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The «Canaanites» and other ‹pre-Israelite› peoples in Story and History

(Part II) *

Looking back

Our *re-lecture* of Israelite-Canaanite relations according to the biblical books from Genesis to Judges should have demonstrated that «Canaanites» and related ‹pre-Israelite› peoples first and foremost fulfil a *narrative role* along the Story of Israel's origins. They are designed to function as stereotypical characters in a play which is exclusively concerned with Israel. All along the story, they serve as anti-stereotypes for shaping the identity of what is described as nascent Israel. In terms of genealogy, Israel is far removed from Canaan – the common denominator could not possibly be smaller.[1] While the Patriarchal narratives may consider essentially peaceful relations between Israel's ancestors and the inhabitants of Canaan with the ancestors discovering YHWH at the ever-holy places of the land, the subsequent story starting with the Exodus from Egypt clearly tries to disconnect «Israelites» and «Canaanites» as not-to-be-related entities.[2] Israel is now called to keep apart from the «Canaanites», and the more strictly it would do so, the more decidedly God would make the «Canaanites» disappear from the land. We should stress, however, that according to the Story itself this remains an hypothetical

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* Continued from *FZPhTh* 67 (1999) 546–578.

[1] Noah is the only common ancestor, which is just to acknowledge humanity to both Israel and Canaan but serves to separate the two as far as possible. Cf. Part I, 567f. and E.T. MULLEN, Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations. A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch (SBL Semeia Studies), Atlanta GA, 1997, esp. 119.

[2] On the separate origins of the two etiologies of Israel (Patriarchal narratives and Exodus tradition), see now K. SCHMID, Erzväter und Exodus. Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments (WMANT 81), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1999.

scenario, since Israel fails to keep apart and thus proves unable to keep the promise at work.

Clearly, the biblical anti-stereotype of the «Canaanites» serves to re-move and disconnect Israel from the other inhabitants of the land as far as possible. Israel's identity is shaped by the negation and repression of anything «Canaanite».[3] The Story underlines Israel's essential (if not real) otherness, denying as it does any common root. The rhetorical violence and the imagined violence of ‹storical› repression should make it obvious that we cannot rely on biblical descriptions of anything «Canaanite» when inquiring into the real *history* of the region at the turn from the IInd to the Ist millennium BCE. However, having read the Story, we may have recognized here and there bits and pieces of the scholarly hypothe-ses on ‹Canaanite› culture, society and religion as summarized above (Part I, sect. II). If we aim at a really historical understanding of these latter issues, and not just a new paraphrase or re-telling of the Story, we have to consider the proper historical sources.

IV. The History: primary sources on Canaan, Canaanites and other inhabitants of Bronze and Iron age Palestine

We shall now consider what we may reasonably know today about «Ca-naan» and «Canaanites» from extra-biblical sources.[4] It goes without say-ing that the following section is not the place for a detailed source ana-lysis but only allows for a very short synopsis.[5] Since we address our

[3] E. BEN ZVI, Inclusion in and Exclusion from Israel as Conveyed by the Use of the Term ‹Israel› in Post-Monarchic Biblical Texts, in: S.W. HOLLOWAY/L.K. HANDY (eds.), The Pitcher is Broken. Memorial Essays for G.W. Ahlström (*JSOT.* S 190), Sheffield 1995, 95–149.

[4] For an earlier treatment of the terms «Canaan» and «Canaanites», I may refer to O. KEEL/M. KÜCHLER/CH. UEHLINGER, Orte und Landschaften der Bibel. Bd. 1: Geographisch-geschichtliche Landeskunde, Zürich-Göttingen 1984, 239–253.

[5] N.P. LEMCHE, The Canaanites and Their Land. The Tradition of the Canaanites (*JSOT.* S 110), Sheffield 1991, is directly relevant to our subject. Informed readers will recognize that the following remarks agree on many issues with Lemche and have cer-tainly learnt from his study. However, I would express some reservation, particularly regarding his treatment of IInd-millennium sources. According to Lemche, these sources do not display a coherent notion of «Canaan» and the «Canaanites», and his discussion consequently leaves the reader with a quite incoherent mass of uncertain-ties. The confusion, however, is less due to the sources than to Lemche's approach; more often than not, one has the impression that he is not really interested in making sense of his sources. For critical reviews of Lemche's approach, see N. NA'AMAN, *UF* 26 (1994, publ. 1995) 397–418 (response by Lemche in *UF* 28 [1996] 767–774); R. ALBERTZ, *BZ* 39 (1995) 109–112; and A.F. RAINEY, Who is a Canaanite? A Review of

subject in the framework of a theological project (i. e. the search for a contextual Palestinian theology), the main objective of the following section is to bring the ideological nature of the biblical portrait of the «Canaanites» into sharper relief.

1. IInd-millennium BCE textual sources

The terms «Canaan» (of still disputed etymology) and (much more rarely attested) «Canaanite(s)» occur in a number of written documents of the IInd-millennium BCE retrieved by archaeological excavations on various Levantine sites. Even if the picture drawn by these documents dating from ca. 1780 (Mari) to the middle of the 12th cent. BCE (Egypt) remains incomplete, they should be regarded as the primary sources for the critical historian, much more important than the biblical texts which are at any rate much later.

Among the Mari cuneiform letters, one letter uses the term «Canaanite» (^{lú}kinahnu/im) as a designation for people living in a town called Rāhisum, situated south of Qatna, while other letters seem to use the same term for inhabitants of the Beqa' valley. These letters imply a rather precise notion of a territorial entity called Canaan, as do some slightly later documents from Alalakh. The 15th-cent. BCE inscription of Idrimi, king of Alalakh, mentions a town called Ammiya in the «land of Canaan» (^{māt}kinahhi), which is usually identified with modern 'Amyūn near Tripolis. According to these earlier documents, therefore, «Canaan» seems to be the name of a well-defined geographical area embracing a considerable part of modern Lebanon, including the Beqa' valley and what was later to become the Phoenician coast.

The situation changes only slightly with the 14th-cent. BCE sources from the Amarna archive and Ugarit. Precise toponyms related with Canaan still include Byblos and Tyre, but also Hinnatūna and Hazor in Galilee, i. e. they remain centered on the Lebanese area. To judge from lists which mention people from Ugarit or Ashdod alongside «Canaanites», these two coastal towns in northern Syria and southern Palestine were considered not to belong to «Canaan» proper by local ‹Lebanese› and Ugaritic scribes.

The more international correspondence of Babylonian or Mitannian kings, however, being less interested in local boundaries than in the regional division between various spheres of influence and vassalship, uses the term «Canaan» to designate a broader area. Since at that time the whole Levantine territory from northern Lebanon to Gaza was under Egyptian hegemony, the scribes of the greater powers took the name of the northernmost area under Egyptian control, i. e. «Canaan», *pars pro toto* as a term for the southern Levant.[6] The Egyptians themselves followed the same international standard; for them, «Canaan» was now the name of their Levantine ‹province›. However, since their outlook was one from the south, they did not even hesitate to call the town of Gaza, which served as an administrative center for the whole ‹province› at least from the 13th cent. BCE onwards, «*the* Canaan».[7] The extension of the territorial concept «Canaan» to the southern Levant as a whole is clearly an outcome of Late Bronze age ‹imperialism›. At the same time, it is important to note that the more extensive use of the term by the greater powers did not rule out nor totally replace the more precise and better informed limited use by locals.[8]

More important for our concern, we should be aware of the fact that «Canaan» was first of all a term for a *geographical* area, while «Canaanite(s)» is a secondary term deduced from the former in order to designate the (mostly urban) inhabitants of that area. Interestingly, the term «Canaanite(s)» may appear in North-Syrian sources, but only rarely in

[6] Most explicitly in a kind of *laissez-passer* delivered by king Tushratta of Mitanni to one of his messengers and asking «the kings of Canaan, servants of my brother (i. e. the king of Egypt)» to provide safe entry to Egypt to his messenger (*EA* 30). Complaining that a caravan of his had been robbed in Galilee, the Babylonian king Burnaburiash writes in a letter addressed to the Egyptian king Akhenaten: «Canaan is your country, and [its] kings [are your servants]. In your country I have been despoiled» (*EA* 8). Note, however, that this latter document is concerned with Galilee and does not make the extension of the territorial concept «Canaan» explicit. Similarly, *EA* 9 which refers to a planned revolt of «all the Canaanites» at the time of king Kurigalzu (*ca.* 1380 BCE) remains somewhat ambiguous.

