

CHRISTOPH UEHLINGER

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

(Part I)*

I. Introduction

1. *Historiography at a turning point?*

Both Jews and Christians have a long tradition of perceiving the history of the Holy Land during the later IInd and the Ist millennium BCE essentially along the lines of the biblical text, taking the latter as *one* text (or *one story*) in spite of its numerous contradictions and composite nature. Ever since the Hellenistic period, and particularly in the Western (i.e. European) tradition, the biblical books from Genesis to Kings supplemented by Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah and Maccabees have been read as so-called «historical books». Epitomized by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus through his monumental *Jewish Antiquities*, which were written in Rome for imperial consumption towards the end of the 1st cent. CE, the historicist approach to the Bible, and particularly to its historiographical parts, attained its fullest impact with the development of modern European historical criticism.

* This article is based upon a paper presented at an international symposium on «Theology in the Palestinian Context», held in Bethlehem on October 1–7, 1995. Its publication has since been delayed for a number of reasons beyond my control. An earlier draft was offered in 1997 as a contribution to an informal Festschrift for Manfred Weippert on his 60th birthday. I am grateful to the editors of the *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* for the opportunity to publish it now in a slightly revised and updated version. – I am grateful to a number of friends and colleagues for having commented on early drafts, especially Klaus Bieberstein, Christian Frevel, Ulrich Hübner, Othmar Keel, Ernst Axel Knauf, Adrian Schenker, Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli. Thanks are also due to Benedict T. Viviano who checked and improved my English. None of them should of course be held responsible for opinions expressed in the article.

However, the adventure of historical criticism in the wake of the European enlightenment also led scholars to raise occasional doubts about the Bible's historical trustfulness. The development of a so-called historical-critical methodology allowed biblical scholars to differentiate among earlier and later layers of tradition in the biblical record. Internal tensions and contradictions among different textual traditions relating to one historical process or period¹ as well as a growing corpus of so-called external evidence produced by archaeological excavations, which sometimes was in clear contradiction to the biblical text², has given way in our cent. to a stream of increasingly subtle scholarship concerned with the task of re-writing the «History of Israel». Still, much of this scholarship amounts to adapting the biblical story to new findings and interpretative models, and thus remains heavily Bible-centered until the present. One reason for this state of affairs is the fact that most authors are trained in biblical exegesis, divinity or theology but neither in historical methodology nor in archaeology. Another reason is the fact that Biblical studies, history and archaeology have long evolved side by side, being practised by the same people claiming – for good or for bad – equal competence in all three fields. A third reason may be that not only biblical scholars, but archaeologists and professional historians alike, usually consider *texts* to form the backbone of any attempt to history writing. When historians talk about sources, they most often consider texts. However, since the archaeology of Palestine has never produced a corpus of historiographically relevant texts (e.g., display inscriptions, annals or chronicles)³ that could be compared to that of the greater

¹ E.g., the arrival of the Patriarchs is described as an essentially peaceful settlement in Canaan; the book of Joshua presents the Israelites' arrival in the Land of Canaan in terms of military conquest; while the book of Judges shows co-existence of tribal Israelites with urban Canaanites. The apparent contradiction between the three models is solved by the biblical redactors by organizing the three models in terms of successive historical periods.

² As in the well-known case of Jericho and 'Ai/et-Tell where no walled settlement existed at the time of Joshua's presumed conquest.

³ Display and building inscriptions by local rulers from Iron age Palestine are attested but rare. Major finds include the Moabite inscription of king Mesha, from Dhiban (mid-9th cent. BCE), fragments of an Aramaic inscription from Tel Dan, probably of king Hazael (second half of 9th cent. BCE), and a short Philistine building inscription from Ekron of king Akish/Ikausu (first half of 7th cent. BCE). Except the Siloam tunnel inscription from Jerusalem which misses a royal referent (c. 700 BCE or slightly later), only fragments are known of Israelite and Judahite

centers of Mesopotamia or Egypt, and since the Mesopotamian and Egyptian textual sources, while containing quite numerous references to ancient Palestine/Israel, remain mute or at best anecdotal with regard to late IIInd-early Ist-millennium Palestine, the Bible has continued to provide the master story, upon which even critical historians and archaeologists heavily rely when writing about the history of that period. As a result, we have today an impressive collection of textbooks⁴ which all claim to expound the «History of Israel»⁵ but read like rationalized paraphrases of the Bible's putatively (historical books). This phenomenon has been aptly termed «sub-deuteronomistic historiography» by Manfred Weippert, a leading authority in the field.⁶

The most radical recent contribution to this debate contends that the «invention of Ancient Israel» by biblical historiography ancient and modern has led to a reciprocal «silencing of Palestinian history».⁷ This

inscriptions from state monuments: cf. J. RENZ/W. RÖLLIG, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik*. Bd. II/1, Darmstadt 1995, 3.

⁴ To name but a few which have been more influential, the works of William F. Albright, John Bright, Roland de Vaux, Henri Cazelles, Benjamin Mazar, besides the German tradition best represented by Albrecht Alt, Martin Noth, Siegfried Herrmann, Manfred Metzger and Herbert Donner. Albright, Noth and de Vaux (the founding fathers, so to speak) dealt extensively with matters of methodology and certainly diverged on numerous issues. Two generations later, they look much closer to one another than their students could have imagined at the time.

⁵ The term itself is misleading. More recent works tend to prefer the title «History of ancient Israel and Judah» which comes closer to the topic. In fact, they try to cover the history of ancient Palestine (or southern Levant, as a regional term). This is acknowledged in G.W. AHLSTRÖM'S *History of Ancient Palestine from the Palaeolithic Period to Alexander's Conquest* (JSOTS 146), Sheffield 1993.

⁶ M. WEIPPERT, *Geschichte Israels am Wendepunkt: ThRu* 58 (1993) 71–103, esp. 73), but see already M. LIVERANI, *Memorandum on the Approach to Historiographic Texts: Or. n.s.* 42 (1973) 178–194 and the article mentioned below, n. 19.

⁷ K.W. WHITELAM, *The Invention of Ancient Israel – the Silencing of Palestinian History*, London 1996. According to Whitelam, not only has research on the history of ancient Palestine been the hostage of biblical studies throughout our cent., but as it evolved along the contemporary realities of the Zionist settlement, the creation of the State of Israel and the parallel elaboration of its quasi-mythological foundations in (biblical history), the «History of Israel» invented by the scholars according to their own present constantly mirrored 20th-cent. politics. Whitelam's book obviously has its own contextual agenda. See most recently *id.*, *The Search for Early Israel: Historical Perspective*, in: Sh. AHITUV/E.D. OREN (eds.), *The Origin of Early Israel – Current Debate. Biblical, Historical and Archaeological Perspectives* (Beer-Sheva 12), Beersheva & London 1998, 41–64.

general thesis is right insofar as the origins and history of Israel have largely dominated the agenda of research on ancient Palestine/Israel. On the other hand, it too easily dismisses decades of study, not least by distinguished Israeli scholars, on the general history and archaeology of the region, including the history of the Philistines and pre-Islamic Arabs in Palestine.

It may be that a shift in paradigm is presently underway. The last two decades have seen the rise of what Marc Z. Brettler has termed a «New Biblical Historiography»⁸. At the same time, more and more scholars engaged in research on the history of late-IIInd- to Ist-millennium Palestine argue for the adoption of a new historiographical methodology *tout court* which could help them leave the Procrustean bed of the Bible's master story.⁹ Their new historiography should be foremost based on the findings of archaeology (i.e. material culture, texts and iconography). These «primary sources» may be considered to contain a more immediate record of the past than the corpus of biblical texts which has demonstrably grown over many centuries and displays a picture of «Israel»'s past that is largely conditioned by a particular religious and political ideology and out of a considerable distance of time.

