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Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa (BOTSA) aims at being a forum for exchange of ideas and information about Old Testament studies in Africa. In brief articles *BOTSA* comments on pedagogical, methodological and research political questions related to Old Testament studies in Africa, and it also brings notices on research projects, teaching programs, books and conferences. The readers are encouraged to use it as a means of communication.

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Ancient Israel and ancient Africa

Most contemporary scholars tend to interpret the African predilection for the Old Testament from phenomenological perspectives. However, until a few decades ago, the idea of some historical interaction between ancient Israel and ancient Africa was a dominating interpretive perspective, and this perspective still has some advocates. When the present issue of *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* focuses on the now controversal idea of historical interaction, it is partly to demonstrate the variety of interpretive approaches to the predilection for the Old Testament in Africa, and partly to encourage further reflection along these lines.

Knut Holter

Are the Balemba in Southern Africa a lost tribe of Israel?

Magdel le Roux

The theory regarding the ten lost tribes of Israel links up with the historical incident when the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were carried off into exile by the Assyrians (722/1 BC), never to return (2 Kings 15:29; 17:4-6; 18:11). These tribes, of course, were not known as Jews, but Israelites. Tribal distinctions became of less and less significance, and practically disappeared after the exile. Over the centuries there were many theories about what happened to these tribes, and biblical prophecies maintained that one day the ten tribes would return to the Holy Land to be reunited with their people. Today there are many groups all over the world who regard themselves to be descendants of the ten tribes, even in Africa.

There are, for example, Judaising groups in India, Japan, Yemen and many "black Jews" in the USA who came from West Africa. Weingarten (1992) points out that most Judaising groups make some attempt to legitimise themselves by claiming that they have always been Jews. The Yemenite Jews insisted that they migrated to South Arabia forty-two years before the destruction of the First Temple (587/6 BC). Judaising Japanese sects claim kinship with the lost tribe of Zebulun, who made their way by sea to Japan, bringing with them the Mosaic law. The Bene Israel of western India (who probably came to Judaism via Islam) claim kinship either with the lost tribes of Israel or with those Jews who left Palestine as a result of the persecutions by Antiochus Epiphanus (Parfitt 1995: 2). The Judaising Shinlung of eastern India, who accepted a kind of Judaism via Protestant Christianity, claim descent from the lost tribe of Manasseh, while the central theory of the (best-known) Falasha of Ethiopia origin involves descent from Solomon and Sheba, although other historical periods and situations are invoked as well.

Other Judaising groups in Africa include the Aba-yudeyo in Uganda, the Moyo or Amwenye in Malawi and Maputo, the Ibo in Nigeria, groups in Kenya and others, for example the Berbers in North Africa. What confuses the situation is that many indigenous groups in Africa have manners and customs with a Semitic resonance. Where did they get these manners and customs from? Did all these groups acquire their customs from colonialists and missionaries and perform a shift in religion at one stage or another or are they simply descendants of the lost tribes? And where do the Lemba fit in?

The Balemba, or Lemba, better known as the "Black Jews of southern Africa", live among other peoples mainly in the Northern Province and Mpumalanga (in the Republic of South Africa) and the southern parts of Zimbabwe. They seem to be blending in with the groups surrounding them, attend local schools, but keep themselves separate and distinct from others by means of their *kosher* laws, customs, skills and aloofness, and through their traditions of origin and Semitic features.

The Lemba cannot recall the particular tribe of Israel from which they have descended, but regard themselves as an offshoot of the Yemenite "Jews" who left Israel during the Babylonian invasion (587/6 BC), believe that they are the "chosen people" with a religion which stems from Abraham and hold that they came from a city called Sena. According to their tradition they crossed the "Phusela" (although they do not know where or what "Phusela" was) and came to Africa "at the back of a tree". According to their ancestors, only males came with "Arabs" to Africa as traders, erecting trading posts at the east coast. At a certain stage in history a war broke out in their country of origin and they were unable to return to their country. They were now forced to take wives from the local people, the *wasendzji* (heathens). In Africa they rebuilt Sena in more than one place and helped to construct a great stone city which they identify as Great Zimbabwe.

One advantage of dealing with a "living source" is that the reseacher can sometimes check some of the information, on traditions, which is provided. To mention a few: Lemba tradition was perpetuated, when scholars found a city of Sena in Africa on the banks of the Zambezi. Parfitt (1997: 336) claims to have found an ancient city named Sena, at the end of the wadi Hadramaut, just before the valley turns away towards the sea. It was situated on the trade route, from the sea to Terim. The valley that leads from Sena in the eastern Hadramaut (in Yemen) to an old port on the Yemeni coast called Sayhut, is the *Wadi al-Masilah.* Parfitt believes that Masilah may be the "Phusela" of Lemba tradition. He has furthermore discovered that some of the clan and sub-clan names of the Lemba correlate with commonplace names in the eastern Hadramaut. One conclusion is that their oral traditions are very old.

A qualitative study of Lemba Jewish (or rather Israelite) culture underlies this article. During my field study conducted among the Lemba in February 1996 – October 1997 I interviewed many Lemba people in the northern and eastern parts of South Africa and the southern parts of Zimbabwe. I spent many hours collecting as many oral traditions as possible, observing their customs and rituals and religious pluralism. My

point of departure was to take the Lemba traditions seriously. If the Lemba originate from the Jews/Israelites in Yemen, the Yemenite community in Africa is perhaps the only one that remained practically unaffected by intra-Jewish migration. It is with remarkable obstinacy that they have preserved some habits and customs from these influences earlier in their history. That the Lemba have many Israelite traditions which correspond both in rite and tradition is noteworthy: their system of twelve tribes, animal sacrifices, circumcision on the eighth day (earlier) linked with the Covenant of God, *kosher* dietary laws, particular burial customs, their particular way of using musical instruments, marital laws such as the Levirate marriage and many more.