[7] Similarly, the way from Gaza to Egypt could be called «the end of the land of Canaan» (*ANET* 478b).

[8] It is for this very reason that different uses of the territorial concept «Canaan» in the sources should not be taken to prove that the concept itself was imprecise for the scribes who used it (*pace* Lemche who claims that «evidently the inhabitants of the supposed Canaanite territory in Western Asia had no clear idea of the actual size of Canaan, nor did they know exactly where Canaan was situated» [op. cit. (n. 5), 39, cf. 51 etc.]).

Egyptian administrative documents[9] and, more important, never in local Lebanese and Palestinian correspondence *as a nomen gentilicium*. This seems to imply that it did not define any kind of *ethnic* identity in the late IInd-millennium BCE. An Egyptian administrator of Canaan would probably not design all the inhabitants of Ashkelon or Lachish, Jerusalem or Shechem as «Canaanites», were they all city-dwellers, nor would the local (urban) population of the Late Bronze age southern Levant have recognized themselves *in toto* as «Canaanites». While the latter point may still be open to debate[10], it is beyond any doubt that the local (urban) population of 13th–11th-cent. BCE Palestine would not have recognized themselves in the polemical portrait of the «Canaanites» as it is drawn by biblical historiography.

Furthermore, we should not assume any kind of ethnic, cultural or political unity or homogeneity for Late Bronze age Palestine. People of different ethnic origin (to judge from their personal names which – linguistically, not ethnically – categorize as Egyptian, West Semitic, Hurrite, Hittite etc.), different cultural identity (to judge, e.g., from proper names, various divinities of local and foreign origin revered by the local population, or material culture) and social rank lived side by side in rather cosmopolitan urban societies, with no single category considering itself to represent «Canaanites» in a straightforward way. The country being divided among numerous city-states, political identity was first and foremost shaped by one's appArtenance to a certain town – or clan, with reference to ‹nomadic› people (the so-called Shasu[11] which the Egyptian sources clearly differentiate from urban Asiatics). Every major town was ruled by its own king. Some kings might well, under specific circumstances, form coalitions without however considering themselves to belong to a particularly «Canaanite» entity (apart from being subject to the same Egyptian provincial administration).[12] It has long been recognized that if Judg. 4:2, 23f. calls Yabin of Hazor «the (one) king of Canaan», this is a blatant

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[9] Two Egyptian references to «Canaanites» are exceptional in this respect: A booty list of Amenophis II mentions «640 Canaanites», probably palace officials, among other Syro-Palestinian aristocrats as prisoners of war (*ANET* 246b), and a 13th-cent. papyrus lists «Canaanite slaves from Huru (i. e. Syria)». Still, this does not make the term an ethnonym, let alone one used by the local population themselves. See LEMCHE, op. cit. (n. 5), 43–46.

[10] See the different opinion expressed by Na'aman, loc. cit. (n. 5).

[11] See TH. STAUBLI, Das Image der Nomaden im Alten Israel und in der Ikonographie seiner sesshaften Nachbarn (OBO 107), Freiburg Schweiz-Göttingen 1991, 35–66.

[12] Note that Tuthmosis III's report on a battle against a coalition of Syro-Palestinian kings at Megiddo (*ANET* 234ff.) never identifies these enemies as «Canaanites».

anachronism based on a construct of ethnicity and territorial state which has no basis in late-IInd-millennium BCE realities.[13]

Finally, we should stress that Late Bronze age Canaan was not even united by common religious beliefs and practices.[14] This last point is particularly important when considered against the strongly anti-Canaanite religious polemics which we found in the Bible and because of the enormous scholarly literature devoted to «Canaanite religion». Archaeological remains of cultic or religious significance dating to the Late Bronze and early Iron ages provide ample evidence of a multi-faceted religious life where local and regional indigenous traditions as well as foreign influences (mainly related to the impact of Egyptian imperialism) combined to almost as many local combinations as there were city-states. Given such a cosmopolitan plurality, and since Ugarit anyway was outside the territorial extent of Canaan, it is extremely hazardous to build a reconstruction of Late Bronze age Palestinian religious history almost entirely on mythological texts from Ugarit (or, for that matter, Emar on the Euphrates). On the other hand, while it is certainly possible to discern common traits cutting across the various urban panthea and local cults, these traits do not stop sharply at the (as we have seen, rather well-defined) borders of Canaan. Therefore we cannot consider them to be distinctively «Canaanite».[15] The latter is all the more impossible since the *nomen gentilicium* «Canaanite» is never related to anything particularly religious in extra-biblical sources which, to the best of my knowledge, know nothing of «Canaanite gods», «Canaanite rites» or the like.[16] In particular,

[13] Notwithstanding the possibility that biblical Yabin may preserve the name of a IInd-millennium king of Hazor, such as Ibni-Addu attested in Mari documents, who may have become a quite legendary figure in the centuries following the collapse of Bronze age Hazor.

[14] For an overview of some major tendencies in the religious symbolism of Late Bronze age Canaan, see O. KEEL/CH. UEHLINGER, Gods, Goddesses and their Symbols, Minneapolis-Edinburgh 1997, chap. IV.

[15] The same, by the way, could be said of «Canaanite» language which, as Frederick H. Cryer (Copenhagen) has reminded me, is a misnomer. Borrowing the term from Is. 19:18, we have come to label so a number of languages which share some common features (such as a prepositioned definite article *h-*). However, the distribution of these languages does not fit the boundaries of «Canaan», whether in the Late Bronze or in the Iron age.

[16] The *geographical* name «Canaan» occurs twice in relation to religious issues: (1) A reference to «the Storm God of Canaan» (^{d}IM *ša ki-na-i*) has recently been identified in a ritual text from Late Bronze age Emar on the Middle Euphrates (D.E. FLEMING, «The Storm God of Canaan» at Emar: *UF* 26 [1994, publ. 1995] 127–130). The reference is, however, not unequivocal since it lacks the determinative KUR/*māt*. (2) A Ramesside papyrus refers to a temple of the god Amun in «the Canaan» (i. e. Gaza

religious practices such as those listed in Exod. 34 or sexual practices such as described in Lev. 18, which are both considered to be distinctively «Canaanite» or else ‹pre-Israelite› by the Biblical texts and many modern interpreters, are either not attested at all for the Canaanite area by late-IInd- or early-Ist-millennium BCE primary sources or, if attested, not limited – be it in space or time – to Late Bronze age Lebanon and Palestine. From a historical point of view, neither of them may thus be considered «Canaanite».

2. *Concepts and terminology: some practical suggestions*

We may conclude from the above overview that the historical primary sources (including texts, iconography, archaeology) of the IInd-millennium BCE do not confirm the biblical concept of a ‹pre-Israelite› ethnic entity called «Canaanites» – and even less what modern commentators have made out of this concept –, neither with regard to the ethnic notion itself nor with reference to specifically «Canaanite» cultural, religious, or social traits. As a rule, the ‹pre-Israelite› Canaanites of the Bible's so-called historical books are to be considered as a pure historiographical fiction of much later times.

