

A Study on Isaiah, Kings, and the Chronicles Tradition of the Hezekiah Period

- Asia's Perspective

I. Introduction

In researching Isaiah in terms of the study of Deuteronomist History (Dtr) and Chronicle History it can be seen that there are common subjects between Hezekiah's reform and the Deuteronomist movement.¹⁾ Accordingly there are many studies in which the Isaiah tradition has been closely related to the King's tradition in the Hezekiah Reformation. Here we are looking into the relations between Isaiah and the Dtr. Historical tradition. The Hezekiah story appears in 2 Kings 18-20, Isaiah 36-39 and 2 Chronicles 29-32. Until now, there has been nothing but von Rad's traditional view of the Hezekiah story. He said that in writing David's Covenant, 2 Samuel 7 was written first, then Isaiah 55.3f, and lastly 1 Chronicles 17. That is the traditional development theory. However, each may, separately, have its own tradition.

According to von Rad, 2 Kings 18-20 was written first, then Isaiah 36-39, and finally 2 Chronicles 29-32.²⁾ The Hezekiah episode is developed by traditional steps. Von Rad focuses on language, assuming that his hypothesis is the development of theological thinking. However, these three

1) E. W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 119-124.

2) R. E. Clements, *Prophecy and Tradition*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 1-2. G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol. II, The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, (Edinburgh and London: 1965), 155ff.

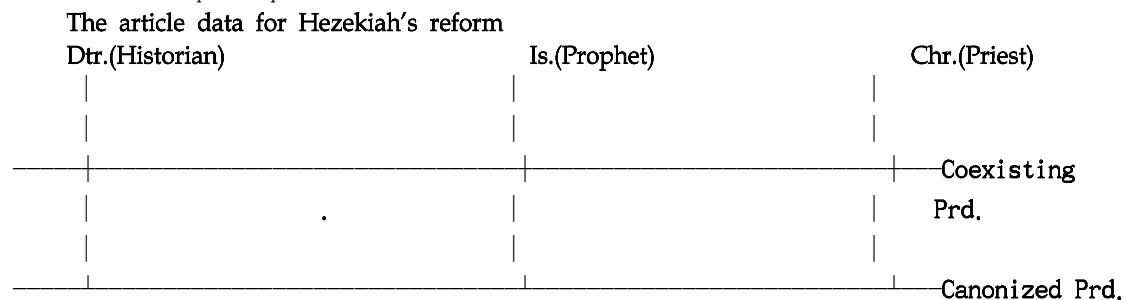
data, by some *tradents*, come down on each other's *traditum*. He did not consider if there was another theological opinion. They existed altogether, so their tradition, their *traditum*, appeared in the Bible.

We will take the three traditions to have existed simultaneously at that time.³⁾ They had been developed, and transmitted in relation to each other. Firstly, the social background in Hezekiah times is researched through inspecting the relation between Isaiah and the Kings data. The tradents' situation, and the group's theology is also clearly considered. Also, this study is to be considered from an Asian perspective and context.

II. Traditions of the Period of King Hezekiah

G. von Rad's hypothesis focused on Biblical language differentiation, and the development of the theological idea. His thought is limited. Because he did not think about the data of the three traditions and that tradents coexisted with different theological views. We will come to see that that tradition itself came together through the period of Hezekiah. We will not study the differences between the three traditions (Dtr, Is, Chr) or the process of tradition (*traditio*), but rather the union of tradition in the Hezekiah period, the starting point of the three traditions. So Isaiah and the Chronicle traditions have in one way been influenced by the Deuteronomist Historical tradition (Dtr), which had conversely been affected by those

3) This graph is about tradition data of Hezekiah times and tradition group (sociologic viewpoint), the state of development process.



traditions. We can see that the Text of the Bible remains.

Each tradition was formed in Hezekiah's time, and each writer wrote a historical Hezekiah from their own viewpoint, while preserving historical data. Hezekiah himself received many traditions, and was helped by and reformed cults, making a centralization of the cult. The results remaining in scripture are in Isaiah, Kings and Chronicles. The Chronicles tradition written in Hezekiah's time was written by the Chronicler and then final editors added material at the time the canon was being formed.