The change in paradigm will offer a necessary and welcome opportunity to look at the history of ancient Palestine (including the history of Israel and Judah) in a novel way. Still, one should not ignore one major difficulty of such an approach: As a matter of fact, archaeology is not *per se* a more objective undertaking than conventional history writing, and its agenda has often been defined by imperialist and nationalist ideologies.¹⁰ In Palestine/Israel, archaeology has

⁸ The term is M.Z. BRETTLER'S, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, London 1995, esp. 2–7. One should restrict its use to studies specifically concerned with *biblical* historiography as displayed in the so-called (historical books) of the Bible, i.e. their literary characteristics, ideological outlook and socio-historical setting.

⁹ E.A. KNAUF, *From History to Interpretation*, in: D. Edelman (ed.), *The Fabric of History. Text, Artifact and Israel's Past* (JSOTS 127), Sheffield 1991, 26–64 is essential reading for matters of methodology.

¹⁰ For a general framework, see B. TRIGGER, *Alternative archaeologies: nationalist, colonialist, imperialist: Man* 19 (1984) 355–370. The Middle Eastern issue is exposed in detail by N.A. SILBERMAN, *Between Past and Present. Archaeology, Ideology, and Nationalism in the Modern Middle East*, New York 1989; more recently see also *id.*/D. SMALL (eds.), *The Archaeology of Israel. Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present* (JSOTS 237), Sheffield 1997; L. MESKELL

long served the interest first of the Zionist returnees', then of the new state's claim for the land. To uncover the stones of «Israel's past» was to spread the roots of the modern state of Israel.¹¹ Consequently, the «new historiography» based upon archaeology will be new only insofar as it implies the prior option for a non-nationalist (regional) perspective. Such an inclusive archaeology is clearly nascent today together with new political developments, and it is probably already aimed at in most Middle Eastern archaeology departments. However, much more cooperation of, e.g., Israeli and Palestinian institutions and individuals is still needed, and many Palestinian citizens will need to take their time before considering archaeology as something else than an instrument of occupation and expropriation.

To come back to the biblical text, it is undisputable that its very inception and tradition represents a major cultural and religious achievement in the history of ancient Palestine (particularly, Judah). However, this text needs to be displaced and re-located (i.e. put at its right place) with regard to ancient history and both ancient and modern historiography. This is not an easy matter in scholarly discussion, and it may be even more difficult for the general public. The Bible will long represent a basic myth, a master story and essential guideline for scholars and non-scholars alike, be they Israelis, Palestinians

(ed.), *Archeology Under Fire. Nationalism, politics and heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*, London-New York 1998.

¹¹ N.A. SILBERMAN, *Power, Politics and the Past: The Social Construction of Antiquity in the Holy Land*, in: T.E. Levy (ed.), *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, London 1995, 9–23 sketches the shift from imperial to nationalist interests. On the latter, see further M. BROSHI, *Religion, Ideology, and Politics and their Impact on Palestinian Archaeology: The Israel Museum Journal* 7 (1987) 17–32; Y. SHAVIT, «Truth Shall Spring Out of the Earth»: The Development of Jewish Popular Interest in Archaeology of Eretz-Israel: *Cathedra* 44 (1987) 27–54; A. KEMPINSKI, *Die Archäologie als bestimmender Faktor in der israelischen Gesellschaft und Kultur: Judaica* 45 (1989) 2–20; N.A. SILBERMAN, *The Politics of the Past: Archaeology and Nationalism in the Eastern Mediterranean: Mediterranean Quarterly* 1 (1990) 99–110; ID., *Desolation and Restoration: The Impact of a Biblical Concept on Near Eastern Archaeology: BA* 54 (1991) 76–86; A. ELON, *Politics and Archaeology*, in: SILBERMAN/SMALL (n. 10), 34–47; Y. SHAVIT, *Archaeology, Political Culture, and Culture in Israel*, in: *ibid.*, 48–61. It would be unfair to consider Israeli archaeology exclusively as an instrument of Jewish nationalism. The silencing of (non-Israelite) Palestinian past is above all a product of Western Christian theologians.

or citizens of another state, Jews, Christians, Muslims or agnostics, when they re-imagine and re-write the history of ancient Palestine.¹²

For people aiming at a Christian theological reflection in the Palestinian context or reflection about this context from a Western perspective, it is all the more important to consider their habits in reading and practising history since they are related in a very particular way to the foundational myth of the Bible's so-called «historical books». Talking about the history of ancient Palestine, they will always have to deal at the same time with the «history of Israel»: the latter is not only an integral part of the history of Palestine but also an essential part of their religious heritage and thus identity.¹³

2. *The problem: an antagonism of the past re-enacted in the present?*

The following remarks will concentrate upon two related issues in the history of ancient Palestine: the way the antagonistic relationship of «Canaanites» and «Israelites» is considered in the Bible, and the way we may today look at and possibly deconstruct the biblical portrait of this relationship.

Many of our contemporaries are deeply marked by the biblical tradition which defines Israel's relationship to the «promised land» roughly in the following terms:

- a. Israel's ancestors (Abraham, the immigration or conquest generation) are not indigenous to the land which they settle, but come from outside (Ur in Babylonia, Egypt). This «memory» of *external origins* will always be upheld.¹⁴
- b. In contrast to their large practical ignorance with regard to the land to be settled, the «children of Israel» of the conquest generation arrive at the land's borders with a clearly defined *religious knowledge*: They know that they (or their fathers) have been called by YHWH, who is the only God whom

¹² Cf. A. DE PURY, *Landesbesiedlung und Landanspruch im Gelobten Land. Historische Erwägungen zu einem territorialen Konflikt der Gegenwart: Zeitschrift für Mission* 8 (1982) 18–30; F. SMYTH-FLORENTIN, *Les mythes illégitimes. Essai sur la «terre promise»* (Entrée libre, 30), Genève 1993.

¹³ See N. LOHFINK, *Landerobring und Heimkehr. Hermeneutisches zum heutigen Umgang mit dem Josuabuch: JBTb* 12 (1998) 3–24.

¹⁴ The generations of the return to Zion after the exile equally come from outside, leaving behind Babylonia in order to initiate a new existence in a land they claim to be their fathers' without having lived there themselves. Whatever they could know of this land was part of their religious tradition, not practical experience. That there is an obvious analogy between these returnees and the patriarchal model should become clear as we move along this paper. For the meantime, we shall be concerned only with the model, i.e. Israel's early ancestors and pre-history.

they should adore; they know that He is prepared to give them the land under the strict condition that they shall not adore the land's «other gods» nor follow the manners and customs of the land's inhabitants.

c. The story of the settlement, of the rise of an Israelite state, of two co-existing monarchies until the sack of Jerusalem will give a number of examples of religious apostasy leading to divine abandonment or punishment, which reinforce the doctrine already taught to the Exodus generation not to follow the rites and rules of the land's original inhabitants.

For convenience and in accordance with numerous biblical texts (see below), let us call this land the «*land of Canaan*» and its inhabitants the «*Canaanites*» (although we shall question the historical significance of such terminology below). As a starting point to our discussion we may state that the contrast of Israel and Canaan, of Israelites and Canaanites, of the one true God of Israel and the many false «other gods» (including goddesses and idols) of Canaan seems to be a concept of fundamental importance for the Bible's putatively «historical books».