Taking into account the strong anti-Canaanite bias and the concept of a fundamental antagonism between Canaanites and Israelites prevalent in biblical historiography, I would make the following *suggestions regarding concepts and terminology* to be used in future studies:

a. As historians, biblical scholars and theologians alike, we should as a principle refrain from retrojecting the biblical Canaanite-Israelite antagonism, whether understood in ethnic, cultural, social or religious terms, into the history of Late Bronze – early Iron age Palestine because of «the extremely inaccurate and

more probably than Beth Shean; cf. CH. UEHLINGER, Der Amun-Tempel Ramses' III. in *p3-Kn'n*, seine südpalästinischen Tempelgüter und der Übergang von der Ägypter- zur Philister-Herrschaft: ein Hinweis auf einige wenig beachtete Skarabäen: *ZDPV* 104 [1988] 6–25). However, everything here (the text, the god, the temple name, its administration and even the specifically determined place name) is Egyptian. What might be considered ‹Canaanite› lies underneath: a certain temple in Gaza which housed an indigenous deity who came to be identified with the Egyptian Amun in the 13th or 12th cent. BCE. If we extrapolate from later Biblical references such as Judg. 16:23f, cf. 1 Sam. 5, the indigenous deity may well have been Dagan (biblical Dagon). However, since Dagan is attested centuries earlier in various parts of Northern Syria, this god has nothing specifically ‹Canaanite› but is a general West Semitic deity. It is only his blending with the Egyptian god Amun (cf. the analogous South Palestinian blending of Baʿal with Egyptian Seth) which might be considered as a particularly ‹Canaanite› feature. Note however that such terminology would be *ours*: it is not attested as such in ancient sources.

tendentious ways in which biblical authors used these names [i. e. «Canaan» and «Canaanites»] for their own historiographical and theological objectives»[17].

b. If we are concerned with a territorial entity called «Canaan» in the Late Bronze age (i. e. an undisputable historical reality), we should always make clear whether we deal with a limited region in Lebanon and Galilee or with the more extensive concept of Canaan including southern Palestine (i. e. the Egyptian province).

c. When dealing with the political, cultural or religious history of the southern Levant (or Palestine) as a whole, we should bear in mind that the term «Canaan» does not include Transjordanian territories which, in terms of geography and cultural history, are an integral part of the region.

d. Should we, despite all historical (and theological) reservations and be it only for convenience, maintain the term «Canaanite(s)» for the inhabitants of Late Bronze age (urban) Palestine in accordance with a few IInd-millennium documents, we would have to make clear that

1. we do not consider these «Canaanites» to have represented an ethnically definable entity;

2. we consider the coexistence of urban «Canaanite» and ‹nomadic›, cattle-breeding Shasu populations in Canaan, as documented by Egyptian sources, a socio-economic rather than an ethnic distinction within a basically dimorphic society;[18]

3. we do not consider the early Iron age villagers related to the settlement process in fringe areas and highlands (among which we may presumably locate some ‹Proto-Israelites›) to have been ethnically divorced from either Canaanites (i. e., per definition, urban inhabitants of ‹greater› Canaan) or Shasu. Whether

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[17] NA'AMAN, loc. cit. (n. 5), 413.

[18] Following the lead of K. ENGELKEN (Kanaan als nicht-territorialer Terminus: *BN* 52 [1990] 47–63), Lemche has suggested to explain a putative pre-monarchical and monarchical antagonism between Israelites and Canaanites in terms of a socio-political dichotomy between traditional tribal and centralized state entities and to identfy the «Canaanites» as «administrators» (City-Dwellers or Administrators. Further Light on the Canaanites, in: A. LEMAIRE/B. OTZEN [eds.], History and Traditions of Early Israel [FS E. Nielsen; SVT 50], Leiden 1993, 76–89). It is unclear to me how this relates to Lemche's earlier monographic treatment (op. cit. [n. 5]) where he considered all biblical texts as unfit sources for the pre-monarchical or early monarchical period. The whole issue of an *antagonism* between Israel(ites) and Canaan(ites) is one of biblical texts and modern interpreters, not of the historical primary sources. Extra-biblical sources of the later IInd and of the Ist millennium BCE are completely silent about and apparently unaware of this antagonism. Lemche's new suggestions are thus not based upon relevant sources but elaborate upon assumptions, unproven statements and speculations. While a dichotomy between leaders of the traditional society and state officers *may* have existed in the Late Bronze age and probably existed during the monarchical period, i. e. from the 9th cent. BCE onwards, there is no reason to connect such an ‹early› dichotomy with the antagonism of Israelites and Canaanites since no single source warrants us to do so. Although purportedly better informed on matters of anthropology, Lemche's suggestions fall back on positions similar to Dietrich's (Part I, n. 41 and pp. 562ff., n. 47]) in content as in method.

the socio-economic background of the ‹Proto-Israelites› should be considered to have been closer to the declining urban («Canaanite») or to the ‹nomadic› (Shasu) segment of the Palestinian population is open to discussion. The presently available sources are too sparse to give a decisive answer to this issue. Suffice it to underline that the earliest mention of «Israel» in the Merenptah stela locates this clan(?) *in* (probably central) «Canaan»/Palestine but does not identify it as a Shasu population.[19]

e. The term «Canaanite» is misleading because of its unifying character and totally un-historical biblical connotations. It might be wiser, and particularly so in arguments concerned with ethnicity issues, to avoid the term altogether when refering to the inhabitants of Late Bronze age urban Palestine since in all probability it does not reflect the latters' historical self-perception. As a more immediate and practical priority, we should stop using the labels «Canaanite religion», «Canaanite culture», «Canaanite literature» or «Canaanite language» – not to men-tion a «Canaanite period» (Bronze age) as opposed to an «Israelite period» (Iron age).[20]

3. An outlook on Ist-millennium BCE textual sources

Turning to the Ist-millennium BCE, we have to acknowledge the fact that from this later period only very few extra-biblical references to «Canaan» or «Canaanites» are known. The primary sources for the political history of the region, namely royal inscriptions of Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian kings, completely ignore the term which therefore cannot have designated a political reality throughout the millennium. Besides one Egyptian inscription which retains the name «the Canaan» for the town of Gaza, the only really hard extra-biblical information about «Canaan» are Hellenistic coins from ancient Beirut which render the Greek name «*Phoenician* Laodikea» in Semitic letters as «Laodikea *in Canaan*». The equation of Phoenicia (the modern Lebanese coast) with Canaan is confirmed by a number of dispersed Phoenician-Punic sources and by Mt. 15:21–22 (to which compare Mk. 7:26).[21] One may conclude

[19] See M.G. HASEL, Israel in the Merneptah Stela: *BASOR* 296 (1994) 45–61. Recent discussions as to whether early Israelites may be identified on pictorial representations from the time of Merenptah at Karnak should be ignored, although a thorough discussion remains necessary in order to dismiss them correctly. The reliefs in question show no Israelites at all, neither ‹Canaanite› nor Shasu.

[20] On this issue, I am in complete agreement with Lemche who emphasizes that «it is incorrect to operate with a concept like ‹the Canaanite religion›» (op. cit. [n. 5], 170). The same might of course be said for the term «Palestinian». See also L.L. GRABBE, ‹Canaanite›: Some Methodological Observations in Relation to Biblical Study, in: G.J. BROOKE/A.H.W. CURTIS/J.F. HEALEY (eds.), Ugarit and the Bible. Proceedings of the International Symposium (UBL 11), Münster 1994, 113–122.

[21] See LEMCHE, op. cit. (n. 5), 53–62.

that following the demise of the Late Bronze age Egyptian province, the name «Canaan» lost any political contour and was reduced to its earlier, mere geographical sense. At first look, this seems to converge with our earlier observation that biblical historiographers considered «Canaanites» to be an entity of the past.

V. The Story in history: cracking the code [22]

1. Geographical and ethnic terminology

Let us recall, however, that 1 Kings 9:20–21 – a text which cannot have been written prior to the late monarchical period and may well be post-exilic – claims that «the Amorite(s), the Hittite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Hivite(s) and the Jebusite(s)»[23] remained corvée workers in Israel «until the present day» (see similarly Josh. 16:10, Judg. 1:21). This formula points to the time of the author who apparently had some *contemporaneous* reality in mind when refering to these ‹pre-Israelite› peoples. What reality? In order to understand, we shall have to abandon the holistic and exclusively synchronic approach to the biblical story followed above in section III.

First of all, let us note some terminological differences among the biblical texts: While some use the terms «Canaan» or «the land of Canaan» more or less consistently as a *geographical* designation, others clearly prefer the (pseudo-)*ethnic* term «Canaanite(s)». Among the latter, some speak of «the Canaanites living in the land» (i. e. Palestine, generally speaking) while others have the mixed form «the land of the Canaanite(s)». The attentive reader should resist the temptation to reduce such differing formulations to one single ethno-geographical concept, but recognize instead that they might betray different concepts which probably reflect different scribal traditions but first of all represent various strands of biblical historiography (and related ‹storical geography›).