Lemba "Jewishness" resembles a syncretising pluralism, a Jewishness which they embraced to ward off the risk of losing their unique character through cultural diffusion. Many earlier scholars mention their anxiety, or even fanaticism, to preserve their tribal and ritual purity. It is indeed the preservation of a part of a very ancient type of religious group which makes the Lemba so valuable for the historian of religion.

Obviously it was no simple matter to compare the history of the Lemba with that of Israel, and it might indeed be deemed an impossible exercise. Nevertheless, studying the Lemba as a pre-industrial group of unique character shed much light on what we already knew about the oral culture and socio-cultural structures of the Israelite clans. Influence from the Israelite religion found its strongest expression in the Lemba culture, probably through their historical connection with Jewry or Israelites, and even through Christianity. It was surprising to find that most of the Lemba accepted the Christian faith. One explanation might be that the arrival of Christianity probably reinforced the ancient traditions and practices of the Lemba. The "success" that the Christians had in the conversion of most of the Lemba could be as a result of their close relationship with the practices and lifestyle preached in the Bible.

After the completion of my field research most of the available anthropological, archaeological, genetic and other literature on the Lemba was studied. Special attention was paid to all the possible Semitic (Phoenician, Hebrew, Judaistic, Christian or Muslim) connections with this material. The reconstruction of the prehistory of any tribe in Africa is no easy task and this is very much the case with the Lemba. The oldest available written documents (e.g. the Assyrian inscriptions, 700 BC and the *Periplous*; first century AD) refer to the pre-Islamic-Arabian (Sabaean or Yemenite), Phoenician and Hebrew activities in Southeast Africa (Bent 1895). At a very early stage, continuing influences between

the Semitic world and that of the southeastern parts of Africa had impacted reciprocally on one another. Later documents (684-900 AD, e.g. the Arab and Portuguese) refer to some kind of "Moorish" people along the east coast of Africa. But from those written sources it is clear that authors were uneasy, or unable, to differentiate between, for example, Jews and Semites, Arabs and Muslims, Arabs and Swahili (Hendrickx 1991).

Exactly who the "Moors" were and what the nature of their religion was, are therefore important questions, which are as yet only partly answered. The Africans for example called some of those groups "Moors" or *vaMwenye* and occasionally they are called the "Arabs" in works on Southeast Africa. Whereas the Portuguese found traders who "in features and appearance in no way differ from ourselves", in Sofala the inhabitants were "*dark-skinned*" (Theal [1898-1903]1964b: 123-124). In 1505 a Portuguese noted that "two pieces of cotton cloth" were the dress of "*white Arabs and slave owners*" and elsewhere, that the Zambezi was "inhabited by heathen [...] and Moors, *some black, some white, some of whom are rich.*" And Dos Santos described the Moors as "barbarians, and very fond of wine; [...] *only Moors in name* and the practice of *circumcision*, as they *neither know nor keep the creed of Mohammed* that they profess" (Theal [1898-1903]1964c: 330; [my italics]). It is also striking that one of the earliest literary works (1721) which refers to the Lemba south of the Limpopo, namely the account by Mahumane, in no way describes them as "Moorish" nor links them to the Islam faith (Liesegang 1977).

A possible conclusion from the information above, could be that most of the references indicate the presence of people, mainly in the Zambezi region, possessing notably Semitic characteristics without being clearly Muslims. This might point to these undefined "Moorish" or "Arab" groups being Jewish, or rather Israelite, descendants coming from Yemen together with Arab traders or even Israel or Tyre. It seems reasonable to assume that although the "Moorish" or "Arab" people were not specifically referred to, their traditions and customs were reminiscent of those people that we know today as Varemba (people who refuse); Mushavi (trader); Mwenye (foreigner, Arab, white people or people of the light); Malepa, Vha-Sena (people of Sena at the Zambezi); Vhalungu (Europeans, non-Negros or strangers) or simply the Lemba or Balemba.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries European colonialists, observers, missionaries and travellers who rushed to Southern Africa for various reasons, after some time came to the conclusion that the beliefs of indigenous people (Khoisan, Zulu, Xhosa,

Sotho and even the Dutch Boers) were derived from ancient sources, most often identified as from the religion of ancient Israel. This was familiar to Christian comparativists from their reading of the Old Testament (Chidester 1996). It is noteworthy that none of these groups as a whole currently accept or publicly declare themselves to be Jews or Israelites. Therefore, to my mind, these early views all rested on misunderstandings and unwarranted inferences. It was highly fashionable to append Semitic traditions to indigenous people, and the Europeans totally misunderstood the realities of pre-colonial Africa. But what about the Lemba? The Lemba, who received least attention in Chidester's work, and who were only once described as "Slaamzyn" [Muslims] by the comparativists, regard themselves as Israelites (not Islamic) and are the only group in southern Africa who have very specific oral traditions about their Semitic ancestry.

Although it is difficult to prove the claims of the Lemba to Semitism, genetic tests by Spurdle and Jenkins (1992; 1996) from the South African Institute for Medical Research at the University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg), and Thomas and Bradman (2000) from the Centre for Genetic Anthropology at University College, London, have shown interesting connections between the Lemba people and those from whom they claim to have originated. This is in contradistinction, for example, to similar tests taken from the Falasha and other African peoples surrounding them.

According to Spurdle and Jenkins it is entirely possible that ancestors of the Lemba were Jewish craftsmen and traders from Yemen (600 AD and later), which constitute part of the oral tradition. The genetic results are also consistent with the oral tradition that only males came by boat to Africa and later had to take local wives. Further results by Bradman and Parfitt (1998) and Thomas (& al. 2000) show a significant similarity between markers of many of the Hadramaut (Yemen) Y-chromosomes and those of the Lemba.