There is no need to underline the fact that this dichotomy which opposes two groups of people claiming the same land and apparently representing two opposed cultures, distinct religious symbol systems and eventually two contradictory concepts of the divine has exerted and continues to exert a very strong influence on the modern and contemporary relationship between Israelis and Palestinians. To many people among the public, the biblical antagonism even seems to be at the very root of the modern antagonism. It has undoubtedly contributed to shape Israeli-Palestinian relations and mutual perceptions since 1948¹⁵ even if we should assume that the model's impact took new forms according to changing political constellations. Moreover, as the biblical antagonism defines a powerful mythical paradigm, it functions as a cultural and political *matrix* which continues to shape continuing antagonisms, their perception, interpretation and practical behaviour until today.¹⁶

¹⁵ To mention but one example, Kempinski refers to the war of 1947/48 as «*Erlebnis der Landnahme*» (op. cit. [n. 11], 6). According to Kempinski, the parallelism was stressed by David Ben Gurion himself (ibid., 11).

¹⁶ In the immediate context of our symposium, we could not avoid thinking of the so-called bypass highways then under construction as a result of the Oslo II agreements. While security reasons are the obvious and explicit motivations of such constructions, they are themselves related to prior identity concepts.

3. How to proceed?

How then should Christians or Jews, who are both inevitably linked to the foundational testimony of Scripture, relate to this biblical antagonism? The following remarks are by no means intended to give a definite answer to this very complicated issue. On the contrary, their scope remains much more limited because of the very epistemological basis of my argument: presuppositions rooted in the European enlightenment tradition of historical-critical exegesis, and as such closely related to a very specific intellectual and socio-cultural context. I shall address problems which would not even arise if we were to read the Bible either in an a-historical or in a historicist way (a-historical being a flat and purely synchronic reading ignoring the historical contexts which gave rise to the biblical texts; historicist being a more or less fundamentalist reading which assumes *a priori* that events related in the Bible actually happened in exactly the way they are described).

While I cannot address the latter problem of fundamentalist historicism in the limits of this paper, I readily admit that I consider an a-historical (or canonical) reading of the biblical text, as not only possible but wholly legitimate – as long as it does not consider the texts uncritically as providing re-enactable models –, all the more since such a reading is *de facto* practised by millions of faithful Jews and by the great majority of, particularly non-European Churches and Christians all over the world. It would be pure culturo-centric arrogance to consider a European historical-critical approach to the biblical texts as essentially superior to an a-historical, canonical reading. I shall myself devote a section of this paper to a synchronic overview in order to highlight the story's modeling power. However, in the context of a conflict where present-day claims are often explicitly linked to the past, to biblical claims, rights and promises, and with our specific topic in mind, it seems useful and necessary for us to go the way of historical analysis unless we deliberately choose to confine ourselves to stubborn exchanges of imagination and pure ideology. Historical reasoning may help to bring the texts at a certain distance from where to get a more dispassionate perception.

For the sake of convenience and clear terminology, I shall henceforth distinguish between *Story* (i.e. the biblical narrative, particularly texts from the so-called «historical books»¹⁷), and *History* (i.e. the con-

¹⁷ Even if considerable parts of the above-mentioned biblical books aim at real historiography within the cultural and material constraints of their own spe-

trolled representation or reconstruction of ancient realities factual, material and/or mental such as we may understand them through critical analysis of sources and documentary evidence). My paper will proceed in the following way: After an overview of some earlier attempts to deal with «Canaanites» and «Israelites» (sect. 2), I shall summarize the portrait of Canaan and Canaanites as it appears to a synchronic, cursory and canonical reading of the biblical account on Israelite origins (sect. 3: the Story). I shall then consider what we know today about Canaan and its inhabitants from the point of view of history, i.e. mainly according to extra-biblical historical sources presently available (sect. 4). From this it should become clear that there is no way of reconciling Story and History on the factual level, except by admitting that the Story seems to be largely *fictitious* and marked by *stereotypes* which do not conserve actual memory regarding «pre-Israelite» populations of late-IIInd- and early-Ist-millennium BCE (or Late Bronze to early Iron age) Palestine.

Once it is demonstrated that the biblical portrait does not match late-IIInd- and early-Ist-millennium BCE realities, we are faced with a new historical problem, namely how to understand the Story, not as an immediate window to factual history, but rather as a mirror of *another history* and as an object of historical inquiry itself: Why, at what time and under what circumstances was the Story so conceived, and what may thus be said about the Story's place in History (sect. 5)? I shall conclude with a few observations on the use and implications of historical-critical analysis for a new look at the history of ancient Palestine, which should also be relevant for a Christian theology in the Palestinian context.

II. *Canaanites and Israelites: their antagonism in earlier studies on Israelite origins, society, culture and religion*

The understanding of Canaanite-Israelite relations in history is closely related to the discussion of Israelite origins in general, an area of research that has witnessed tremendous debate since the middle of this cent. An outside observer of this intense and sometimes heated debate could assume Israelite origins to be the most important if not

cific historical context, the term «historical books» is misleading because of its different modern use. One would better name them «*storical books*», which would account for the essentially narrative character of biblical historiography and remind us of the difference between Story and History.

the only really problematical issue of the history of ancient Israel. From an insider's point of view, this is not necessarily the case, since many other questions and rather more important problems regarding the history of Israel and Judah spanning the entire Ist millennium BCE remain without a satisfactory answer. Even if we had very precise ideas about Israelite origins, these would be of almost no use for answering most questions and problems concerning later periods.¹⁸ Why then did scholarly discussion of the «history of Israel» concentrate so much on the problem of origins during the second half of the 20th century?¹⁹

Among several reasons, let us point out the following: First, origins always have a special appeal of their own. Second, they are often considered normative, an opinion incidentally shared by numerous biblical texts and otherwise critical historians.²⁰ Third, since according to the biblical presentation Israel's history does not go back to times immemorial but starts either with Abraham (in terms of calling and promise) or with the Exodus (in terms of a *people's* history), the Bible itself puts the question of Israel's origins on the historian's agenda. Fourth, the rise of a new political and national reality called «Israel» in 20th-century Palestine – a reality implanted by immigrant settlers and late-colonial powers – have generated a particular interest in Israelite origins unparalleled in earlier centuries. For the Jewish state, it was necessary to gain a clear vision of its ancient roots in the newly-

¹⁸ The time has gone when it was possible to define ancient Israel's spiritual particularities *ab origine* and then consider them at work throughout the movements of Ist-millennium history. As a matter of fact, the procedure itself was again a reflection of the Biblical master story which has God shape Israel's identity as a people in the desert, giving him all the necessary equipment for successful life in Canaan (the law from Sinai) before even approaching the land.

¹⁹ For a dissenting Italian voice that remained almost unheard, see M. LIVERANI, *Le «origini» d'Israele: progetto irrealizzabile di ricerca etnogenetica: RivBiblIt* 28 (1980) 9–31.