Excursus: The «Land of Canaan»

More than half of the biblical references to «the land of Canaan» occur in the book of Genesis, with approximately one quarter in the ancestor narratives and the other in the Joseph story. Of these, not one occurrence may be dated before the 7th cent. BCE (to say the least). Most of them and all references in the remaining books of the Pentateuch are usually attributed to the so-called Priestly

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[22] Cf. B.O. LONG, On Finding the Hidden Premises: *JSOT* 39 (1987) 10–14.

[23] «Canaanites» may be missing in this list because they are said to have been killed by an Egyptian king a few verses earlier (9:16).

writer. The label does not imply an individual author, but a stratified tradition about the story of Israel's origins composed in the late 6th and 5th cent. BCE. This tradition extends into the book of Joshua (e.g., 5:12, 14:1, 21:2). One striking feature of the concept of «the land of Canaan» is that it includes southern Palestine as a whole (coastal plain, hill country and highlands) but excludes Transjordanian territory (see esp. Num. 34; 35:10, 14; Deut. 32:49; Josh. 22:10, 32; Judg. 21:12).

The problem of dating the concept of «the land of Canaan» is rather tricky.[24] It is often maintained that the border description of Num. 34 ultimately depends on the limits of the Late Bronze age Egyptian province of «Canaan».[25] However, such an explanation inevitably raises the question what interest could motivate Ist-millennium BCE Israelite or Judahite scribes to handle down an obsolete list during centuries: the necessary postulate of tradition for such an hypothesis is intrinsically improbable. More decisive, historical geography does not support the theory: As a matter of fact, the *northern* border does not fit the extent of Israelite dominion in any period in the history of Israel. With regard to the *eastern* border, the Jordan river did not constitute a border line in the late IInd-millennium BCE, but during the late 8th and possibly the 7th cent. at the earliest, and again in the Persian period. The *southern* border reference to Qadesh-Barnea implies a 7th/6th-cent. BCE *terminus a quo* since Qadesh-Barnea was not settled earlier. Taken together, these considerations seem to exclude the Late Bronze age provenience of Num. 34 or its source.

Interestingly, the close parallel to this border description in Ez. 47:15–18 (and see 48:1) does not mention the name «Canaan» but simply «the land» which the Israelite tribes should inhabit – *after the exile*! More contemporaneous names appearing in the Ezekiel text, such as Hamat, Damascus, Hauran and Gilead, seem to indicate that the northern border line common to both Num. 34 and Ez. 47f. (and rather close to Josh. 13:4–6a as well) was still (or again) of some territorial significance in the Persian period (perhaps the border between the zones of influence of Sidon and Byblos on the one hand, and Arvad on the other?). Now it is obvious that «the land of Canaan» did not reflect a political-territorial reality in the Persian period. However, the same might be said regarding the later concept of «the land of Israel» as defined by rabbinical texts or the Tannaite border list.[26] The latter did not correspond to a political reality in the Roman and Byzantine periods but was exclusively concerned with matters of cultic offerings, calendar validity, festal and ritual regulations etc. Later Rabbinical tradition considered Num. 34 to define the area from which Jews had to bring regular offerings to the temple of Jerusalem. I am inclined to suppose that the border description of Num. 34 ultimately had a comparable legal aim, namely to define the area in which Jews of the Persian period would be considered to be able to regularly relate to Jerusalem in terms of pilgrimage obligations, of-

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[24] KEEL/KÜCHLER/UEHLINGER, op. cit. [n. 4], 245–250.

[25] See recently NA'AMAN, loc. cit. (n. 5), 409–413.

[26] See KEEL/KÜCHLER/UEHLINGER, op. cit. (n. 4), 263–275.

ferings, purity regulations, marriage rules and possibly Temple jurisdiction – or, turned otherwise, until where Priestly writers would consider them not to live under particular diaspora conditions. Take one very practical example to illustrate this point: Until where would you get in conflict with Deut. 7:3 when marrying a non-Jewish woman? Until where would you ‹risk› meeting a «Canaanite» woman? Num. 34 would provide a basis for a rather straightforward answer to such a question. While the exclusion of Transjordan poses a problem for this explanation, one could argue that the Priestly writer here considered Transjordanian territory to be *per se* situated outside the borders of the promised land and as such unfit for Jewish settlement. The Nehemiah-Tobiah antagonism plainly demonstrates that this was a matter of conflicting opinions in the 5th cent.

In sum, interpreters who consider Num. 34 to be a historical reflection of a late IInd-millennium BCE territorial order should ask themselves how the Priestly writers would have been able to consult and why they would have bothered to copy such a list of old (Na'aman and many others do not address the problem). Those who consider the text to be unrelated to a IInd-millennium BCE order still have to face the issue of its practical and literary function within the Torah (an issue which is not addressed by Lemche). It is not sufficient simply to declare a text to be an «ideological construct». One still must ask: what ideology, to what purpose?

2. *Various ethno-geographical concepts ...*

The geographical entity named «the land of Canaan» should not be confused with «the land of the Canaanite(s)». The latter form is attested eight times in the Bible; the eight cases fall apart into at least three different categories[27]:

a) one which considers «the land of the Canaanite(s)» to be situated in northern Palestine (Deut. 1:7), namely Sidonian territory towards southern Lebanon (Josh. 13:3f.);[28]

b) another one which we might call ‹harmonistic› since its territorial concept seems to coïncide with the notion of ‹greater› Canaan (Exod.

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[27] Deut. 11:29–30 which situates Mt. Ebal and Mt. Garizim near Gilgal in the Jordan valley is so clearly a very late scribal gloss born out of religious ideology (not geography) that it may not be adequately termed a territorial concept. Cf. E. NOORT, The Traditions of Ebal and Garizim: Theological Positions in the Book of Joshua, in: M. VERVENNE/J. LUST (eds.), Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic Literature (FS C.H.W. Brekelmans; BEThL 133), Leuven 1997, 161–180.

[28] Deut. 1:7, obviously post-exilic and composite (L. PERLITT, Deuteronomium [BK V/1], Neukirchen-Vluyn 1990, 35–49), distinguishes between «the highland of the Amorite(s)» and neighbouring areas, mentioning «the land of the Canaanite(s)» between the Palestinian coastal plain and the Lebanon. Josh. 13:3f. distinguishes between yet unconquered Philistine and «Awwite» territory in the south, «the land of the Canaanite(s)» in Sidonian neighbourhood distinct from «Amorite» territory and not belonging to Byblos nor to the slopes of Lebanon (cf. Part I, n. 65).

13:11) of mixed population (among them Amorites and Hittites, Ez. 16:3[29]), a notion also met with in texts of the Priestly writer naming «the land of Canaan»;

c) a third one which we may loosely term ‹late Deuteronomistic›. This group has the form «the land of the Canaanite(s)» connected to a list of several other ‹pre-Israelite› peoples without defining a precise territorial notion in the immediate context. It should be noted that the three items in this category are not of the same hand since each displays a slightly different list of peoples (Exod. 3:17; 13:5; Neh. 9:8).[30]

All these texts are undisputably of ‹post-exilic› (or, at the very best, ‹exilic›) date.[31] The same holds true for the remaining ca. 20 occurrences of one or another form of the list of ‹pre-Israelite› peoples found in the ‹historical books› of the Hebrew Bible.[32] Generally speaking, a greater number of occurrences mentions six peoples («the Canaanite(s), the Hittite(s), the Amorite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Hivite(s), the Jebusite(s)» (e.g., Exod. 3:8, 17), and one may consider the six-peoples list to represent a more or less fixed concept in spite of variations in its internal ordering. Moreover, since «the Canaanite(s)», «the Hittite(s)» and «the Amorite(s)» stand at the head of all but one six-peoples lists (and of some others), these three represent a kind of stable nucleus, attested as such in Ez. 16:3. An interesting geographical distribution is advocated by Num. 13:29:

«Amalek lives in the Negev, the Hittite(s), the Jebusite(s) and the Amorite(s) lives (!) in the highlands, and the Canaanite(s) lives by the sea and along the Jordan river.»

[29] Note that in contrast to Deut. 16:3, v. 45 only mentions Jerusalem's ‹Hittite› and ‹Amorite› parents but not their ‹Canaanite› territorial roots.

[30] Common to all three is the initial series «Canaanite(s) – Hittite(s) – Amorite(s)» first attested in Deut. 16:3 and which also heads the list in Exod. 3:8 (there connected to the term «place», not «land»).