In Hezekiah's report, we assume that there are many more viewpoints than the three traditions in the Bible. We do not know the other traditions, but suppose that the three perspectives of the Bible report are: Dtr (Deuteronomist History) – an Historical writer of the scribal / wisdom class⁴⁾; Isaiah's Hezekiah report producer (Prophets) – of the Prophetic group; and Chr (Chronicle History) – of the Priestly group. We can see that the relation between these three groups has an analogy in the text today.⁵⁾

These three groups coexisted in Hezekiah's period. They might be considered as the Dtr Historical group, the Priestly group, and the Prophetic person. During the period in exile, the Dtr group became centered in political power, creating an exile theology and reinterpreting events in terms of Hezekiah's reformation. At that time Isaiah brought forth a salvation theology, in which Isaiah's traditionist prophets developed a Jerusalem (Zion) Ideology at that time of national crisis.⁶⁾ After being deporting from Babylonia, the restored people rebuilt Jerusalem and the Temple and restored the Priestly system and established the Priestly institution. They again had a new theological thinking at the period of Chronicles.

4) I. W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings* (Berlin: New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 1-31. Dtr writes about themes of David and bamoth (High Places).

5) N. K. Gottwald, "Sociological Method in the Study of Ancient Israel," 26-37; W. Brueggemann, "Trajectories in Old Testament Literature and the Sociology of Ancient Israel," in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*, ed. N. K. Gottwald (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 312.

6) G. von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 126-139.

So the Chronicler wrote down a religious history and thus three groups existed simultaneously, while also being in conflict with each other. During the time when the scriptural canon was being established, they competed with one another. Because the Chronicler insisted on it the Hezekiah story occupies four chapters (2 Chr 29-32). However, the Josiah story takes only two chapters (2 Chr 34-35).⁷⁾ Because the Chronicle group was centered on the government office, who influenced the power, they had a hegemony during the times of Hezekiah's reform.

Secondly, in Chapter 18 of 2 Kings there is nothing but 4 verses (2 Kgs 18:1-4) about the report of a religious reform. However it was here that the pericopes of the political report, the report of Sennacherib's invasion, and of Hezekiah's illness were mostly written and concentrated. Conversely in Josiah's report, the religious pericope was much more extensively written. In 2 Kings 22-23, the two chapters consist of Peshach (Pass over), several cults, the discovery of law books, and religious reform.

Accordingly, Dtr and the Chronicle Historical writers recorded events in different ways according to their own theological opinions. Nevertheless the Dtr Historian had a minimal role in the Hezekiah Period, but a role which came to be larger later in the Josiah Period.

III. Common Points between Isaiah and Kings

When we study the relation between Isaiah 36-39 and 2 Kings 18-21 we should first look for the tradition of Hezekiah in Isaiah. In order to analyse it, we should search for a unity in the totality of Isaiah research. Recently, Isaiah study is being strongly advanced by Rhetorical Criticism. This study started in 1976 when J. W. Rogerson tried to understand the whole part of the completed work of Isaiah.⁸⁾ R. Knierim suggested Genre

7) Park Shin-bae, *Reformed Theology of Old Testament*, (Seoul: Christian Herald, 2006), 193-228.

8) J. W. Rogerson, "Recent Literary Structuralist Approaches to Biblical Interpretation," *The Churchman* 90 (1976): 173.

Criticism as a substitute for Form Criticism.⁹⁾ W. G. Doty, J. A. Baird, W. Richter, and K. Koch insisted that Form Criticism is not suitable for dealing with a literary unity in a continued work. The pioneer of Form Criticism is H. Gunkel, and those who analysed scripture in this way were H. Gressmann, S. Mowinckel, C. Westermann, H. C. White, R. F. Melugin, A. Schoors, D. L. Christensen, and A. Grsffy etc.¹⁰⁾ Today, a major focus of scholarly endeavor is the concern with the question of the rhetorical coherence in the message of the book of Isaiah. These scholars are E. H. Lovering, R. Rendtorff, B. S. Childs, R. E. Clement, W. J. Dumbrell, C. R. Seitz, C. A. Evans, E. W. Bullinger etc.¹¹⁾