²⁰ «The «first moment of true civilization», as Dhardwaker has pointed out, takes on a crucial significance in the history of any people. It is historically and historiographically the key moment which, if understood in its totality, provides the basis for understanding all subsequent history» (WHITELAM, *op. cit.* [n. 7], 234). On the level of traditional historiography this statement is a truism since most peoples and nations privilege inception and origins in their collective memory; on the level of history, however, the validity of Dhardwaker's principle is almost nil.

chosen land. The interest in the origins of old could serve the need of the modern, cosmopolitan state for national identity and cohesion.²¹

1. Israelite origins: neither conquest nor social revolution

Let us now briefly summarize a number of scholarly attempts to understand Israelite origins in general, the encounter and relationship of «Canaanite» and «Israelite» culture in particular. We shall group these attempts according to their basic assumptions: Three major models which were developed during this cent. considered Israelite origins in terms of either peaceful infiltration, belligerent invasion and military conquest, or social revolution. Each theory was based on a different sociological definition of incipient Israel.

a. The German historian *Albrecht Alt*²² considered the Israelite settlement in Canaan in terms of a sociological dichotomy between sedentary, mostly urban Canaanites and semi-nomadic, pastoral Israelite families who visited the land along the all-yearly seasonal cycle, looking for pasture for their flocks. According to Alt, it was in the course of decades and generations that these families slowly settled in highland areas. Based upon intimate acquaintance with early 20th-century Palestine and its inhabitants²³, the model of peaceful infiltration is also strongly reminiscent of the Patriarchal narratives of the book of Genesis.²⁴ While Alt did not exclude occasional clashes of early Israelites with Canaanite city-dwellers at a later stage of the settlement process, he postulated late monarchic or even exilic and post-exilic origins for most of the belligerent traditions of Judges and Joshua, a position further developed by his German colleague Martin Noth within a general theory on the so-called deuteronomistic historiography.

²¹ See bibliography cited above, n. 7 and 11.

²² *Die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina* (1925), in: *id.*, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte Israels I*, München 1953, 89–125 = *id.*, *Zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel. Eine Auswahl aus den «Kleinen Schriften»*, München 1979, 99–135 (Engl. translation in: *id.*, *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, Oxford 1966, 135–169); *id.*, *Erwägungen über die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina* (1939), in: *Kleine Schriften I*, 126–175 = *Zur Geschichte* 136–185. On Alt as a scholar, see R. SMEND, *Albrecht Alt (1883–1956): ZThK* 81 (1984) 286–321 = *id.*, *Deutsche Alttestamentler in drei Jahrhunderten*, Göttingen 1989, 182–207, 316–321.

²³ WHITELAM's critique that Alt's model was «a construction of the past, an invention of Israel, which mirrors perceptions of contemporary Palestine of the 1920s at a time of increasing Zionist immigration» (op. cit. [n. 7], 74) is not very plausible when put against a map showing the Zionist immigration's settlement pattern.

²⁴ For a thorough critique of Alt's theory on patriarchal religion, see M. KÖCKERT, *Vätergott und Väterverheißungen. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Albrecht Alt und seinen Erben (FRLANT 142)*, Göttingen 1988.

b. American scholars led by *William F. Albright*²⁵ considered the picture of invasion and conquest drawn in the books of Joshua and Judges as essentially historical, supporting their claim with so-called external evidence, mainly 13/12th-cent. BCE destruction layers documented by archaeological excavations tells situated in the coastal plain and lower hill country. Since such destruction could not be the result of pastoral-nomadic extended family groups, Albright thought of conquering Israel in terms of tribes or rather the biblical tribal confederation. His model of tribal invasion long prevailed among American scholars. It became part of a much larger, theologically motivated «Biblical Archaeology» movement which used archaeology as a way to prove the historical trustworthiness of the Bible in an often fundamentalist way.

c. Theological presuppositions were an ever-important ingredient to the debate in Europe and in the United States. However, both models had major proponents also among Israeli scholars who were less influenced by theology rather than by political creed. Most famous among the Israeli conquest proponents was the general and some time minister of defence *Yigael Yadin*, who directed the excavations of Hazor during the late 50's and early 60's. That a military and political career as Yadin's should lead him to consider the book of Joshua's description of an Israelite conquest as historically correct will not surprise anyone aware of the issue of contextuality.²⁶ Yadin used Hazor as *the* paradigm for the conquest model, interpreting the late 13th-cent. BCE destruction of the Late Bronze age city and its successor, a much smaller, village-like settlement of the 12th cent. BCE, in terms of the Israelite-Canaanite cultural antagonism.

Against Yadin and others, archaeologist *Yohanan Aharoni* favoured the historical approach of Alt, supporting its plausibility first by extensive surface exploration in Upper Galilee where he located a number of village remains which he dated to the early Iron age (12th-11th cent. BCE), second by excavations in the Beersheba valley where the simultaneous occurrence of various building traditions at one and the same place and other material re-

²⁵ On this most influential scholar, one should consult the collection of articles «Celebrating and examining W.F. Albright»: *BA* 56 (1993) 3–45 rather than hagiographies such as L. GLIDDEN RUNNING/D.N. FREEDMAN, *Albright – a Twentieth-Century genius*, New York 1975. See also G. VAN BEEK (ed.), *The scholarship of William Foxwell Albright: an appraisal*, Atlanta, GA 1989; B.O. LONG, *Historical Imaginings, Ideological Gestures: W.F. Albright and ther «Reasoning Faculties of Man»*, in: SILBERMAN/SMALL (n. 11), 82–94; *id.*, *Planting and Reaping Albright: Politics, Ideology, and Interpreting the Bible*, University Park, PA 1997.

²⁶ Kempinski (n. 11), 11–12 provides a very condensed account of the issue. N.A. SILBERMAN's biography of Yadin unfortunately was not available to me: «A Prophet From Amongst You. The Life of Yigael Yadin: Soldier, Scholar and Mythmaker of Modern Israel», New York 1993.

mains were interpreted in terms of a peaceful co-existence of various populations (Egyptians, Canaanites, Israelites, and Amalekites) during the same period.²⁷

d. In the 1960's a third model emerged again from strong theological presuppositions defined by American protestantism. «The Hebrew conquest of Palestine», as *George E. Mendenhall* termed it²⁸, was thought to be the result of a movement of peasants withdrawing from the oppressive Canaanite city states in the coastal plain to the less controlled highlands under the flag of egalitarian Yahwism. Mendenhall's model relied heavily on theological premises since it considered the covenant based upon faith in Yahweh to have been the essential motor of the process. His approach was idealistic and *per se* difficult to square with archaeological evidence.²⁹

*Norman K. Gottwald*³⁰ redesigned the theory by adding a heavy load of Marxist social analysis and technological arguments, hypothesizing that the peasants' withdrawal to the highlands had been possible only because of inventions such as the building of agricultural terraces, the creation of water-proof limed cisterns and new iron technology. The latter observation had already been made by Albright, but Gottwald brought the argument to a higher level of sociological modeling. His theory certainly fostered the quality of the debate on Israelite origins which had hitherto been all too confined to theology, burnt layer stratigraphy and isolated observations on technological data. However, Gottwald's social revolution hypothesis obviously depended on its own, very specific context. It was developed during a period of tough guerilla experiences with «people's armies» withdrawing to the countryside all over the world. The United States were then actively engaged in various countries (think first of Vietnam, later of Central America), and many of these combats had a great impact on North American political consciousness. Conversely, Gottwald's study «The tribes of Yahweh» found much response among Liberationist theologians and exegetes in Latin Ame-

²⁷ See Y. AHARONI, Nothing Early and Nothing Late: Re-Writing Israel's Conquest: *BA* 39 (1976) 55–76; his approach was still basically followed by A. KEMPINSKI, How profoundly «Canaanized» Were the Early Israelites? *ZDPV* 108 (1992) 1–7. On Aharoni, note the biographical sketch by O. KEEL in: *Judaica* 32 (1976) 70–75, 113–118.

²⁸ The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine: *BA* 25 (1962) 66–87 = *Biblical Archaeologist Reader* III (1970) 100–126; *id.*, The Tenth Generation, Baltimore 1973.

²⁹ For a polemical but well-reasoned critique of Mendenhall's model which is said to have «parachuted a Protestant paradise onto Israelite earth», see B. HALPERN, Sociological Comparativism and the Theological Imagination: The Case of the Conquest, in: Sha'arei Talmon. Studies in Honor of Sh. Talmon, Winona Lake, IN, 1992, 53–67 (cit. 65).