From DNA samples, taken specifically from the Buba clan (priestly families), in Sekhukhuneland and elsewhere, a very close relation has emerged between them (the Buba) and those of the *cohanim* (priesthood) in Israel and all over the world. The *cohanim* are not the same as rabbis. The latter are appointed functionaries while members of the priestly class inherit their position through the male line. The *leviim* or Levites are non-*cohen* members of the paternally defined priestly tribe of Levi (cf Nm 25). The distinct pattern found among members of the Jewish priesthood, the *cohanim,* is called the *Cohen Modal Haplotype* (CMH). Specifically, the samples taken from the Buba clan indeed showed a high frequency of

this same pattern. In other words, it was found that 45 percent of Ashkenazi priests and 56 percent of Sephardic priests have the *cohen genetic signature*, while in the Jewish populations in general the frequency is 3 to 5 percent. Among the Lemba in general it is 8.8 percent, a similar frequency to the Israelites (Jewish males). Among the Buba, though, it is as high as 53.8 percent. Thomas (& al. 2000) emphasises that the presence of the CMH in the Buba could, however, "have an *exclusively Judaic* origin" (my italics) which could date from 3 000 years ago.

In the meantime the research concerning the genetics of the Lemba is still continuing and the results are not yet definite, but until new results come to the fore, the current results are fascinating.

In my opinion, the Lemba were not a regular Judaising group and no specific religious shift was made in their case. The possibility exists, rather, that the Lemba do have archaic remnants of an ancient type of religion. In more than one respect these remnants could differ from what is expected of "Judaism" proper. It seems, however, that their self-identification as "children of Abraham" both evidences and conceals a much older and very complicated religious identity. There are abundant echoes of ancient Judaism.

Are the Lemba then a lost tribe of Israel? If one considers them as one of the ten tribes taken into captivity by the Arryrians, I don't think one can say that. But if one considers a lost tribe of Israel to be a group who had specific traditions of origin and have some unsuspected connections with other Jews, then it is a legitimate claim. The Hasidic leader Dov Ber, the *Maggid* of Mezericz (d. 1772) said:

> The twelve of the thirteen gates of Jerusalem corresponds to the twelve tribes, through which the prayers of each of them ascend to the heavens [...]. The thirteenth gate is for him that does not know which is his own tribe.

Maybe by virtue of not knowing exactly where they belong, or to which tribe they belong, so-called Judaising groups, lost tribes or bene Israel all over the world will qualify for the Thirteenth Gate one day.

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Dr Magdel le Roux is Professor of Old Testament, University of South Africa. Address: Department of Old Testament, University of South Africa, P.O. Box 392, Pretoria 0001, South Africa; e-mail: LROUXM1@unisa.ac.za

Hebrewisms in West Africa

Daniel N. Wambutda

Joseph J. Williams' book *Hebrewisms of West Africa* (Williams 1930) represented the first major attempt by a student of the Old Testament to relate the Hebrew language to a West African language group; in the case of Williams the Akan of Ghana was chosen (Wambutda 1987). The West African region itself comprises linguistically the Kwa group of languages (south) and the Chadic or Afro-Asiatic languages (north), sandwitched by the Niger-Congo linguistic group otherwise known as the Bantoid. It is probably time for Old Testament studies to devote energy to a detailed study of some of these languages in their relation to Semitic languages and in particular Hebrew, not only as a human enlightenment but, should I be so optimistic as to suggest a possible clarification of hitherto unclear meanings of certain words in the Masoretic Text! A concomitant to the linguistic relationships is the question of origin and ethnic affiliation, all of which may enrich human awareness and cohesion.

Willams used the Akan to examplify the possible linguistic and cultural relationship between the West Africa and ancient Israel. In this brief article I will make use of another ethnic group: the Nga. In earlier works this group is known as Anga, but now the name Nga is used and accepted by the people itself (Wambutda 1991).

The Nga is the largest ethnic group in Plateau State, Nigeria. It is surrounded by other ethnic groups whose languages are either Bantoid or some dialect of the Chadic. Still, Nga has retained its distinctiveness. Some examples should be given:

a) *Gurum*: the name of the human being is *Gurum*. The Hebrew word for the stranger is *ger* (pl. *gerim*). Bringing in the Semitic mode, which relies on consonants, the two words are basically the same. The vocalization may change but the consonants remain the same. How did the name occur? My theory, which I believe is very strong, is that the Ngas were once living together with the Jews at a Nile contract in Elephantine (the Ngas believe their ancestry to go back to the East), where they probably served as servants to the Jews. They were the strangers: Gerim among the Jews, and so they adopted the name.

b) Names of the parts of the body.

i.	Nga: *po* (mouth)	Hebr: *pe*	first radical
ii.	Nga: *lis* (tongue)	Hebr: *leshon*	two first radicals
iii.	Nga: *but* (stomach)	Hebr: *beten*	two first radicals
iv.	Nga: *'ashil* (testicle)	Hebr: *'eshek*	two first radicals
v.	Nga: *mut* (death)	Hebr: *mot, mawæt*	two radicals

c) Verbs: basically, the verbs occur sporadically in various conjugations not respecting the regular Hebrew process. Examples are as follows:

i.	Nga: *rib* (to divide)	Hebr: *raba*	two first radicals
ii.	Nga: *ji* (to come)	Arab: *ja*	radical
iii.	Nga: *s'we* (to drink)	Hebrew: *shah*	radical

d) Syntax: two examples can be mentioned:
   i. Both languages lack the copulative "is".
   ii. Both languages are very sensitive to gender; the speaker must indicate whether the addressed is masc. or fem.