[31] Without a detailed textual analysis, which cannot be argued here, this statement is somewhat unsatisfactory. One might of course argue that Deut. 16:3 is potentially pre-exilic, but this would not lead us further up in time than the early 6th cent. BCE. In Exod. 3:17 the reference to «the land of the Canaanites etc.» may be a secondary insert.

[32] For this lists in general, see T. ISHIDA, The Structures and Historical Implications of the List of Pre-Israelite Nations: *Biblica* 60 (1979) 461–490 (convenient overview but outdated with regard to the historical discussion); K.G. O'CONNELL, The Lists of Seven Peoples in Canaan. A Fresh Analysis, in: H.O. THOMPSON (ed.), The Answers Lie Below. Essays in Honor of L.E. Toombs, Lanham, NY-London 1984, 221–241; G. MITCHELL, Together in the Land. A Reading of the Book of Joshua (*JSOT*. S 134), Sheffield 1993, 122–141, 191–192.

According to the context the land is well considered to be one but none the less divided into three different zones (steppe, highlands and plains) each of which is said to be inhabited by different peoples.[33] This is an astute editorial device to account for the terminological differences in the various conquest traditions brought together in the book of Joshua which is here anticipated. At the same time it roughly outlines the imaginary ethnogeography of post-exilic Deuteronomists.

Another distribution is found in Josh. 11:1–3 where precise toponyms, individual kings and various peoples of the northern parts of the country are mixed together in a call to arms by Yabin, the king of Hazor. Among them we find

> «the Canaanite(s) to the east and to the west, the Amorite(s), the Hittite(s), the Perizzite(s) and the Jebusite(s) in the highlands, and the Hivite(s) below Mt. Hermon in the land of Mizpah.»

Again «the Canaanite(s)» are so to speak considered to embrace the Amorite, Hittite and Jebusite highlanders. However, such texts displaying a discernibly *territorial* representation in relation to the lists of ‹pre-Israelite› peoples are rare – and, as the example shows, at least partly contradictory. The overall variations and the contradictions among the whole corpus of lists as well as their mostly Deuteronomistic environment if not tertiary glossing nature makes their ‹post-exilic› origin undisputable. In consequence, these lists and related concepts can have no bearing whatsoever on the *history* of the region in the late IInd-millennium BCE.[34]

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[33] We should probably understand the inner segment of the picture to proceed from south to north, with the «Hittite(s)» thought to have lived in the southern highlands (i. e. Judah), the «Amorite(s)» in the northern highlands, and the «Jebusite(s)» in the area of Jerusalem in between, a distribution which is supported by some texts (such as Gen. 23) but contradicted by others (e.g., the tradition of the five ‹Amorite› kings related in Josh. 10).

[34] M. WEINFELD (The ban on the Canaanites in the Biblical codes and its historical development, in: LEMAIRE/OTZEN [n. 18], 142–160) has recently suggested that the origin of the laws of expulsion and dispossession of pre-Israelite peoples should be looked for in the period of king Saul. In historical terms, this is impossible since no relevant text dates so far back in time. Weinfeld rightly states that the *herem* extermination envisaged by Deuteronomy «is unrealistic» and goes on by presenting his own assessment: «What did in fact happen was the expulsion and clearing out of the pre-Israelite inhabitants, and even that was, taken as a whole, not a one-time event, but an on-going process» (155). As a matter of fact, that picture is not much more ‹realistic› than Deuteronomy's but it dramatically highlights the burden of biblical stereotypes when such a most distinguished biblical scholar turns to history.

3. ... but all imaginary

Declaring these lists and related ethno-geographical concepts to be basi-
cally unhistorical and part of ‹post-exilic› imaginary (or *storical*) constructs
of the pre-history of «Israel» leads us to an inevitable conclusion: «the
Canaanite(s)» and other ‹pre-Israelite› peoples are literary creations fixed
upon *pseudo-ethnonyms*, they have no more historical reality *as peoples* than
the book of Joshua's «children of Israel» invading the country from the
east. Two questions remain to answer: Where do these pseudo-ethno-
nyms come from? And what is the pragmatic use and *function* of the con-
cept of ‹pre-Israelite› peoples in the biblical historiography of the Persian
period?

It seems obvious that the biblical historiographers of the Persian pe-
riod could not just invent the pseudo-ethnonyms under discussion. I
would maintain in this respect that the so-called Deuteronomists and
related authors were not driven by religious ideology alone but (at least
in part and intentionally) by a truly historiographical interest and some-
times even antiquarian curiosity. This does not mean that they were ge-
nerally interested in matters of the past for its own sake, still less in *bruta
facta*; such was rarely the approach to history in antiquity. Rather, when
trying to build up a picture or better a story about Israel's imagined past,
they based themselves upon earlier traditions, sometimes documents
three or more generations old[35], religious teaching, etc. in order to pro-
duce a story that would look plausible to them and could convince a
potential audience.

The pseudo-ethnic terms used in the lists of ‹pre-Israelite› peoples
and elsewhere along the Story have various origins. This is not the place
for detailed argument, and we shall concentrate on the six ‹pre-Israelite›

[35] How long a papyrus or a leather scroll would last under the climatic conditions
of Palestine has to my knowledge never been tested by experiment. Prof. L.W. Hur-
tado (University of Manitoba) has drawn my attention to T.C. SKEAT, Early Christian
Book-Production: Papyri & Manuscripts, in: Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 2,
Cambridge 1969, 59–60, who notes examples of papyrus manuscripts already 250 years
old which were used again for new documents in the Ist-cent. BCE. Closer to our texts
and their world, one may of course refer to Jer. 32:9–14 on which Y. Nadelman (Israel
Antiquities Authority, Jerusalem) commented: «We can infer that important documents
(though it is not clear if this particular deed was written on parchment or papyrus)
were carefully stored in pottery jars (as also found in Qumran) and not necessarily just
‹stored on a shelf.› The open copy was the less authoritive one: while it could be read
and copied at will, the sealed authoritative copy could not be tampered with. In theory
the open copy could wear out and the sealed copy opened. This would present a rela-
tive pristine original document, extending the life span of the actual original docu-
ment.»

peoples mentioned most often in the lists: The terms «Amorite(s)» and «Hittite(s)» were borrowed from Assyro-Babylonian geographical terminology where *Amurru* and *Hatti* (leftovers of long-gone political realities of the IInd-millennium BCE) designate the whole area of Syria and Palestine down to the 6th-cent. BCE. «The Perizzite(s)» derive from a formerly sociological or ‹socio-ecological› designation for rural folk living outside an urban environment in fringe area villages as peasants and pastoral nomads.[36] «The Jebusite(s)» present a tricky case and it remains somewhat hypothetical to pinpoint the precise origin of this pseudo-ethnic term. The following scenario is plausible although impossible to prove: The «Jebusite(s)» became associated with Jerusalem because of a conspicuous topographical feature near the town which was called «the shoulder of the Jebusite» (Josh. 15:8, 18:16). The latter must have been a legendary man from the small town of Jebus situated in Benjaminite area somewhat north of Jerusalem (Josh. 18:28, Judg. 19:10).[37] Only very late glosses identify Jebus or «the city of the Jebusite(s)» with Jerusalem (Judg. 19:10, 1 Chr. 11:4f.). But no ethnically distinct Jebusite *people* ever inhabited the city of Jerusalem and its surroundings, and the city was never called «Jebus» in actual history.[38] Neither the so-called Succession story (2 Sam. 9–1, Kgs. 2) nor the book of Kings nor any potentially ‹pre-exilic› prophetic tradition (Ez. 16:3, 45!) know anything about Jebusites in Jerusalem.

There remain «the Canaanite(s)». The use of this term in biblical historiography is far better explained by the persistent use of the *geographical* term «Canaan» for either Sidonian surroundings or the country as a whole (see above) than by far-fetched references to isolated IInd-millennium BCE texts mentioning «Canaanites» here and there without attaching a definitely ethnic meaning to the term. However, how should we understand (a) the renewed extension of the term «Canaan» to the

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[36] H.M. NIEMANN, Das Ende des Volkes der Perizziter. Über soziale Wandlungen Israels im Spiegel einer Begriffsgruppe: *ZAW* 105 (1993) 233–257. Gen. 13:7 perceives the country's population to be composed of (urban) «Canaanites» and (non-urban) «Perizzites», a division reminiscent of the Late Bronze age perception of urban inhabitants of Canaan and non-urban Shasu. This remark does not claim either strict sociological or (obviously) ethnic continuity between Shasu and «Perizzites» but draws attention to the recurrence of stereotyped categorization.