³⁰ The Tribes of Yahweh. A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 B.C.E., Maryknoll 1979.

rica and Asia. I do not know whether it has been used by Palestinian Christians and theologians during the Intifada.

While the social revolution hypothesis certainly helped to disclose the debate and bring it down to issues of historical, political, social, economical, ideological and religious reality, it remains highly unsatisfactory from an historian's point of view. There are various reasons for this, the most notable being the total lack of sources attesting to the postulated peasants' revolt or to any kind of egalitarianism (even domestic) in the rural societies of early Iron age Palestine.³¹ One should also be aware that in a rather particular way, Mendenhall and Gottwald actually followed the track of the conquest model and thus were inevitably caught in the same trap: Aiming at an understanding of an historical process of the 13th–11th cent. BCE, they relied too heavily on the biblical books of Joshua and Judges and adopted the latter's particular religious ideology instead of trying to put «Israel-related» phenomena into the larger context of late IInd-millennium history of the Middle East.

Clearly, «the welter of competing claims, the cacophony of methods, betrays the cumulation of the decades.»³² Given the strength of the biblical matrix outlined above and the political and intellectual context in which the conquest and social revolution models developed, one is not surprised to note that all authors perceive the issue of «Canaanite» and «Israelite» culture as one of essential difference and antagonism.

2. Israelite origins: towards a new consensus

Only in recent years has it become possible to envisage alternative models and imagine the emergence of an autochthonous Israel in late IInd- to early Ist-millennium Canaan in terms less antagonistic and less «anti-Canaanite». One may safely maintain that this latest development in scholarly discussion is again directly related to the changing political context, although we may note a certain paradox: the new archaeological perception of the Late Bronze to Iron age transition and the new historical perception of the Israelite origins in Canaan are a direct outcome of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank since 1967, which allowed dozens of archaeological excavations and intense surface exploration all over the Palestinian highlands.³³ This

³¹ See the convenient summary in: E.A. KNAUF, Die Umwelt des Alten Testaments (Neuer Stuttgarter Kommentar – Altes Testament 29), Stuttgart 1994, 68–71.

³² HALPERN (n. 29), 64.

³³ M. KOCHAVI (ed.), Judaea, Samaria and the Golan Archaeological Survey 1967–1968, Jerusalem 1972; I. FINKELSTEIN, The Archaeology of Israelite Settle-

confirms once more that context is always at work – not only in theology and history writing, but also in archaeology – although at times in more subtle or even surprising ways. Not surprisingly, thus, the most significant contribution to the new debate has been made by Israeli scholars of a new generation, among them *Israel Finkelstein* and *Nadav Na'aman*³⁴, while European and North American scholars have engaged in debates on methodology that strongly bear the stamp of their forefathers ideology, whether upheld or rejected by the sons and epigons.

Today no serious scholar maintains the idea of an Israelite conquest, let alone a 12th-cent. BCE pan-Israelite invasion into Canaan. True, there are signs of destruction and abandonment at various urban sites all over the country, but they span over more than a century and may not be generally related to military attacks and conflagrations brought about by an invading people, let alone identifiable Israelites.³⁵ The reasons for the decline of the Late Bronze age city states of Palestine are multiple and much more complicated than was imagined by the immigration, conquest or social revolution models. They are part of a historical process which extended over the whole Eastern Mediterranean. The local phenomena – destruction and abandonment, at times only slow decline of urban centers, settlement processes in fringe areas and highlands which may only partly be attributed to clans of previously pastoral or «nomadic» background, gradual cristallization of settled groups with the emergence of new centers, ultimate appearance of territorial states – should not be viewed in isolation but in relation with similar phenomena in neighbouring areas (e.g., Transjordan and Syria) and also in other periods of long-term history.³⁶

ment, Jerusalem 1988; *id.*/Z. LEDERMAN, Highlands of Many Cultures. The Southern Samaria Survey. The Sites (Tel Aviv University. Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology. Monograph no. 14), Tel Aviv 1997; A. ZERTAL, The Manasseh Hill Country Survey: The Shechem Syncline, Haifa 1992 (Hebrew); *id.*, The Manasseh Hill Country Survey: The Eastern Valleys and the Fringe of the Desert, Haifa 1996 (Hebrew).

³⁴ I. FINKELSTEIN/N. NA'AMAN (eds.), From Nomadism to Monarchy. Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel, Jerusalem & Washington, DC, 1994.

³⁵ For an overview, see H. WEIPPERT, Palästina in vorhellenistischer Zeit (Handbuch der Archäologie: Vorderasien II/1), München 1988, 352–363.

³⁶ See Sh. BUNIMOVITZ, Socio-Political Transformations in the Central Hill Country in the Late Bronze – Iron I Transition, in: FINKELSTEIN/NA'AMAN (n. 34), 179–202; I. FINKELSTEIN, The Emergence of Israel: A Phase in the Cyclic

There is nowadays a growing consensus among historians that what ultimately became ancient «Israel» grew out of Canaan and represented an *indigenous* element of the country's population of the 13th–11th centuries BCE.³⁷ When first used in an inscription of the Egyptian king Merneptah in ca. 1208/7 BCE, the term «Israel» denotes a clanlike group of people living on the fringe of the central hill country of Palestine. There is no historical evidence that *this* group named «Israel» ever came from anywhere else at an earlier period. At the same time, recent archaeological research has demonstrated that the settlement process in the fringe areas and the hill country is to be viewed as a multi-faceted historical reality with very different developments taking place in each region according to its own particular ecological, economic and demographic background. The primary agents of this development, i.e. the pastoral and rural populations involved in the settlement process, may by no means all be identified as «Israelites» on grounds of political and religious terminologies and of an ethnic (or para-ethnic) consciousness which developed much later and even then only gradually. Consequently, one should abandon the unilateral and misleading label «period of the Israelite settlement» when discussing the 13th–11th cent. BCE transitional process.³⁸ Totally outdated are the terms «Canaanite period» and «Israelite period» still used by some conservative Israeli archaeologists and museums for the Late Bronze and Iron ages respectively.³⁹

According to Finkelstein and Na'aman, «combination of archaeological and historical research demonstrates that the biblical account of the conquest and occupation of Canaan is entirely divorced from historical reality. (...) The biblical descriptions of the origin and early history of the people of Israel are not dissimilar from narratives on the origins of other peoples, which likewise do not withstand the test of historical criticism.»⁴⁰ The present contribution should confirm this evaluation and consider some implications for a new ap-

History of Canaan in the Third and Second Millennia BCE, *ibid.*, 150–178; *id.*, The Rise of Early Israel: Archaeology and Long-Term History, in: AHITUV/OREN (n. 7), 7–39.

³⁷ B. HALPERN, The Emergence of Israel in Canaan, Chico, CA 1983; D.V. EDELMAN (ed.), Toward a Consensus on the Emergence of Israel in Canaan (SJOT 1991,2), Aarhus 1991.

³⁸ In this respect, the title of Finkelstein's seminal work cited in n. 33 reflects obsolete terminology.

³⁹ On the issue of terminology, note WHITELAM (n. 7), 37ff.

⁴⁰ FINKELSTEIN/NA'AMAN (n. 34), 13.

proach to the history of ancient Palestine and for a contextual Palestinian theology.