In addition to these linguistic similarities, one can also find a number of examples of cultural parallels. One example is the celebration of the New Year at the end of September or the beginning of October. Another example is a concept of exclusivism: both distinguish sharply between itself and other nations/groups. For this reason the Ngas have until very recently married only their own kind. Other examples of parallels include the idea that women are unclean during the menstruation period and after birth, and regulations demanding that one during the harvest is obliged to leave something for poor and sojourners.

In conclusion I would say that no one who have studied Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac, such as the present writer has done, can escape the strong impression of similarities between Semitic languages and culture and the language and culture of the Ngas. The purpose of this article is to affirm the efforts made by Williams a couple of generations ago as worthwhile, and to argue that Old Testament studies should include such comparative research. It is my belief that such a research will help to clarify hitherto unknown meanings of certain Hebrew words.

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Dr Daniel N. Wambutda is Professor of Religious Studies, University of Jos. Address: Department of Religious Studies, University of Jos, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.

African Influence on Ancient Israel

David Tuesday Adamo

In my research on the presence of Africa and Africans in the Bible, I have discovered almost 800 references in the Old Testament alone, mainly to Egypt and Cush/Ethiopa, and I have also seen that these references occur in every strand of the Old Testament. At the same time, scholars generally acknowledge that Africans have a special interest for the Old Testament. One example is B. Sundkler, who observed the preference of the Old Testament to the New Testament in the Zionist Churches in Southern Africa (Sundkler 1961). Another example is H. Turner, who observed that the Old Testament occupies an important position in the preaching of leaders of some African independent churches (Turner 1965)

On this background, the purpose of the present article is to ask whether the African presence in the Old Testament and the African preference for the Old Testament reflect some kind of interaction between ancient Africa and ancient Israel. I will try to demonstrate the existence of an African influence on the political and religio-cultural life of ancient Israel. However, before proceeding to the main discussion, I would like to make a preliminary remark. During my last visit to the United States, I asked a Eurocentric Old Testament scholar whether he had ever visited Africa. His anwer was negative; however, he said, he had visited Egypt. I responded that Egypt is part of Africa, and then he answered that Egypt is regarded as a different kind of Africa. Let me therefore emphasize that I in this article regard Egypt and the entire North Africa as part of Africa, and that this indeed is relevant when one deals with ancient times. I believe that most of the Pharaohs were black; the Eurocentric idea that the Egyptians were not Africans is to be rejected.

Political influence

Jeroboam, who later became the king of the Northern kingdom of Israel, ran for his life to Africa when he opposed his father, Solomon, and there he married an African woman. Eventually he returned to Israel, and there is evidence of a strong African political and religious influence on Israel in his time. The time of his return was the time of the reign of Pharaoh Shishak, and he seems to have copied Shishak's political and religious policy: whereas Shishak restored the temple of Amun and increased the splendor of the worship of Amun, Jeroboam restored the worship of the

golden calves throughout his kingdom. And whereas Shishak appointed his brother-in-law as high priest of Amun and made use of his relatives and close friends who were loyal to him, Jeroboam dismissed the Levitical priests and appointed those who were loyal to him.

Jeroboam stayed for a long time in Africa, and his marriage to the Egyptian princess Ano may be seen as a diplomatic act. Immediately after having returned to mount the throne of Israel, he organized his political and administrative policy according to that of Shishak. Like the African ruler he united the Northern kingdom and rebuilt the cities throughout the kingdom. He transferred his capital to Tirza as Shishak had transferred his capital from Bubastis to Tanis. He embraced a policy of avoiding open conflict with his traditional ethnic structures, just as Shishak did in Africa.

Israel's desire to have a king was not a sudden affair. For about 430 years of Israel's sojourn in Africa, they probably watched the system of kingship in Egypt and other parts of Africa. Since no one can live so long in a place without being influenced by the culture of the people, one should not be surprised to find that ancient Israel desired to be ruled by a king. The saying of the elders of Israel to the prophet Samuel, "Now, make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam 8:5), demonstrates the fact that the influence of other nations is immeasurable. The fact that kings are divine and at the same time humans, is a common feature in the royal ideology of ancient Israel. The concept of divine kingship probably has its origin in Africa. At the period of Israel's sojourn in Egypt this notion of divine nomination of kings had already become very popular. Israel must have experienced and witnessed this notion of divinity of the Pharaohs. A concrete example of this is the record of the inscription on the walls of the Temple of Amon at Kanak where the divine nomination of Thutmosis III is recorded. He is considered to be "the oracular choice of the god himself". Another record is the divine nomination of An, the Ethiopian king, which recorded Amon-Re as dwelling in Napata and made the Ethiopian king his choice.

Although other nations in the so-called Ancient Near East might have had some influence, a denial that the African system of kingship tremendously influenced Israel's notion of kingship, would be to commit the academic sin of attributing African achievements to other nations. This system of divine nomination of kingship has been prevalent in most African countries even up till today. Israel did not copy this verbatim, but it was related to her faith in Yahweh as the king of Israel. This affected ancient Israel's concept of God as judge. Another example of influence that is related to kingship, is the dynastic system. Africa has embarked on

the dynastic system of ruling very early from the Old Kingdom. Africa produced one of the longest lasting dynasties in the world. This system of governing dominated the entire ancient world, including ancient Israel. In the Southern kingdom, the Davidic dynasty lasted for more than four centuries as a result of the divine promise made to David. In the Northern kingdom, however, the only attested dynasties are those of Omri and Jehu.

Religio-cultural influence

Kwesi Dickson has emphasized that African wisdom traditions influenced Israelite wisdom (Dickson 1979). A comparative study of African and Israelite wisdom shows tremendous similarities. The possibibility of the writer of the Book of Proverbs being influenced by the Egyptian wisdom called "Teaching of Amenemope", is very strong. And, there are certainly many other African wisdom texts that are reflected in the writings of ancient Israel. These include military, political, and religous aspects. Other scholars will have to investigate this area further.