Recently the result of study in Isaiah shows that the separation of Isaiah into 1 Isaiah, 2 Isaiah and 3 Isaiah is no longer needed because all texts reflect each other many times.¹²⁾ So 1 Isaiah (Isa 1-39) reflects the context of 2 Isaiah or 3 Isaiah.¹³⁾ As B. Peckham states, the Hezekiah story of 1 Isaiah's text (Isa 36.1-22, 37.1-38, 38.1-22, 39.1-8) is set in the context of 2 Isaiah.¹⁴⁾

The opinion of B. Peckham is different from that traditionally held about 1 Isaiah. He states that it is important that the final text of the Hezekiah episode be regarded as from the exilic period. However, we can understand that part of the Hezekiah report is reflected during the Hezekiah period. 2 Kings 18.17-20.19 was repeated in Isaiah 36-39 (the Hezekiah story). The story order of both reports is almost similar. The Kings' story order is Hezekiah reform narrative - Invasion of Sennacherib - Hezekiah's Prayer - Prophecy of Isaiah - Hezekiah's illness - Healing of Isaiah - Ambassador of Babylonia - Isaiah's Prophecy.

9) R. Knierim, "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered," *INT.* 27 (1973): 456.

10) R. H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity*, JSOT sup. 188 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 15-17.

11) R. H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity*, 17. cf note 2.

12) R. H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity*, 19-20.

13) R. H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity*, 29-30. repetition patterns: A. Gilead, W. H. Brownlee, bifid scheme: R. K. Harrison, C. A. Evans, concentric schemata: E. W. Bullinger.

14) B. Peckham, *History and Prophecy*, (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 136. C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (London: SCM Press, 1980), 8-27.

Isaiah's Hezekiah pericope order is like that in Kings: Sennacherib's Invasion – Rabshakeh's Address – Hezekiah's Prayer – Prophecy of Isaiah – Withdrawal of Assyrian Army – Hezekiah's illness – Hymn, Prayer – Babylonian Ambassador – Prophecy of Isaiah. But the report on Hezekiah's Reform is first, then extension of territory, and North Israel's destruction.

Among Hezekiah's pericopes, the first part of 2 Kings 18 is left out. Also the story of the Introduction and the Conclusion part is abridged. The two narratives have a similar order and content. To look in more detail, it can be seen that Hezekiah's illness and recovery story, Isaiah 38 and 2 Kings 20.1–11 are the same, but the difference is that Isaiah's story has the additional story of Hezekiah being healed from his illness (Isa 38.10–20). Secondly, in Isaiah 38 and 2 Kings 20.1–11, there are more important differences in the Isaiah story, which is shorter than that of 2 Kings. Because of this fact there are many debates among the scholars as to what was written first, whether Isaiah or 2 Kings.

Until now Hezekiah narrative study has been about how Dtr (2 Kgs 18–20) and Isaiah (Isa 36–39) were related; what was first scribed and what was later. but the future study is to present a *sitz im leben* (place of life) of each story. We should study how each one was written as a story, rather than research the time order, so we will study the possibility of text being made into vivid tradition group and tradition. So in 2 Kings 18–20, Isaiah 36–39 and 2 Chronicles 29–32, we try to scrutinize each tradition group, their situation, the writer's relation, and the viewpoint of the Hezekiah reform. We can figure out their different perspectives through this hypothesis, and so can find each tradition's theological understandings, and which one is original for the Hezekiah religious reform and how that reform is related to each traditionist.

If the 2 Kings text had borrowed data from Isaiah, then Isaiah's text might have already existed.¹⁵⁾ Meanwhile Isaiah depends on 2 King's data,

15) H. G. M. Williamson, "Hezekiah and The Temple," *Text, Temples, and Traditions*, ed. M. V. Fox,

suggesting that Hezekiah's narrative of Dtr was the first in existence.¹⁶⁾ W. Genesius and Otto Kaiser suggested the theory that Isaiah's text was chosen from Kings. Otherwise Hans Wildberger with A. Jepsen proposed that the "Isaiah miracle pericope" already existed as a complete form in the second edition of Kings, which would mean that the Isaiah text was the first to be presented.

