
Ann-Kathrin Knittel here presents a fine study on the somewhat enigmatic site of Shiloh. Primarily utilizing redaction-critical approaches to the Deuteronomistic History, the likes of which are common in German-language scholarship, the author helpfully brings together both textual and archaeological data—using a “Kooperationsmodell”—to illuminate the role that Shiloh appears to have played in the development of the Hebrew Bible over the course of the first millennium BCE. Ultimately, Knittel constructs a reasonable model for understanding how Shiloh came to serve as a source for cultural memories tied (literally) to the origins of Israel’s monarchy, its temple cult based in Jerusalem, and exilic and post-exilic reimagining of such institutions. Knittel explicates the goal of the project in this way: “Ziel der Arbeit ist es nicht, eine lückenlose Rekonstruktion der Geschichte Schilos zu schreiben, ... sondern schlicht danach zu fragen, wer, wann und in welchen Kontexten und mit welchen Intentionen von Schilo erzählt oder auf die Erinnerungen an das vormalige Heiligtum zurückgegriffen haben könnte” (p. 27).

The volume begins with a basic overview of the handful of places in which Shiloh appears in the Hebrew Bible. A summary of archaeological expeditions and results follows in the second chapter, bringing the conversation surrounding the site “up to speed” with the most recently published field-work. Especially important at this point in the study is the fact that, when approaching the archaeological data, Knittel endeavors not to presuppose the results of the textual analysis that follows. The third chapter, the most substantive of the volume, leverages a close, technical, and detailed study of the majority of 1 Samuel 1–4 (excluding the Song of Hannah in 1 Sam 2:1–10) to uncover the role that Shiloh played in the earliest detectable layer of this portion of Samuel. A translation of the text in view is presented with various typefaces utilized to indicate the redactional layers discerned in the text. Chapter 4 investigates the Ahijah narratives in Kings with the specific aim of determining whether or not the diachrony of the text can clarify whether pre-Dtr traditions are linked to Ahijah of Shiloh. This is the foundation upon which the site’s historical significance is to be determined. Next, Knittel turns to Shiloh’s role in the preaching of Jeremiah. There is here a noticeable turn toward considering how retained memories of the cult site were employed long after the site would have been occupied (“...spricht die Argumentationsstruktur des Textes dafür, dass hier das Schilo einer anderen Epoche in Erinnerung gerufen und bespielt wird,”
Knittel’s consistently judicious attention to the text also helps prevent overreaching on redaction-critical perspectives. In chapter 6, this comes through especially in the analysis of Shiloh in Psalm 78 and consideration of a purported “Zornesredaktion” within the Psalm. Chapters 7–9 contain relatively smaller studies on Shiloh in Gen 49:10, Judges, and Joshua respectively, each of which serves to clarify further the ways in which Shiloh was used in these texts as a linchpin that helped to bring together larger corpora of texts. The references in Ps 78 and Joshua—which are dated by Knittel as some of the latest of the bunch—serve to construct a literary bridge through Shiloh that connects the wilderness wandering to the Jerusalem temple by way of the Tent of Meeting. The conclusions proposed here thus have an impact on ongoing conversations about the convergence of Pentateuchal traditions—especially priestly—with Joshua as well as the convergence of Judges with Samuel and the literary emergence of the early monarchy. In chapter 10, the major implications of the study are consolidated and Shiloh’s role as an object of cultural memory is considered more formally.

The various components of the study are brought together to paint an archaeologically informed understanding of Shiloh within the Hebrew Bible as follows. The site was destroyed during the 11th c. BCE. While it may have been occupied during the Iron II, this possibility does not seem to have impacted the development of Shilonite traditions in the biblical text. The oldest layer of the Hebrew Bible to report on Shiloh is to be found in 1 Samuel 1–4*—dated after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, but possibly still containing older material. The material concerning Eli and the infelicities of his sons is secondary to this older Shiloh material. Ahijah and the accounts in 1 Kings are also dated to the monarchical period, but they appear to have been mediated through Dtr hands. In these texts, Shiloh appears as a locus of divine presence and revelation along with a demonstrable connection between the site and Ephraimite individuals. Thus, it is possible that these texts originated in that area. The reference in Gen 49:10 could have arisen in the wake of Josianic religious reforms of the 7th c. BCE—notably as a result of the move toward cult centralization in Jerusalem. By the Exilic period, Shiloh became an important referent as a former sanctuary, offering a useful tool for tradents to frame, and reflect on, the destruction of the temple in 586/7. Here, the references in Jeremiah feature prominently, followed by the Elide material. Eventually, Shiloh becomes the literary forerunner to the temple cult in Jerusalem. The memories of the site appear to have been created, preserved, or some combination of both with the help of visible ruins that helped to cultivate cultural memories of the site for the region, in a manner not dissimilar from Ai’s role in Joshua.
While redaction-critical models are inherently limited due to the somewhat subjective nature of their construction, Knittel's study stands as a fine example of the value of such approaches to the biblical text. This is highlighted especially by the careful attention to detail throughout and reinforced by thoughtful consideration of the larger implications of the composition-critical conclusions proposed. Given the nature of the project, it makes sense that a larger treatment of theoretical approaches to cultural memory receives a rather brief treatment in the concluding chapter. Knittel's work, however, could serve as a strong foundation upon which to build out a larger and more formal investigation of memorable sites, such as Shiloh, in the future.

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