For ancient Israel, the idea that God is the creator is assumed. It is presupposed and it is affirmed in their thought. No other than God could have created heaven and earth. That is why the idea of creation runs throughout the Old Testament. It was told, retold and contextualized. A close comparative study of creation ideas in the Old Testament and in Africa reveals great similarities. Although there are some differences in how the two traditions understand the idea of creation, the similarities are overwhelming. The major difference between African and Israelite creation myths is the fact that African creation myths are unanimously polytheistic. They say that God assists in the process of creation, and the moon and the trees are personified (cf. Adamo, 2001: 94). These similarities with Israel can be found all over Africa; cf. for example the creation myths of the Yoruba (Nigeria), the Vugusa (Kenya), the Ashanti (Ghana), the Banbuti (Congo), and the Asande (Sudan).

The common notion of Eurocentric biblical scholars is that the sources of the Old Testament creation myths are to be found in Mesopotamia, and they seldom consider the relationship between Israelite and African creation myths. Amongst those few who accept the possibility of Egypt as a source of the Old Testament creation myth, Egypt is generally takes as part of the so-called Ancient Near East, rather than Africa. The truth is that Africa is more likely to be the source of ancient Israelite creation myths as a result of Israel's long-standing contact with Africa. In fact, due to their long sojourn in Africa, they all

became Africans. They lived there for 430 years, and during this time they not only came in contact with African myths of creation, they also learned them and participated in the ritual recitation of the myths. The Mesopotamians, with whom Israel indeed were in touch throughout many centuries, also came in contact with African myths. They appropriated the myths, but the African elements still survived. Therefore, Israel was influenced by African creation myths both directly – through contact with Africa, and indirectly – through contact with Mesopotamian myths.

In this article I have suggested various forms of an African influence on ancient Israel, an influence that includes political and religio-cultural aspects. Though I understand that similarities do not necessarily mean dependence or copying, to deny the possibility of African influence in the areas I have mentioned above would amount to the usual Eurocentric practice of attributing African achievements to other nations rather than to Africa herself. Admittedly, care must be taken in reaching conclusion, and there is still a lot to be done on the African influence on ancient Israel.

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Dr David Tuesday Adamo is Professor of Religious and Biblical Studies, Delta State University. Address: Department of Religious Studies, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria; e-mail: adamod@skannet.com

Some critical remarks to le Roux, Wambutda and Adamo

Marta Høyland Lavik

The present issue of *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* focuses on a possible historical interaction between ancient Africa and ancient Israel. Various perspectives on this question are presented in articles by Magdel le Roux, Daniel N. Wambutda and David T. Adamo, and I am asked to make some few critical remarks to their presentations.

Le Roux' article is built on her long-standing research on the Lembas (in addition to her Th.D. thesis referred to in her bibliography, cf. also her "'Lost tribes of Israel' in Africa?", *Religion & Theology* 6 [1999] 111–139). She notices that many indigenous groups in Africa have customs with a Semitic resonance and subsequently, with a special view on the Lemba, she asks where this resonance comes from. The Lembas are chosen because they "[...] regard themselves as Israelites, and are the only group in southern Africa who have their specific oral traditions about their Semitic ancestry." Le Roux concludes that the Lembas are not one of the ten tribes taken into captivity by the Assyrians, rather they have "archaic remnants of an ancient type of religion."

Generally speaking, I find le Roux' article(s) very interesting, although I must admit that I am a bit uncertain about her use of genetic tests to prove kinship between the Lembas and Israelites. She does so, probably because she has a genuine wish to take the Lemba traditions seriously and therefore does not want to leave out anything that can be used to shed light on these traditions. This is probably also why she talks about the genetic tests in a rather enthusiastic language: she uses the word "prove" about the possible relationship between the Lemba and the ancient Israelites, and she thinks that the whole thing is "fascinating". Nevertheless, this should not prevent readers from studying le Roux.

Wambudta's article, which follows in the footsteps of J.J. Williams' famous book *Hebrewisms of West Africa* (1930), and which echoes one of Wambutda's previous articles ("Hebrewisms of West Africa", *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 2 [1987] 33–41), goes into the complex problem of comparing existing West African languages—especially Nga—with Biblical Hebrew. Comparing words from the two languages, Wambutda draws conclusions based on seemingly similarities: one or two consonants of a word in Nga are often equal with a Hebrew word of similar meaning. And this is then related to the suggestion that the Ngas lived together with the Jews of Elephantine, and that they even were their servants.

In my view, Wambutda's approach is quite an insecure enterprise; drawing a line from the observation of resemblance to the conclusion that one language is directly influenced by the other is insecure. Wambudta's observations neither indicate a relationship between the two languages, nor does it prove that the Nga language was influenced by Hebrew in ancient times. What Wambutda's article indicates, however, is that there sometimes can be some resemblance between certain words of the two languages. This is in itself an interesting observation. However, Wambutda's suggestion of why these vague similarities exist provides us with nothing but speculations. The fact that there are cultural similarities between the Ngas and the Hebrews is interesting, but it cannot serve as evidence of some contact between these two groups in ancient times.

The article by Adamo, too, reflects a long-standing interest from the author's side, with several books and a number of articles on the relationship between Africa and the Bible; partly with a positive approach: to establish and analyze this relationship, and partly with a negative approach: to reveal how this relationship is neglected in traditional western ("Eurocentric", he would say) biblical scholarship. The present article is no exception. This time he emphasizes the *influence* ancient Africa is supposed to have had on ancient Israel, and by the term "Africa" Adamo once again refers to the whole continent; this time, though, with a stronger emphasis on Egypt than in his previous publications.