The contradiction between these theses is much debated. Clements and Jones state that 2 Kings is original, and that Isaiah is secondary and added by an editor.¹⁷⁾ Two reports (2 Kgs 18.13=Is 35.1) start with the expression "In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah" – a word commonly stated. This phrase was originally in Isaiah, but the chronological writing is in 2 Kings. Later Isaiah had an addition. Perhaps the original form of 2 Kings comes from Isaiah's autobiographical data. This data primarily consisted of the poetic oracle at the end of the episode, and maybe later edited additions from the Isaiah tradition.

R. E. Clement said that this text was prudently injected into Isaiah, set up as a bridge between Assyria's background (Is 1-35) and Babylon's background (Is 40-66).¹⁸⁾ So he suggested that the key understanding of this data is the background from Kings rather than from Isaiah. Such a view proves that the 2 Kings story is authentic.¹⁹⁾ As a third theory, H. G. M. Williamson has a new concern. He said that Isaiah's text was influenced by the story in Kings. The 2 Kings text affected Isaiah's text. That theory is based on correlations of Kings and Isaiah, not a one-sided relationship, but of an exclusive existence which impacted mutually. It is noted that this theory has been studied at the connecting point which is that of the character of the two texts.

(Indiana: Eisenbranns, 1996), 47. Of the same opinion are K. A. D. Smelik, and C. R. Seitz.

16) A. H. Konkel, "The Sources of the Story of Hezekiah in the Book of Isaiah," *VT* 43 (1993): 462-463.

17) G. H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, (Grand Rapids and London, 1984), 556.

18) R. E. Clements, "The Unity of the Books of Isaiah," in J. L. Mays and P. J. Achtemeier (eds.), *Interpreting the Prophets*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 52-54.

19) G. H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, 556.

Williamson's theory is that Isaiah's tradition coexisted with Dtr's tradition (Kgs 18-20). Although we accept that theory, the step is then imagined that the Dtr writer of Hezekiah's times wrote first. The written tradition influenced the Isaiah editors. During the Babylonian deportation era, after the Hezekiah period, he might edit the Hezekiah story, (Isa 1-35 - the Assyrian text), between Isaiah 40-66 (the Babylonian text).

Therefore through Hezekiah's story, as Israel in the time of the Assyrian Empire time was delivered, so they were saved and should be restored from exile in Babylon. Because of the structure of Isaiah, the middle place of Hezekiah made it clear that the step in edition reflected Babylonian times. The study of Isaiah is in a literary perspective, and also takes an historical approach. Ehud Ben Zvi proposed making an historically concrete situation in the prophetic text, that the context of the history is presented as an integral part of a social system, and that we can see a political, cultural, and religious situation in the written period in the Prophetic Books.

Isaiah 14.24-27 and Isaiah 31.4-9 represent that Assyria defeated Judah in 701 B.C. Isaiah 31.8 was written as an apocalyptic, proto-apocalyptic response of 701 B.C. Isaiah 10.24-27, 14.24-27 and 31.8-9 are anti-Assyrian texts which do not appear in Hezekiah's times but later in Manasseh (c697-642). Ben Zvi said that the background of the Isaiah text was settled in the Hezekiah, Manasseh period.

H. A. J. Kruger contends another way that the Isaiah text should be seen to have an unbiased theological character as narrative coherence.²⁰⁾ He notes that the past concern was primarily on the historical background of Isaiah 36-37. Because Isaiah's report was possibly related to Sennacherib's invasion, then Isaiah's historical verse is still confusing enough, in terms of exact historical frame, to make history scholars feel

20) H. A. J. Kruger, "God's For Argument's Sake: A Few Remarks on the Literature and Theological Intention of Isaiah 36-37(Part 1)," *OTE* 9 (1996):52-67.

some difficulty. Some of them are studying this chapter from this background and from a different point of view. As a balanced position it is not historical exactness but narrative coherence with theological character. We concede Kruger's theory in respect to harmonizing an extreme hypothesis, for example, archaeological evidence; since the historical aspect of the text is too much emphasized. Otherwise so much emphasis is placed on the historicity of data in the document that it is not considered much as a literary work. We don't accept any of them.