[37] J.M. MILLER, Jebus and Jerusalem: A Case of Mistaken Identity: *ZDPV* 90 (1974) 115–127.

[38] CH. UEHLINGER, Die «Jebusiter». Geschichtliche Hintergründe eines problematischen Jubiläums: *ZeitSchrift für Kultur, Politik, Kirche. Reformatio* 45 (1996) 256–263; see also a fortcoming contribution of U. HÜBNER to M. ABU TALEB (ed.), Jerusalem Before Islam, Amman [in press?].

country as a whole, including southern Palestine, and (b) the strong anti-Canaanite strive of many texts? To my understanding, the answers to both questions lie in the political and social history of the region during the early Persian period.

4. «Canaanite» (Phoenician) commercial expansion during the early Persian period

The biblical extension of the term «Canaan» from Sidonian territory to all Palestine west of the Jordan river parallels the gradual expansion of the Phoenician-Philistine trade network and territorial control over considerable parts of coastal Palestine and the Jordan valley from the 7th to the 4th cent. BCE. While in the 7th cent. the city of Tyre controlled the northern Palestinian coast and the province of Dor, Sidonian control in the 5th cent. reached down to the province of Jaffa including the whole Sharon plain. The remaining territories to the south belonged to the cities of Ashdod, Ashkelon and Gaza. Ashdod and Gaza are old Philistine towns which retained their autonomy during the Persian period. In contrast, Philistine Ashkelon was largely destroyed by the Babylonians in 605 BCE, but founded anew by Tyrian colonist merchants probably in the late 6th cent. BCE. Although Sidonian, Tyrian and ‹Philistine› merchants were practically engaged in a strong commercial competition, they could all be considered «Canaanites» of the same ilk from a more removed Judean perspective. Zeph. 2:5 simply terms «Canaan» the land of the Philistines because of its commercial activities.

«Canaan» is associated with treacherous scales in Hos. 12:8, which is probably the oldest *socio-cultural* anti-Canaanism in the Bible (see also Is. 23:11). In a number of texts «Canaanite» just means «merchant» (see Is. 23:8 Tyre, Job 40:30; Prov. 31:24), similarly «people of Canaan» (Zeph. 1:11, where Philistines might be concerned).[39] In Judaean perception, the gradual development of a Phoenician-driven commercial network all over the country crystallized in the shaping of an imaginary collective identity (Canaanites = Phoenicians = merchants = profiteers = Canaanites).[40] The gradual expansion of Phoenician commercial activity was gradually perceived as «Canaanite» presence all over the coastal strip of Palestine and, to a lesser extent, in the Jordan valley. The impossibility of the Jeru-

[39] Deut. 16:29, 17:4 may even call Babylonia a «land of Canaan» (i. e. a merchants' land).

[40] A Swiss citizen may experience the reality of such collective identities when traveling abroad, since Swiss people are easily considered to be farmers *and* (!) bankers. It is not always recognized that in 1995 half a million inhabitants of Switzerland who are neither farmers nor bankers depended on social welfare. Jewish people are particularly aware of such collective stereotyping.

salemite establishment to compete with this «Canaanite» network pro-
bably fostered a growing anti-Canaanite aversion in Judah and particu-
larly in Jerusalem. The antagonism may have been rooted in a socio-
economic and cultural conflict, it was at the same time perceived in reli-
gious terms (see, e.g., the Sabbath incident related in Neh. 13:16–22).

In such a context neither the emergence of a pseudo-ethnonym «Ca-
naanites» in Persian period Judah nor its use in contemporary biblical
historiography should come as a surprise. A *caveat* is however in order:
As we have seen, biblical historiography considers to a large extent «the
Canaanite(s)» to be a phenomenon of the past. Moreover, the «Canaa-
nite(s)» as we meet them in biblical historiography are not described as
merchants but in rather general terms as urban citizens. Thus we have to
look for complementary arguments in order to account (a) for the speci-
fically *historiographical* connotation of Canaanites as ‹pre-Israelite› inhabi-
tants and (b) for the *religious polemics* against the rituals and practices of
«the Canaanite(s)» and other ‹pre-Israelite› peoples.

5. «Canaanite» religious practices?

We have found anti-Canaanite religious polemic in Exod. 34:12ff., Deut.
12, and Lev. 18. This is not the place to undertake a detailed historical
study of all the rituals and practices mentioned in these texts. A refe-
rence to Ez. 16 might suffice to underline that the polemic against the
so-called ‹pre-Israelite› «abominations» is first and foremost a witness to
an inner-Judahite religious conflict which may have started in the later
7th cent. but certainly lasted throughout the Persian period. This process
witnessed the gradual development of a rhetoric of exclusion which
projected an actual inner-Judean conflict onto a historiographical screen
which mirrored the conflict in terms of a ‹pre-historical› antagonism
between «Israel» and «Canaan».[41]

I would not dare to maintain that all the «abominations» were in fact
current practice among 7th–5th-cent. inhabitants of Judah. We should
probably distinguish between the mostly sexual taboos listed in Lev. 18,
the cultic regulations of Exod. 34 and Deut. 12 and the prohibition of
marriage with ‹pre-Israelites› in Deut. 7:3ff. According to current histori-

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[41] Cf. M. WEIPPERT, Synkretismus und Monotheismus. Religionsinterne Konflikt-
bewältigung im alten Israel, in: J. ASSMANN/D. HARTH (eds.), Kultur und Konflikt
(edition suhrkamp 1612), Frankfurt am Main 1990, 143–179; O. KEEL/M. DIETRICH/
O. LORETZ, Der zu hohe Preis der Identität oder von den schmerzlichen Beziehungen
zwischen Christentum, Judentum und kanaanäischer Religion, in: Ugarit. Ein ostmedi-
terranes Kulturzentrum im Alten Orient. Ergebnisse und Perspektiven der Forschung.
Bd. I: Ugarit und seine altorientalische Umwelt, Münster 1995, 95–113.

cal evidence and general anthropological considerations, most of the pratices prohibited in Lev. 18 must have been as exceptional in Egyptian as in Palestinian culture and equally exceptional in Judah. The reference to Egyptians and ‹pre-Israelite› inhabitants of Canaan simply serves to reinforce a list of traditional taboos. In contrast, most *cultic* practices mentioned in Exod. 34 and Deut. 12 were *traditional* cultic behaviour followed from centuries ago all over the Levant. From a historical point of view, they are neither specifically «Canaanite» nor specifically ‹un-Israelite› but simply traditional Syro-Palestinian practices. To declare them «Canaanite», ‹pre-Israelite› or characteristic of the non-Israelite «inhabitant of the land» (Exod. 34:12, 15) is a rhetorical device of Judean historiographers and propagandists whose aim was to legitimate their own, particular socio-religious program.

What program? The claim of ‹post-exilic› returnees from Babylon for the land of Judah (*Yehud*) under the exclusive lead of the Jerusalem temple administration, and their claim for the inheritance of «Israel». *This* is most probably the historical constellation which generated the matrix of biblical anti-Canaanite cultural and religious polemic.[42]

6. ‹Post-exilic restoration› in Judah

Many details of the complex history of the return of Judahite exiles from Babylonia to Judah during the Persian period remain to be elucidated. The general outline of the process is however clearly discernible from the biblical texts, which for *this* period contain most relevant source material: The Babylonian destructions and successive exiles of 598, 587 and 582 BCE had impoverished but never emptied the land of Judah.[43] When descendants of the exiles returned to Jerusalem in several movements from the late 6th until the end of the 5th-cent. BCE under the protectorship of the Achaemenid kings, most of them had no personal acquaintance with the land and its customs but a rather clear religious identity shaped in the Babylonian diaspora which entitled them to a claim for leadership in Jerusalem or, at least, for the right to settle freely

[42] This had already been noted by J. VAN SETERS, The Terms «Amorite» and «Hittite» in the Old Testament: *VT* 22 (1972) 64–81, esp. 68; see now BEN ZVI, Inclusion (n. 3).