Adamo argues that the African influence on ancient Israel includes political as well as religio-cultural matters, and he presents his ideas by pointing at phenomena of similarities between the two cultures, for instance divine kingship and the dynastic system. Adamo's article is clearly an ideological ("Afrocentric", I would say) piece of work, and what he does, I think, is closer to *eisegesis* than to *exegesis*. Nevertheless, I find that Adamo is more nuanced in this article than in many of his previous publications. He even talks about the "possibility" of African influence on ancient Israel, which to me functions as an invitation to a real discussion between ("Afrocentric" and "Eurocentric", I would hope) Old Testament scholars. Adamo's research deserves to be taken into account also by researches outside Africa as it addresses a side of the Old Testament that is often overlooked by western scholars.

Marta Høyland Lavik is doing doctoral studies in the Old Testament in Stavanger. Address: School of Mission and Theology, Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway; e-mail: mh@mhs.no

Social transformation and biblical interpretation
A report on some of the results of a research project

Louis C. Jonker

In an earlier issue of *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* (then still called *Newsletter for African Old Testament Scholarship* 6 (1999) 23) a research project with the title "The influence of different contexts of social transformation on biblical interpretation" was introduced. A team consisting of seven scholars was involved in this project during 1999–2000: Dr Louis Jonker (Stellenbosch, South Africa), Rev Andries Daniels (Stellenbosch), Mr Sias Meyer (Stellenbosch), Mr Alec Basson (Stellenbosch), Dr Joel Manda (Zomba, Malawi), Dr. Winston Kawale (Blantyre, Malawi) and Prof Arie van der Kooij (Leiden, The Netherlands). Two colloquia were held during the course of the project. In September 1999 an interdisciplinary colloquium was held in Stellenbosch, South Africa, in order to get the input of scholars from related subjects into the project. The papers of this colloquium were published in the journal *Scriptura* 72 (2000). Another colloquium took place in April 2000 in Leiden, The Netherlands. At this meeting all participants in the project had the opportunity to introduce their research results to a wider audience.

The research problem that has been investigated in this project was: What influence do different contexts of social transformation have on the use of the Bible when Reformed Christian churches respond to social issues? Four different contexts of social transformation have been investigated in order to determine what strategies of biblical interpretation have been used in those contexts, and how these strategies have been influenced by the processes of social transformation. These contexts were: (i) The biblical legitimization of a policy of racial segregation in Apartheid South Africa (focussing on the document "Race relations and the South African scene in the light of Scripture" accepted by the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa in 1974). (ii) The theological struggle against apartheid (focussing on the Belhar Confession, finally accepted by the Dutch Reformed Mission Chruch of South Africa in 1986). (iii) The debate on the position of women in the Malawian Church (focussing on the various decisions by different Malawian synods of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian). And (iv) the debate on homosexuality in the Dutch Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (focussing on various documents of the Nederlandse

Hervormde Kerk, as well as of the Gereformeerden Kerken in Nederland).

The following hypothesis has been formulated and tested: Different contexts of social transformation lead to different modes of biblical interpretation. These modes range on a spectrum from legitimization to resistance (with accommodation and apology somewhere in between). The findings of the theoretical reflection, as well as of the different case studies are presented in the following publications:

- A methodological reflection appeared in *Scriptura* 72 (2000); cf. the contribution of Jonker.
- Race relations: two contributions (by Jonker and Basson) will appear in *Scriptura* (the first volume of 2001).
- Belhar Confession: one contribution (by Meyer) already appeared in *Scriptura* 72 (2000), and another one (by Daniels) will appear in *Scriptura* late in 2001.
- The role of women in the Malawian church: two contributions (by Kawale and Manda) will appear in *Scriptura* late in 2001.
- Homophilia and the Dutch Churches: one contribution (by Van der Kooij) already appeared in *Scriptura* 72 (2000), and another one (by the same author) will appear in *Scriptura* (the first volume of 2001).
- A comparative study by Jonker will appear in *Scriptura* (late in 2001).

The following short remarks can be viewed as the culmination of the research done in this project (for a more detailed discussion, as well as for an explanation of the distinctions made here, the above-mentioned publications can be consulted):

Theological tradition

Although many other factors are involved in times of transformation (see below) that result into different modes and effects of interpretation within specific interpretative communities, it could at least be argued that the shared Reformed tradition of the interpretative communities involved in this project created an openness and willingness towards reinterpretation and reflection during times of social transformation.

Hermeneutical strategies of appropriation

It became apparent that a combination of hermeneutical strategies of appropriation occurred in all four case studies. However, it could also be indicated that each interpretative community showed greater affinity towards a specific strategy, namely (i) the Dutch ecclesial discussions on homophilia (emerging knowledge); (ii) "Ras, Volk en Nasie" in apartheid-South Africa (relational parallelism); (iii) the Belhar

Confession in apartheid-South Africa (terminological parallelism); (iv) women participation in the Malawian church (trace paper model).

Modes of interpretation

The distinction of modes of interpretation focusses on the function of interpretations in relation to circumstances of social transformation (i.e. what each interpretation does/attempts in society). The following identifications were made: (i) Dutch ecclesial discussions on homophilia (accommodation); (ii) "Ras, Volk en Nasie" in apartheid-South Africa (legitimization); (iii) the Belhar Confession in apartheid-South Africa (resistance); (iv) women participation in the Malawian church (resistance and legitimization in one part of the church, accommodation in the other part).