Thus we might understand the Hezekiah story of the Isaiah text from the aspect of narrative coherence. It is located in Isaiah 36-39 in the middle of Assyria's and Babylon's background, delivering a theological message in Babylonian times.

On the other hand, some opinions differ in saying that there must have been a much more advanced type of data than the sources of the story of Hezekiah in the book of Isaiah and Kings.²¹⁾ Konkel insists that there must be an original source of Hezekiah such as Vorlage, original texts and Q data. He compares the Masorah text, by literary textual criticism, with one from the first Qumran Isaiah, LXX Isaiah. He tells that the way Hezekiah's story was adapted to the one included in Isaiah is revealed only when the differences between the original source and the Masorah text in Kings were compared, especially as proved by Kaige. A significant revision could be found out in Isaiah 38, there the story of Hezekiah was altered, shortened, and poems were added on. This was done in accordance with the theological purpose of the writer of Isaiah.

The story of Isaiah is, as Smelik contends, absolutely unified in grand literary form. However, it cannot induce a conclusion that Isaiah, written in Persian times, had been composed for the first time then. Theological interpretation had the form of poems not interpretable as those in the book of Kings. The story of Hezekiah is a much more advanced form of literacy

21) A. H. Konkel, "The Sources of the Story of Hezekiah in the Book of Isaiah," 462-463.

than the one in the book of Isaiah.²²⁾

His conclusion is that a Dtr historian and Isaiah writer recorded Hezekiah's story focussing on his theological purpose using the Data, the third Hezekiah's original script. Hezekiah's third original story form can be known by Konkel's view as follows.

Konkel's 'third data theory' is persuasive for it came out of data comparison, but it also has shortcomings as to certain facts.²³⁾ In terms of tradition, Hezekiah's people in his time made up his story, and finished the early Dtr history edition by unifying David and Isaiah's Jerusalem tradition for salvation after accepting the northern tradition which appeared as the Nechustan tradition in Kings 18-20 through the northern Hosea, Dtr, Exile tradition. Isaiah co-existed and was made up of the Isaiah tradition written in their own book of Isaiah.

The third story of Hezekiah can be material for the last editor for the history of Deuteronomy and also for Isaiah. Nevertheless, we should understand that the Hezekiah story in the book of Kings comes from the people with Hezekiah combined with tradition and formed under the edition of Deuteronomy during Hezekiah's times. There must still be Isaiah's followers during Hezekiah's times though we are still open to the possible existence of the third Isaiah followers at that time (Isa 1.1; 7.14,18; 10.5,6,21,22; 11.1-3; 12.1-6; 31.8-9). For they are delivering the article of Hezekiah's reform, and it remains in the book of Isaiah. We can guess that the Isaiah group joined Hezekiah's reform during Hezekiah's times through the fact of cult centralization as reported by Isaiah and worshiped only in Jerusalem (Isa 36.7).

The first Isaiah is known to remark the on the elimination of High Places and cult centralization in Jerusalem. Therefore, Isaiah and the Isaiah

22) A. H. Konkel, "The Sources of the Story of Hezekiah in the Book of Isaiah," 463.

23) A. H. Konkel, "The Sources of the Story of Hezekiah in the Book of Isaiah," 482.

group might have been interested in the policy of cult centralization conducted by Hezekiah. The following story comes from the article of Isaiah or Kings that King Hezekiah sent the officials in the palace to the prophet Isaiah and let them listen to him after hearing a humiliating speech from Rabshakeh (Isa 37.4, 2 Kings 19.1-5). The next scene is that Isaiah the prophet, while activating cult centralization, encourages Hezekiah who was waiting for the reply from God against Rabshakeh's speech requesting surrender in the national crisis caused by the invasion of Sennacherib from Assyria. Through this, the Isaiah group assented and participated in Hezekiah's action for cult centralization to the extent that the centralization was to recover the religiously pure belief in YHWH for a political purpose.²⁴⁾ Also, they found out that Isaiah and the Deuteronomist co-occupied the Hezekiah tradition. It is proved that Isaiah had accepted the early historical tradition of Deuteronomy.

24) N. K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 368-369.