique*, Tome 83, 1976, p. 321-379, 481-528) the linguistic affinities between the speeches of Hushai and that of the woman of Tekoa go back to the same "rédaction prodavidique et prosalomonienne" (p. 353).

3 ὡς ὄρε τραχεῖα ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ; lacking in the Codex Alexandrinus and certain other manuscripts, for details, see the critical apparatus of the Septuagint edition by Brooke - McLean - Thackeray, Vol. II (Cambridge 1927), *sub loco*.

4 It is rather probable that the attitudes of disdain towards the pig as well as the command against eating pork are a quite late innovation in Israel, see A. von Rohr Sauer, The cultic role of the pig in ancient times (In memoriam Paul Kahle, *Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 103, Berlin 1968, p. 201-207), and G.W. Ahlström, An archaeological picture of Iron Age religions in ancient Palestine (*Studia Orientalia*, 55:3, 1984), p. 13-14.

King David was a realistic politician. To secure his personal safety he had hired a foreign bodyguard, the Gittites, Cheretites and Pelethites. Also a smart counsellor who was not entangled in the intrigues of Israeli clans and who therefore could be trusted was more than useful to a new king whose family did not belong to the top of society. This personal adviser, Hushai the Archite, was endowed with honorary title, the Friend of the King (הַיָּחַד הַלְּמֶלֶךְ), a title which was of foreign origin,<sup>1</sup> as was its first incumbent in Israel. King David was neither the first emperor nor the last to conceive the advantages of a wise foreign vizier.<sup>2</sup>

1 The title seems to have been of Egyptian origin (mediated possibly by Canaanites), see H. Donner, Der "Freund des Königs" (*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 73. Band, 1961, p. 269-277), and T.N.D. Mettinger, Solomonite state officials (*Coniectanea Biblica - Old Testament Series*, 5, Lund 1971, p. 63-69).

2 These evaluations have a bearing on the final composition of the story. What took place in reality in Jerusalem in those days remains a moot question. As for different interpretations, reconstructions and redaction conceptions, see E. Würthwein, *Die Erzählung von der Thronfolge Davids - theologische oder politische Geschichtsschreibung?* (Theologische Studien, Zürich 1974), esp. p. 41 (2 Sam. 17:5-14 is a later addition "durch den erreicht wird, dass Hushai aus einem Verräter zum erfolgreichen Gegenspieler Ahitophels wird"); Langlamet (1976, p. 353, and 1978, p. 83-88) concludes that 16:16-19 and 17:5-14.15b (among other sections) go back to the "rédacteur de la "scène des conseillers"" and the "rédaction prosalomonienne" (= S<sup>3</sup> = quatrième strate = rédaction "prosalomonienne" ou "théologico-sapientielle", idem, Absalom et les concubines de son père. Recherches sur II Sam., XVI, 21-22, *Revue biblique*, Tome 84, 1977, p. 164 and 208-209); J. Treballe, Espías contra consejeros en la revuelta de Absalón (II Sam., XV, 34-36) (Historia de la recensión como método, *Revue biblique*, Tome 86, 1979, p. 524-543): the advice of Hushai is an insertion which converts Hushai from a spy into a counsellor, the passage might be dated on the basis of the title "the Friend of the King" which was adopted into the royal terminology not earlier than during the reign of Solomon (esp. p. 536-541); according to Langlamet's latest presentation (review on the works of Fokkelman, Mondati and Richter, *Revue biblique*, Tome 90, 1983, p. 100-148) the message of Hushai in verses 17:15-16 remains in the division plans of Fokkelman (1981) as well as in his own (1982/3) in another section than the rest of Hushai's words dealt with here (p. 144-145).