Societal factors influencing biblical interpretation

Although it has become clear from this investigation that no patterns exist in the relationship between social transformation and biblical interpretation, and that any attempts at prediction will be refuted in practice, certain significant factors have emerged. The following could be mentioned:

- Broader tensions in society: It has been indicated that the broader societal forces of globalisation and localisation occur simultaneously in changing societies, and that interpretative communities are exposed to both of these forces. However, it also became clear that interpretative communities often show a stronger tendency towards one of these forces. The following was found: (i) Dutch ecclesial discussions on homophilia (globalization); (ii) "Ras, Volk en Nasie" in apartheid-South Africa (localization); (iii) the Belhar Confession in apartheid-South Africa (globalization); (iv) women participation in the Malawian church (localization in one part of the church, globalization in the other part).
- Power relations in society: The power position an interpretative community occupies in society during a period of transformation, is quite significant with regard to biblical interpretation. Within the above-mentioned tensions in society, interpretative communities function closer or further from the centre of power with regard to specific social issues. The following was found: (i) Dutch ecclesial discussions on homophilia (power and authority of churches eroded by societal changes); (ii) "Ras, Volk en Nasie" in apartheid-South Africa (occupying the centre of social and political power); (iii) the Belhar Confession in apartheid-South Africa (marginalized and oppressed); (iv) women participation in the Malawian church (occupying the centre of social and cultural power).
- Degree of cultural identification: The Malawian case study, in particular, has shown that the degree of similarity between biblical cultural norms and the contemporary culture of the interpretative community also plays a significant role.

- History: The Malawian case study has also shown that the theological historical background of the interpretative community results in significant differences in interpretation.

The effect of biblical interpretation in society

From the outset it was stated in this project that the relationship between social transformation and biblical interpretation is a reciprocal one. Social transformation not only influences the way in which the Bible is interpreted by faith communities, biblical interpretation also tends to influence society. One can distinguish between transformative and non-transformative (or conservationist) interpretation. The following was found: (i) Dutch ecclesial discussions on homophilia (transformative); (ii) "Ras, Volk en Nasie" in apartheid-South Africa (non-transformative / conservationist); (iii) the Belhar Confession in apartheid-South Africa (transformative); (iv) women participation in the Malawian church (non-transformative / conservationist in one part of the church, transformative in the other).

The following table provides a summary of the different aspects mentioned above:

	heuristic keys	**Modes of interpretation**	**strategies of appropriation**	**Effect of interpretation**
Stronger tendency towards **localization**	"volk", race, identity holiness, purity, indigenous culture	Legitimization Resistance	finding eternal values/truths trace paper relational parallelism	non-transformative
Stronger tendency towards **globalization**	justice reconciliation unity openness anti-authority holiness purity	Accommo-dation Resistance	Terminological parallelism emerging knowledge trace paper	Transformative

Dr Louis C. Jonker is part-time lecturer in Old Testament studies, University of Stellenbosch, and minister of religion in the Dutch Reformed Church. Address: 11 Buiterkring Avenue, Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa; e-mail: lcjonker@mweb.co.za

Ghana Association of Biblical Exegetes

Benjamin Abotchie Ntreh

Biblical scholars from various seminaries, university departments of religious studies, and other related institutions, gathered at St. Peter's Regional Seminary, Pedu, Cape Coast, from September 21 to September 22, 2000, to form an association to be known as "Ghana Association of Biblical Exegetes" (GABES), an interdenominational association whose membership shall be open to all who are committed to scholarly study of the Bible.

Membership

1. Full membership in the association shall be open to persons:
   (a) With at least a Master's (second) degree in Biblical Studies.
   (b) Committed to issues of Christian faith and practice.
2. Associate membership in the association shall be open to persons:
   (a) With the above qualifications but who wish to be associate members.
   (b) Who are graduate students in Biblical Studies.
   (c) Who are graduate students in related fields of study.

Aims and objectives

1. We recognise that GABES shall:
   (a) Promote the indigenous study of the bible in the Church and in the Academia.
   (b) Foster a critical study of scripture from an African perspective in the service of the mission of GABES.
   (c) Foster networking and membership among members of GABES.
   (d) Create a forum for interfaith encounter, dialogue and engagement.
   (e) Forge links with other similar associations worldwide.
   (f) Explore the relevance of the study of the Bible to nation building.
   (g) Pursue the publishing of research efforts in the area of biblical and other related studies.
   (h) Source-funding for activities of the GABES.
2. We again recognise that:
   (a) GABES shall exist at regional and national levels and that a good concentration of biblical scholars in the country are in institutions in Cape Coast, Accra-Legon and Tamale.

(b) Whenever other areas get their share of biblical scholars GABES shall be extended there.
(c) For the smooth running of GABES there shall be in place the following officers to steer the affairs of the association:
    i. Chairperson/Convener
    ii. Secretary
    iii. Co-coordinator/Protocol Officer
    iv. Treasurer
(d) Members shall be sponsored by their mother institutions to the various meetings of GABES.

Meetings

1. GABES shall meet at least twice a year with the one in August/September being the Annual General Meeting.
2. The Executive shall have the powers to call for other meetings of members as and when necessary.

Officers

The following officers were elected to steer the affairs of the association:

1. Chairperson: Archbishop Peter K. Turkson, Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
2. Vice-chairperson: Prof. Emmanuel A. Obeng, Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
3. Secretary: Rev. Dr. Benjamin A. Ntreh, Senior Lecturer, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
4. Coordinator/Protocol Officer: Rev. Fr. Augustine Mensah, Lecturer, St. Peter's Regional Seminary, Pedu-Cape Coast.
5. Treasurer: Rev. Mrs. Dorothy Akoto, Lecturer, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon.

Correspondence

The Secretary, Ghana Association of Biblical Exegetes (GABES), C/o Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, GHANA; e-mail: gabes@hotmail.com

Dr Benjamin A. Ntreh is Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies, University of Cape Coast. Address: Religious Studies Department, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana; e-mail: bantreh@hotmail.com

Book Reviews

David Tuesday Adamo, *Explorations in African Biblical Studies*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001. iii + 164 pp. ISBN: 1-57910-682-X. US$ 18.00.