[43] See now H.M. BARSTAD, The Myth of the Empty Land. A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the «Exilic» Period (Symbolae Osloenses, fasc. suppl. 28), Oslo 1996; L.L. GRABBE (ed.), Leading Captivity Captive. ‹The Exile› as History and Ideology (ESHM 2; *JSOT*. S 278), Sheffield 1998. On the settlement history during the 6th cent. BCE, see now O. LIPSCHITS, The History of the Benjamite Region under Babylonian Rule: *Tel Aviv* 26 (1999) 155–190.

in Judaean territory. After a para-monarchical experiment under Zeruba-
bel towards the end of the 6th cent. BCE[44], Jerusalem witnessed to the
rise and establishment of a new polity which scholars have come to term
a «citizen-temple community» by analogy with other, comparable polities
of the time.[45] The protagonists of this ‹community› found themselves
confronted with competing claims (descendants of «Israel» in the nor-
thern part of the country, particularly in Samaria, inhabitants of Judah
and Jerusalem whose forefathers had never left the country). Against
these indigenous who had not gone the way of exile the returnees clai-
med to be the real inheritants of the divine promises to «Israel» (cf. Ez.
11:14ff., Jer. 24). They also had to overcome considerable economical
difficulties with their project of ‹restoring› Jerusalem and its temple (cf.
the books of Haggai and Ezra), not least against the Phoenician com-
mercial interests meanwhile netted over the country, but also against in-
digenous people less enthusiastic or openly hostile to the centralizing
‹restoration› project. It was thus felt necessary to focus all the energies
upon what was designed to be the religious and economical center of the
new polity: Jerusalem and its temple.

It comes as no surprise that the god who had chosen that place to
put his name there claims himself not to have anything in common with
the gods of the country – and least with its goddesses – in the rhetoric of
Deuteronomistic historiographers and propagandists. To the protago-
nists of the new polity, the local sanctuaries they met would only distract
the members of the families related to the «citizen-temple community»
from their exclusive bounds with YHWH and the Jerusalem temple. By
consequence, these sanctuaries and cult places had – if possible – to be
destroyed, alternatively, to be avoided together with all indigenous cults,
rituals and oracular practices. It may well be that some of the respective
practices looked rather primitive and outdated to the more enlightened
‹theologians› among the returnees[46], although we may safely doubt that
the latters' call to banishment was primarily motivated by theology.

[44] See F. BIANCHI, Le rôle de Zorobabel et de la dynastie davidique en Judée du
VIe siècle au IIe siècle av. J.-C.: *Transeuphratène* 7 (1994) 153–165; A. LEMAIRE, Zoroba-
bel et la Judée à la lumière de l'épigraphie (fin du VIe s. av. J.-C.): *RB* 103 (1996) 48–57.

[45] See now C.C. CARTER, The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period. A Social
and Demographic Study (*JSOT*. S 294), Sheffield 1999, with critical comments on the
«citizen-temple-community» model (which is here retained for convenience only, since
Carter does not provide an alternative shorthand).

[46] An ever interesting feature of Deuteronomy is the simultaneous use a explicit
Exodus rhetoric as a foundation of religious exclusivism (*ad extram*) and intra-commu-
nal ‹brotherhood› solidarity (*ad intram*). The contemporary reader cannot avoid thin-
king of the Muslim brothers as an analogue.

Deut. 7 gives a most interesting combination of an incitement to put the ‹pre-Israelite› peoples to death, a prohibition of ‹covenant› and intermarriage, and an incitement to destroy ‹pre-Israelite› cultic installations. It is explicitly maintained that marrying a ‹pre-Israelite› woman or man could lead an Israelite into apostasy (of which Dtn. 13 details social consequences). It is not difficult to make sense of such an argument once we assume that in the early ‹post-exilic› period «Israelite» settlements, i. e. extended family holdings of Judaeans related to the «citizen-temple-community» were still dispersed among non-related indigenous settlements, and that the religious life in the environment of rural Judah was essentially family- and community-bound. As G. Braulik[47] has recently demonstrated on the basis of Dtn. 29–30, these regulations on *herem* and related matters were not to be taken as actual *Handlungsanweisungen* by post-exilic returnees.[48] But the regulations of Deuteronomy freed true «Israelites» from all obligations towards the local community, their sanctuaries and traditions. Moreover, since marital regulations usually pertain to inheritance rights, to guarantee by the prohibition of intermarriage that landed property would remain within the «Israelite» community meant to enhance the economical viability of its members and of the socio-political project of the Jerusalem-centered «citizen-temple comunity».

7. *Looking back from the Ezra experience*

The plausibility of this suggested background to Deuteronomistic anti-Canaanite polemic may perhaps be confirmed by a reference to a famous incident which is said to have occurred in the context of Ezra's reform. Ezra was of course another well-known returnee from Babylon. Chap. 9 of the book of Ezra opens with the statement that the returnees (lay people, priests and levites) had mixed up with the indigenous population:

> «The people of Israel, including priests and Levites, have not kept themselves apart from the foreign population and from the abominable practices of

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[47] G. BRAULIK, Die Völkervernichtung und die Rückkehr Israels ins Verheissungsland. Hermeneutische Bemerkungen zum Buch Deuteronomium, in: VERVENNE/ LUST, op. cit. (n. 27), 3–38.

[48] «In den allermeisten Fällen sind die Gebote bzw. Aussagen über eine Vernichtung der Landesbewohner ausdrücklich auf die Landeroberungszeit unter Mose bzw. Josua fixiert. Sie gelten nur für diese Periode und gehören für die eigentlichen Leser zur erzählten und erinnerten Urzeit" (ibid. 13f.). The problem remains that the «*eigentlichen* Leser» are not the only, and no more the actual readers of the texts (cf. Part I, n. 64). According to W. HORBURY, Extirpation and Excommunication: *VT* 35 (1985) 19–38, the biblical *herem* could be re-interpreted in terms of expulsion and confiscation of property in late Second Temple times.

the Canaanite(s), the Hittite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Jebusite(s), *the Ammonite(s), the Moabite(s), the Egyptian(s)*, and the Amorite(s). They have taken women of these nations as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed has become mixed with the foreign population; and the leaders and magistrates have been the chief offenders» (Ezra 9:1f.).

Ezra reacts with ritual penitence, and his prayer repeats the already well-known prohibition:

«We have neglected the commands which thou gavest through thy servants the prophets[49], when thou saidst: ‹The land which you are entering and will possess is a polluted land, polluted by the foreign population with their abominable practices, which have made it unclean from end to end. Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons, and do not marry your sons to their daughters, and never seek their welfare or prosperity. Thus you will be strong and enjoy the good things of the land, and pass it on to your children as an everlasting possession'» (Ezra 9:11–12).

The argument is limpid: Either the pollution remains, in which case Israel would again lose the land; or the polluting arrangements are canceled in the interest of keeping the «rest of Israel» alive in the country. Ezra is joined by a very great crowd, and hope arises from a renewal of the covenant with YHWH and the sending away of all the ‹foreign› women together with their children.

Deut. 7 in all probability predates Ezra 9–10 and may be considered as the latter text's ideological starting point. The cultical-biological term «holy seed» is as unknown to Deuteronomy as Ezra's (more Priestly) pollution ideology. Interestingly, the Ezra list mixes peoples known from the past with peoples of the present (the Ammonites, Moabites and Egyptians). Among the peoples living in Palestine at that time, one would expect the Idumaeans/Edomites and the Philistines to be equally mentioned. Since this is not the case, we may have to conclude that the peoples of the (imagined) past were still considered to be present, so that the Philistines might be included among the Canaanites and the Edomites among the Hittites. At the same time, it is clear from the context that Israel's earlier laxist attitude towards the peoples of the past is thought of as a model not to imitate (a storical anti-paradigm).