3. *Canaan and Israel: a permanent antagonism of contrasting societal models?*

According to Judges 1, the Israelite settlement in Canaan did not lead to a complete replacement of the earlier «Canaanite» population by the intruding «Israelites», but the two «peoples» lived side by side and co-existed over generations or even centuries. As the text puts it, the urban «Canaanites» continued to live in fortified cities while the Israelite tribes settled in the land which remained in between. In a slim monography by *Walter Dietrich* published in 1979, this momentous picture has been stretched out to extend over the whole pre-exilic history of Israel from the settlement down to the end of the Judahite state.⁴¹ Designed as a study in social history, Dietrich's book – which incidentally appeared the same year as Gottwald's – represented a welcome addition to the all too many historical textbooks concentrating on problems of political history. His condensed treatment certainly helped a number of German-speaking biblical scholars, who would have rejected the Marxist referents of Gottwald's social revolution model, to become more aware of social tensions and conflicts in the history of ancient Israel and Judah. Unfortunately, however, this study's plausibility too rises and falls with its leading concepts. To Dietrich, the terms «Israel» and «Canaan» point to «a highly explosive opposition of strongly diverging *social, ethnic and cultural* structures»⁴². As many others before him, he thought that the roots of this opposition should be looked for in the Late Bronze to Iron age transition.

Among the major difficulties in Dietrich's, one should first stress the untenable assumption of an ethnically defined entity termed «Canaanites» as opposed to «Israelites».⁴³ It is more than doubtful that

⁴¹ W. DIETRICH, *Israel und Kanaan. Vom Ringen zweier Gesellschaftssysteme* (Stuttgarter Bibel-Studien 94), Stuttgart 1979.

⁴² *Op. cit.*, 7 (emphasis added).

⁴³ On ethnicity, see F. BARTH, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Boston 1969; W.W. ISAJIW, *Definitions of Ethnicity: Ethnicity 1* (1974) 111–124; C. KEYES (ed.), *Ethnic Change*, Seattle 1981; R. AUGER et al. (eds.), *Ethnicity and Culture*, Calgary 1987; M. BANKS, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, London 1995. On ethnicity, culture and archaeology, see S.J. SHENNAN (ed.), *Archaeological Approaches to Cultural Identity*, London 1989; M. WENDOWSKI, *Archäologische Kultur und Ethnische Einheit. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Identifikation* (Arbeiten zur Urgeschichte des

something like a «Canaanite» *ethnos* or *ethnic identity* ever existed in Late Bronze to Iron age Palestine (see below). Consequently, the terms «Canaanite» and «Israelite» define neither distinct nor mutually opposed ethnic identities in the Bronze and Iron ages. Second, and contrary to long-held opinions, it is impossible to relate particular features in the material culture (such as specific types of pottery or architecture) to «Canaanites» or «Israelites» (the so-called «pots-and-peoples» issue)⁴⁴, the only possible exception being remains of distinctive foodways.⁴⁵ Finkelstein, who in 1988 still understood the settlement process of Iron age I as «the Israelite settlements», freely acknowledges today that «the equation of Iron I highlands material culture with an Israelite ethnic identity is dubious» since ethnic affiliations emerged only later in the context of new political frameworks, namely the territorial states of the later Iron age.⁴⁶ Third, one cannot

Menschen, 19), Frankfurt am Main 1995; S. JONES, *Archaeology and Ethnicity. A Theoretical Perspective*. London-New York 1996; *id.*, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity. Reconstructing Identities in the Past and Present*, London 1997. For studies exclusively concerned with Palestine, see K.A. KAMP/N. YOFFEE, *Ethnicity in Ancient Western Asia During the Early Second Millennium B.C. Archaeological Assessments and Ethnoarchaeological Prospectives: BASOR 237* (1980) 85–109; Sh. BUNIMOVITZ, *Problems in the «Ethnic» Identification of the Philistine Material Culture: Tel Aviv 17* (1990) 210–222; B.J. STONE, *The Philistines and Acculturation: Culture Change and Ethnic Continuity in the Iron Age: BASOR 298* (1995) 7–32, and literature mentioned in the following note. For comparison, see J.M. HALL, *Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Iron Age of Greece*, in: N. SPENCER (ed.), *Time, Tradition and Society in Greek Archaeology: bridging the «great divide»*, London-New York 1995, 6–17.

⁴⁴ On this debated issue, see D.L. ESSE, *The Collared Pithos at Megiddo: Ceramic Distribution and Ethnicity: JNES 51* (1992) 81–103; W.G. DEVER, *Cultural Continuity, Ethnicity in the Archaeological Record, and the Question of Israelite Origins: ERLS 24* (1993) 22*–33*; *id.*, «Will the Real Israel Please Stand Up?» Part I: *Archaeology and Israelite Historiography: BASOR 297* (1995) 61–80; *id.*, *Ceramics, Ethnicity, and the Question of Israel's Origins: BA 58* (1995) 200–213; Sh. BUNIMOVITZ/A. YASUR-LANDAU, *Philistine and Israelite Pottery: A Comparative Approach to the Question of Pots and People: Tel Aviv 23* (1996) 88–101; I. FINKELSTEIN, *Ethnicity and Origin of the Iron I Settlers in the Highlands of Canaan: Can the Real Israel Stand Up?: BA 59* (1996) 198–212; *id.*, *Pots and People Revisited: Ethnic Boundaries in the Iron Age I*, in: SILBERMAN/SMALL (n. 10), 216–237.

⁴⁵ B. HESSE, *Pig Lovers and Pig Haters: Patterns of Palestinian Pork Production: Journal of Ethnobiology 10* (1990) 195–225; *id.*/P. WAPNISH, *Can Pig Remains Be Used for Ethnic Diagnosis in the Ancient Near East?*, in: SILBERMAN/SMALL (n. 10), 238–270.

⁴⁶ FINKELSTEIN/NA'AMAN (n. 34), 13; see further I. FINKELSTEIN, *The Great Transformation: The «Conquest» of the Highlands frontiers and the Rise of the*

follow Dietrich when he imposes the putative (but ill-founded) ethnic distinction of «Canaanites» vs. «Israelites» upon the *socio-economic* dichotomy of cities and villages, as if all city-dwellers had by definition been merchant Canaanites and administrators⁴⁷ or all villagers Israelite peasants. Fourth, Alt/Dietrich's postulate that a permanent Canaanite ethnic entity survived in the midst of Israel-governed Iron age cities throughout the monarchical period is dubious. No doubt there were social tensions between various societal segments during the history of Israel and Judah in the 1st millennium BCE, and biblical texts explicitly refer to some of these. However, they should first of all be considered as *inner-societal* (Israelite, Judahite etc.) conflicts and not be attributed to a putative ethnic antagonism between «Canaan» and «Israel». As a case in point, Jehu's *coup d'état* which Dietrich and other biblical scholars tend to understand in terms of this antagonism was not directed against «Canaanites» – not even according to the biblical sources! It mirrors a conflict between two leading factions of the *Israelite* political establishment.⁴⁸

Finally, and most important for our purpose, Dietrich's attempt to inflate ethnic and socio-economic distinctions up to an over-arching *cultural, social and religious dualism* is totally unacceptable. In his book, while things Canaanite may at times be considered to represent high cultural achievements they ultimately stand for oppression, exploitation, domination etc. Time and again the adjective «Canaanite» functions as a value judgment and labels a society and culture that is thought to have been, as a whole, full of dangerous contradictions, while the label «Israelite» somewhat romantically stands for simple rural life and subsistence, freedom and justice etc.⁴⁹ It is quite apparent that this socio-historical typology ultimately rests on non-historical, theological and philosophical premises. It thus calls for the same kind of criticism as Gottwald's: Affected by religious prejudices which are themselves clearly rooted in biblical (particularly in deuter-

Territorial States, in: T.E. Levy (ed.), *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, London 1995, 349–367.

⁴⁷ Cf. N.P. LEMCHE, *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.