David Tuesday Adamo, *Reading and Interpreting the Bible in African Indigenous Churches*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001. iii + 120 pp. ISBN: 1-57910-700-1. US$ 15.00.

[The books can be ordered from Wipf and Stock Publishers, 150 West Broadway, Eugene, OR 97401, USA].

Dr David Tuesday Adamo, Professor of Religious and Biblical Studies in Delta State University, Nigeria, has published not less than two books this year. His research has for many years focused on two areas of African biblical studies—(i) the so-called African presence in the Old Testament (cf. his book *Africa and Africans in the Old Testament*, reviewed in *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship* 5 (1998) 26-27), and (ii) more general African biblical hermeneutics, with particular attention to biblical interpretation in African Indigenous Churches—and the two new books follow up these two research interests of his, although with special emphasis on the latter (to the former, cf. also his article "African influence on ancient Africa" in the present issue of *BOTSA*, pp. 11–14).

The first book, *Explorations in African Biblical Studies*, is an essay collection, republishing some of Adamo's previous articles. Some analyze African or African American hermeneutics, others go into biblical themes (e.g. creation, peace, suffering, the African people of Cush) or texts (e.g. Deut 6:4) and interprets them from an African perspective. The other book, *Reading and Interpreting the Bible in African Indigenous Churches*, is a monograph presenting and analyzing various examples of how the Bible is "used" (a wide sense of the words "read" and "interpret") in African Indigenous Churches. After brief introductory chapters presenting African worldviews and some of the relevant (Nigerian) churches, follow a large number of examples of how the Bible is used "therapeutically", "for protection" and "for success". Let one typical case—a "therapeutic" one, the curing of smallpox—examplify these various uses (p. 60): "Prophet Adewole recommends Ps 84 to be read ten times over water with the holy name *Alojah*, *Alojah*, *Alojah* to be pronounced 21 times. Or a mixture of fried oil, potash, shear butter, with the reading of Ps 84 to it. The oil is for rubbing the body and the water for bathing." Most of Adamo's readers would here, I guess, and in a number of corresponding cases, quite intuitively think in terms of syncretism. But not Adamo; rather, he emphasizes such uses of the Bible as important examples of a non-westernized biblical interpretation in Africa.

Let me add two remarks to this brief presentation of Adamo's new books. On the positive side, Adamo should be praised for his innovative approaches to biblical studies in Africa. Adamo has never been afraid of cutting new paths through thick forests, and his constant emphasizing of an African presence in the texts as well as his general openness towards popular biblical interpretation outside the historical churches should be taken, I think, as invitations to further discussion of the various facets of the relationship between Africa and the Bible. This is the strength of the books, and I hope this is where Adamo will get response. However, on the negative side, I fear that some of Adamo's readers will not get as far as to see these important

concerns; long before they come there, they are stuck in misprints, lacking typographical consequence and lacking bibliographical information. Nevertheless, and in spite of these shortcomings, Adamo's two new books offer valuable insights and provocative perspectives to the concept of an Africanized biblical studies.

Knut Holter, School of Mission and Theology
Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway; e-mail: kh@mhs.no

Innocent Himbaza, *Transmettre la Bible: Une critique exégétique de la traduction de l'AT: le cas du Rwanda*. Rome: Urbaniana University Press, 2001. 622 pp. ISBN: 88-401-3780-7. IL 50.000 / Euro 25,82.

Dr Innocent Himbaza is a Rwandan theologian presently living in Switzerland, where he works at the Faculty of Theology, University of Fribourg. The book is a revised version of a dissertation directed by Prof Adrian Schenker, accepted by the same university in 1998. Himbaza's major focus is the relationship between biblical text and translation context, and two Rwandan translations are used as case studies: *Biblia Yera* (Protestant, 1957, rev. version 1993) and *Bibiliya Ntagatifu* (Catholic, 1990). After brief introductory chapters presenting the project and outlining the historical background of the two translations, the major bulk of the book is a close reading of a selection of texts taken from Exodus, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Hosea, Malachi, Psalms, Esther, and Nehemiah. In each case the two target translations are discussed in relation to the Masoretic Text and to possible influence from English (King James Version, Revised Version) and French (Bible de Jérusalem) translations, and special attention is shown to whether, and to what extent, the target translations manage to express the message of the Hebrew texts in a language that is sensitive to Rwandan traditional culture. This case study of the relationship between biblical text and translation context will be of special interest to translators, of course, but also exegetes doing contextual interpretation of the Old Testament in Africa will benefit from reading it.

Knut Holter, School of Mission and Theology
Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway; e-mail: kh@mhs.no

Research

University of Stellenbosch, South Africa: Rev Petrus Booys is working on D.Th. dissertation on the topic: "Land dispossession and prophetic critique: the significance of spatial awareness for the theological interpretation of 1 Kings 21:1-24" (Supervisor: Prof H.L Bosman). Booys is interpreting the Naboth incident (1 Kings 21) from a landless Khoi perspective, arguing that his Khoi understanding of 1 Kings 21 enables him to appreciate the often neglected theological point of view that spatial awareness is crucial for one's religious identity and subsequent theological reflection. Adress: Rev Petrus Booys, Faculty of Theology, 171 Dorp Street, Stellenbosch, 7600 South Africa.

BOTSA is edited and published by Dr Knut Holter.
All editorial and business correspondence should be addressed to:

- Dr Knut Holter, School of Mission and Theology, Misjonsvegen 34, N-4024 Stavanger, NORWAY, tel.: (+47) 5151 6227, fax: (+47) 5151 6225, e-mail: kh@misjonshs.no

As the very idea of *BOTSA* is to be a forum for exchange of ideas and information, the editor constantly needs response from the readers. Other scholars working with the Old Testament within the context of Africa are interested in your ideas and meanings, your research and book projects, your meetings and conferences.

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