The parallel story of Neh. 9–10 shows rather clearly that the reasons for the Judean «citizen-temple community» to dissociate itself from the indigenous population were economical and perhaps political as well as

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[49] The reference is to Lev. 18:24 and Deut. 7:1–4, 11:8f., 23:4–7 and considers Moses as the first of the (dtr) prophets, but see also Deut. 36:17ff.

religious or ideological.[50] Given the claim of the new polity, the antago-
nism was almost inevitable. While the practical implementation of disso-
ciating measures served the needs of the new polity's structural consoli-
dation, the ideology of essential otherness and separation contributed to
shape post-exilic «Israel»'s collective identity. We now may conclude that
the fictitious historiographical concept of «the Canaanite(s)» and other
‹pre-Israelite› peoples was one of the most important pieces serving this
clear-cut self-definition of post-exilic «Israel».[51]

VI. Conclusions

As historians, Bible scholars or theologians, it is not our duty either to
condemn or to legitimate the past – nor, of course, to use the past for
legitimating the present –, but to understand or rather to interpret it with
the ultimate aim of contributing to the ‹humanization› of the present and
the future. It is hoped that studies such as the above might contribute,
be it only a little, to that aim. I shall therefore conclude by stating a few
implications of this paper's argument for the questions and problems
outlined in the introduction.

It should have become clear that new approaches to the history of
ancient Palestine are urgently needed. Too obviously, the biblical master
story has had its time for shaping the essence of that history but should
today be considered first and foremost for what it essentially is, namely a
historiographic construct of the Persian period. As such, we certainly
deal with a most valuable and indispensable source for understanding the
formation of nascent Judaism but should not expect any longer – unless
tight argument would prove otherwise for one or another particular
textual segment – that this source might tell us much about early Ist-
millennium, let alone IInd-millennium BCE Palestine.

As we have seen, scholars have long considered the history of late
IInd-millennium and Ist-millennium BCE Palestine as a dominion of the
biblical master story. One may reasonably affirm that by doing so they
have to a considerable extent *invented* ‹Ancient Israel› along the master

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[50] «If Yehud was as small and as poor as the archaeological data suggest, and if
members of the *gôlāh* community found themselves in some cases residing within other
provinces of the Persian empire, then the need for both ritual purity and ethnic boun-
daries became all the more imperative. The texts of the Priestly source/editor, the
Holiness code, and Ezra–Nehemiah reflect a reality of survival by self-definition"
(CARTER, op. cit. [n. 45], 315).

[51] On this issue, see BEN ZVI, op. cit. (n. 3).

story's scenario.[52] Once this is recognized, one further step could be to maintain – as has been done recently by K. Whitelam[53] – that the ‹invention of Ancient Israel› during a century of scholarship has led to a partial *silencing of the Palestinian past*. To recognize the biblicist bias of much of 20th-century historiography on ‹Ancient Israel› and related archaeological research does not mean that one should have to subscribe to all of Whitelam's claims regarding the political contexts and implications of that scholarship. It is enough honesty just to admit that contemporary historical research needs a thorough re-orientation, both in method and scope.

With the rise of a Palestinian national entity and the subsequent establishment of a Palestinian state, no doubt we shall observe among other things the elaboration of various alternative histories of the region. One may expect and fear the offshoot of counter-histories which will simply exchange one nationalist ideology for another. As a matter of fact, such counter-histories have already a long existence in the country, although rarely in written form or, if published in Arabic, inaccessible for most Western scholars. Today the claim for a counter-history and «archaeology without the Bible»[54] is raised with growing emphasis. This should not be confused with the naïve claim of less-inspired Palestinian nationalists who would deduce their nation's right to live in the land from a putative priority of Philistine settlement in the area, an argument which cannot, of course, be of any weight either in the historical or in the political debate. Inverting names will definitely not change the game.

From the somewhat detached point of view of a scholar, it goes without saying that the alternative history we should look for is *not* simply a, say, Philistine-centered version of the story. Writing a history of the Philistine city-states of the southern coastal plain would certainly be a very worthwile undertaking, all the more since recent archaeological and historical research has considerably added to our knowledge of this particular history.[55] But as long as we do not think through the funda-

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[52] For a thorough critique of this approach, see P.R. DAVIES, In Search of ‹Ancient Israel› (*JSOT*. S 148), Sheffield 1992.

[53] Cf. Part I, n. 7, 20, 23.

[54] Muhammad al-Assad, Palestinian historian, reported by J. CROITORU in *NZZ*, 29 May, 1996 (no. 122, p. 45). Note A. GLOCK, Archaeology as Cultural Survival: The Future of the Palestinian Past: *Journal of Palestine Studies* 23 (1994) 70–84.

[55] T. and M. DOTHAN, People of the Sea. The Search for the Philistines, New York 1992. The title of this synthesis takes over an Egyptian term used for a coalition of various invading groups, including the Philistines. It stresses the foreign origins of the Philistines although the book not only deals with origins but largely with the Philistines' later history in the southern coastal plain of Palestine. The problem is not dis-

mental methodological issues at stake, a Philistine history alongside the traditional model will result not so much in a different history, but simply in another version of the ever-known master story. *If a «Philistine history»* be written in our days[56], it should at the same time participate in the new historiographical re-orientation[57] such as is beginning to take shape with the recent publication of monographs on, e. g., Edomite[58], Moabite[59], Ammonite[60] and early Arab history.[61]

What remains to be called for is an integrated *regional history* of a broad scope[62], which would take into account Palestine as a whole, albeit generally fragmented and rarely unified, and eventually consider the land itself as a the subject of history in the terms of Fernand Braudel's *longue durée*.[63] Such a shift would lead us from an essentially nationalist, since nation-oriented, model to a truly alternative, eco-geographical paradigm of history-writing. To be sure, such a history of Palestine will never be written without the Bible, but it will put the Bible in its proper context and perspective.

similar to that of Israelite origins and history: the Philistines, too, would merit to be considered more than just foreign invaders, since the bulk of the Philistine population was probably as indigenous in Palestine as the Israelite and Judaean peoples, too. Cf. the studies by BUNIMOVITZ and STONE mentioned in Part I, n. 43.

[56] See most recently C. S. EHRLICH, The Philistines in transition: a history from ca. 1000–730 BCE (SHCANE 10), Leiden 1997.

[57] I. FINKELSTEIN, The Date of the Settlement of the Philistines in Canaan: *Tel Aviv* 22 (1995) 213–239.

[58] P. BIENKOWSKI (ed.), Early Edom and Moab. The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan (Sheffield Archaeological Monographs 7), Sheffield 1992; D.V. EDELMAN, You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He ist Your Brother (Archaeology and Biblical Studies 3), Atlanta GA 1995.

[59] S. TIMM, Moab zwischen den Mächten. Studien zu historischen Denkmälern und Texten (ÄAT 17), Wiesbaden 1989; A. DEARMAN, Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab (Archaeology and Biblical Studies 2), Atlanta GA 1992.

[60] U. HÜBNER, Die Ammoniter. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Religion eines transjordanischen Volkes im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr. (ADPV 16), Wiesbaden 1992; B. MACDONALD/R.W. YOUNKER (eds.), Ancient Ammon (SHCANE 17), Leiden 1999.

[61] E.A. KNAUF, Ismael. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Palästinas und Nordarabiens im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr., Wiesbaden ²1989; U. HÜBNER, Frühe Araber im vorhellenistischen Palästina: *Christiana Albertina* 43 (1996) 5–17.

[62] To some extent, such a history may be discerned in H. WEIPPERT's monumental handbook on the archaeology of the region: Palästina in vorhellenistischer Zeit (Handbuch der Archäologie), München 1988.

[63] F. BRAUDEL, La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II, Paris 1949, ⁹1990.

For the present, there still remains the more immediate task, to de-construct and oppose ideologies which claim all the land for one nation alone. Exegetes and theologians, whose job it is to investigate and ex-plain the meaning of biblical texts to present-day believers and skeptics alike, have a moral duty to re-contextualize the biblical portrait of the purported ‹pre-Israelite› peoples and to make clear its fundamentally a-historical and ideological nature.[64] One may wish that the re-contextu-alization of the biblical master story might contribute to a better un-derstanding of the region's historical past and further the conviction that today's problems and antagonisms are *not* the ones fixed up in biblical stereotypes.

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[64] Cf. A. DE PURY, L'argumentaire biblique des annexionistes israéliens: que ré-pondre?: *Revue d'études palestiniennes* n.s. 21 (73) (1999) 32–45.