⁴⁸ Cf. recently T.J. SCHNEIDER, *Rethinking Jehu: Biblica 77* (1996) 100–107; W.M. SCHNIEDEWIND, *Tel Dan Stela: New Light on Aramaic and Jehu's Revolt: BASOR 302* (1996) 75–90.

⁴⁹ As a matter of fact, these label valuations are clearly transparent for the author's perception of his own, 20th-century socio-economic context.

onomistic) historiography, they double the polemical stance of biblical self-perception instead of leading modern readers towards a critical historical interpretation, contextualization and deconstruction of the too obviously one-sided biblical presentation.

4. *Canaanite culture and religion, or «Analyzing the Abominable»*

Our brief and necessarily selective review of opinions would be narrow-minded without referring to the study of Canaanite religion. As a matter of fact, biblical texts reject the Canaanites foremost because of custom and religion. It is thus only natural that scholars trained in theology and biblical exegesis run into epistemological embarrassment once they should address issues of Canaanite religion from an historical point of view.

The discovery of religious texts in the ruins of Ras Shamra/Ugarit since the late 1920's has produced an incredibly rich discussion on ancient Syrian (or «Canaanite») religion and its historical relationship to the religion of the Bible. This is not the place to summarize even the most significant issues in this debate, but only to draw attention to the curiously ambiguous attitude with which some of the leading authorities, among them W.F. Albright, studied and evaluated the newly-discovered documents. *Delbert R. Hillers*, himself a student of Albright's, has called attention to the fact that while «Biblical scholars have a special reason to be interested in Canaanite religion and are specially qualified to deal with it» (since the words and the very conceptions of biblical religion often come from the rival religions or were framed with reference to it), in other ways they «have proved singularly ill-suited to deal with the subject» because of the Bible's polemical stance against Canaanite religion. Biblical, and particularly Western scholars studying Canaanite religion commit themselves, so to speak, to «analyzing the abominable». In order to arrive at a real understanding of Canaanite religion from within, they have to free themselves from the two sources of prejudice which are the biblical view on Canaanite religion and the Graeco-Roman conviction that Near Eastern paganism is «something alien, backward, and a little obscene» to the westerner.⁵⁰ Generally thinking of history, including the history of religion, in linear, evolutionary and teleological terms (recall the title of one of Albright's most famous books: «From Stone

⁵⁰ D.R. HILLERS, *Analyzing the Abominable: our understanding of Canaanite religion: JQR 75* (1985) 253–269; see also LONG, op. cit. (n. 25).

Age to Christianity)), Bible-trained scholars and theologians face obvious difficulties when approaching religions which the Bible considers to be abominable or obsolete.

Time and again these difficulties have led scholars to posit numerous fundamental oppositions between Canaanite and Israelite religion, such as «myth» vs. «(salvation) history», «nature- or fertility-oriented» vs. «society- or moral-oriented», «static» vs. «dynamic», «primitive or savage» vs. «humanistic or enlightened», «depraved» vs. «developing or developed», «oppressive» vs. «liberating» etc. Interestingly, these oppositions fall back on the scholarly perception of biblical texts themselves. They lead to circular argument whenever scholars distinguish *a priori* between «Canaanite» religious concepts and practices (e.g., sexual and fertility rites, human sacrifices, ancestor cults and divination by magical means) even when these are not explicitly (or at least, not exclusively) termed as such in the biblical texts, and other concepts and practices which they declare to be «truly Israelite». To take but one example, the book of the prophet Hosea contains numerous polemical passages against religious rites and practices. However, not once do the terms «Canaan» or «Canaanite» appear in this book in relation to specifically religious or ritual issues. Nevertheless, many scholars consider the prophet's polemics to be directed against Canaanite religious practices. A historical-critical reading of the book of Hosea should instead dispense itself with the label «Canaanite» (since this leads to an incorrect ethno-religious characterization of the conflict) and consider Hosea's religious polemics as a witness to an inner-Israelite conflict.⁵¹ What biblical exegetes and historians of religion have long interpreted in terms of «Canaanite» religious beliefs and practices is today more and more understood as part of traditional *Israelite* and *Judahite* religion.⁵²

⁵¹ Cf. M. WEIPPERT, *Synkretismus und Monotheismus. Religionsinterne Konfliktbewältigung im alten Israel*, in: J. ASSMANN/D. HARTH (eds.), *Kultur und Konflikt* (ed. suhrkamp 1612 = ed. suhrkamp N.F. 612), Frankfurt a.M., 143–179 = *id.*, *Jahwe und die anderen Götter. Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des antiken Israel in ihrem syrisch-palästinischen Kontext* (FAT 18), Tübingen 1997, 1–24.

⁵² Cf. S. ACKERMAN, *Under every green tree. Popular religion in sixth-cent. Judah* (HSM 46), Atlanta, GA, 1992; O. KEEL/Ch. UEHLINGER, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole. Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* (QD 124), Freiburg i.Br. 1992, 41997 (engl. *Gods, Goddesses and the Image of God*, Minneapolis & Edinburgh 1998).

III. The Story: Canaanites from Genesis to Judges

Let us now turn to the biblical foundations of the «Canaanites vs. Israelites» antagonism and consider how Canaan and the «Canaanites» (as well as related «pre-Israelite» peoples such as the «Amorites», «Hittites» etc.) are portrayed (one might say: construed) in biblical texts relating to Israelite origins throughout the books of Genesis to Judges. As was mentioned in the introduction, this section will proceed as a cursory, synchronic reading alongside the biblical books.⁵³

1. Origins (Genesis)

The very first story about Canaan ends up with a curse, and is related to matters of honour, shame and sex. According to Gen. 9:18 Noah, the father of post-diluvial humanity, had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japhet (who, roughly speaking, stand for Asia, Africa and Europe). Canaan, the son of Ham, is also mentioned because of the particular outcome of the following story: Noah lies naked and drunken in his tent. Ham looks at his father's nakedness and, instead of covering the father, tells his brothers who behave more honourably. Clear-headed again, Noah curses Canaan – not Ham⁵⁴ – to become a slave among his brothers, and he blesses Shem and Japhet. Curse and blessings define a three-storied hierarchy among humans: Shem at the top (with YHWH being called «the God of Shem»); Japhet second being allowed to live in Shem's tent; Ham viz. Canaan lowest and a slave to both.⁵⁵ Canaan thus represents from the beginning an almost tragical char-

⁵³ N.P. LEMCHE, *The Canaanites and Their Land. The Tradition of the Canaanites* (JSOT.S 110), Sheffield 1991, also calls for a synchronic approach but does not follow the text in reading direction.

⁵⁴ According to the extant text, it is really Canaan who is cursed instead of his father, although he was not even implied in the Noah incident. A more original version of the story either knew Sem, Japhet and Canaan as brothers or had Noah curse Ham, not Canaan, and declare him, not Canaan, a slave of his brothers. This latter reading was used until recently to legitimate racist disdain for Black African people, e.g. in South African apartheid theologies. Theologically speaking, there is of course a strong communion of suffering between the Palestinian and Black South African people. On the relationship of OT interpretation and racism, note C.H. FELDER, *Race, Racism, and the Biblical Narratives*, in: *id.* (ed.), *Stony the Road We Trod. African American Biblical Interpretation*, Minneapolis 1991, 127–145; F. DEIST, *The Dangers of Deuteronomy. A Page from the Reception of the Book*, in: F. García Martínez et al. (eds.), *Studies in Deuteronomy* (FS C.J. Labuschagne; SVT 53), Leiden 1994, 13–30.

⁵⁵ Ham is not mentioned anymore in the story, so that Canaan really takes his father's place. Reading further on the genealogy of Ham's sons (Gen. 10:6ff.), where Canaan is said to be Ham's fourth son after Cush, Egypt and Libya, one may conclude from the phrase «Let him be the lowest slave among his brethren»

acter in a play that calls him on stage only to be submitted to the permanent fate of slavery.

But whose eponymous ancestor is Canaan? According to the genealogy of Gen. 10:6ff., he was the father of

«Sidon, his first-born, and Heth, and the Jebusite(s)⁵⁶, the Amorite(s), the Girgashite(s), the Hivite(s), the Arkite(s), the Sinite(s), the Arvadite(s), the Zemarite(s) and the Hamathite(s).»

Canaan thus represents a number of people, inhabitants of Phoenician cities such as Sidon, Arvad, Zemar and Hamath alongside peoples which otherwise belong to a standard list of «pre-Israelite» inhabitants of the land: Heth (otherwise called the «Hittite»), the Jebusite(s) who are generally connected to pre-Israelite Jerusalem, the Amorite(s) etc. Gen. 10:19 adds a note on the extent of Canaanite territory, in which the areas of Sidon and Gaza represent the northern and southern limits respectively⁵⁷ while Gerar is situated at the north-eastern and Sodom, Gomorrah, Adma and Zeboyim at the south-eastern border.

2. Abraham and his sons among Canaanites, Amorites and Hittites

The genealogies of Gen. 11 lead up to Terach and his son Abra(ha)m. Leaving the Babylonian city of Ur in order to wander to «the land of Canaan», Terach settles in North Syrian Harran, i.e. in an Aramean environment, where he dies. Abra(ha)m is then called to go further and arrives in «the land of Canaan». He stops at a holy place of divination near Shechem. At this point of the story, we are told by a narrator's off-voice that

«at that time the *Canaanite(s)* was/were in the land ...» (Gen. 12:6).

The comment implies that the holy place once belonged to the Canaanites but that such is no more the case in the narrator's own time. YHWH appears to Abra(ha)m at this holy place and promises for the first time to give «this land» to his descendants. Abra(ha)m builds an altar in recognition but then continues to wander southwards, building another altar near Bethel. Still further south, a famine has him leave for Egypt just to return almost immediately: the narrative makes plain for the first time that Egypt is not a place to stay for a patriarch.

that Canaan is not only considered to be a slave to Shem and Japhet but even to his own brothers.

⁵⁶ Modern translations of the Bible usually put these ethnonyms in the plural, but in the Hebrew text they more often take singular verb forms, being apparently considered as collective nouns.

⁵⁷ The apparent tension between 10:18 mentioning Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites and Sidon as northern border of Canaanite territory may be resolved by the observation that 10:18 refers to itinerant merchants and displaced colonies rather than the inhabitants of the respective cities themselves.

Back to Bethel, Abraham separates from Lot because the place is too small to be shared between them together with the Canaanite(s) and Perizzite(s) (Gen. 13:7). It is there that YHWH shows Abra(ha)m the land that he shall inherit, which roughly corresponds to the hill-country of Judah. The patriarch logically leaves south and arrives at another holy place called Mamre (Gen. 13:18), before meeting Melchisedek of (Jeru)Salem in chap. 14.⁵⁸ In chap. 15, a new promise of the land is given and confirmed by YHWH: Abra(ha)m shall live long and be buried in the land. But only his descendants shall actually occupy the land after a period of enslavement:

«The fourth generation (viz., of Abraham's enslaved descendants) shall return here, for the guilt of the *Amorite(s)* is not full until then» (Gen. 15:16).

The Amorite(s) are already known to us as descendants of Canaan (10:18). Here the story anticipates that Abra(ha)m's descendants will inherit the land as a consequence of Amorite guilt (cf. Lev. 18:24ff.; 20:22ff.; Deut. 9:4f.; 1 Kings 14:24), which is thought to gradually accumulate but for the time being remains unspecified.

«To your descendants I give this land from the River of Egypt to the Great River, the river Euphrates, the Kenite(s), the Kenizzite(s), the Kadmonite(s), the Hittite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Rephaim, the Amorite(s), the Canaanite(s), the Girgashite(s) and the Jebusite(s)» (Gen. 15:18–21).

Once again the lack of precision is deplorable: neither do the limits of the land promised here fit the extent of Canaanite territory as described earlier (in Gen. 10) and later (in Num. 34, on which see below)⁵⁹, nor is the list of inhabitants homogeneous, since it mixes up tribal (nomadic) groups which later continued to live alongside Israel without challenging its territorial rights, with the standard list of seven «pre-Israelite» peoples. Among these, the Amorite(s), the Hittite(s) and the Jebusite(s) will play a considerable role later on.

It is from the *Hittite(s)* that Abraham purchases the Machpelah burial place, situated between Hebron and Mamre according to the biblical text, in order to bury his wife (Gen. 23). This beautiful chapter depicts Abraham as a foreigner acting with great respect for the autochthonous inhabitants, asking politely for a place to buy and insisting on giving a correct price for the burial field. Vice versa, the «sons of Heb» repeatedly honour the patriarch.

⁵⁸ Clearly he is meant to have thus visited the major cult centers known by the narrator in the central hill country.

⁵⁹ Such variations present a major obstacle to an exclusively synchronic reading. The extent of Gen. 15's «greater Israel» is clearly related to the boundaries of Solomon's empire according to 1 Kings 5:1 (which is itself a historical fancy of the Persian period). As for Num. 34, it is often thought that this text ultimately reflects the boundaries of the once Egyptian province of Canaan, but see sect. 4.

The text's insisting on mutual honouring and Abraham's regular payment instead of the Hittites' readiness to leave the field for nothing is conspicuous. We might suspect that these issues would have been a source of conflict and embarrassment in the narrator's time.

In the following chapters, Canaanites and Hittites play a role insofar as they are considered unfit for marriage with a descendant of Abraham. The aged Abraham has his servant take an oath that he would never marry Isaac to a Canaanite daughter (Gen. 24) and he sends him to old Aramaean relatives in order to bring back a suitable relative as a wife for his son. Similarly, Isaac will exhort Jacob not to marry a Canaanite (Gen. 28). Esau who had already taken two Hittite daughters into his house (26:34) then marries an Arab woman (28:8): all three are called «Canaanites» in Gen. 36:2. Conflict is avoided since Esau then leaves «the land of Canaan» and settles in Seir/Edom with all his family, which leaves Canaan as an inheritance for Jacob/Israel alone who, however, will never occupy it in its entirety.

3. *A snare towards idolatry (Exodus to Leviticus)*

Another story of Israelite origins has its start in Egypt. Having called Moses to the burning bush, YHWH promises him to take his enslaved people out of Egypt and to bring it into a good and wide land,

«the place of the Canaanite(s), the Hittite(s), the Amorite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Hivite(s) and the Jebusite(s)» (Exod. 3:8, cf. v. 17; in Exod. 6:4 this is simply called «the land of Canaan»).

Once the fugitive Israelites arrive at the mountain of YHWH, the references to Canaan and «Canaanites» take a specifically *cultic* significance:

«When my angel going before you will lead you into the land of the Amorite(s), the Hittite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Canaanite(s), the Hivite(s) and the Jebusite(s), *when I will make them disappear*, you shall not bow down before their gods nor serve them. You shall not make cultic objects as they make them, but destroy them and break down their holy pillars» (Exod. 23:23f., cf. 33:2).

In order not to turn the land into a lions' nest, YHWH will not chase all the «pre-Israelite» inhabitants of the land immediately but make them disappear little by little out of growing panic (cf. Deut. 7:22–24). Israel is therefore exhorted not to conclude any covenant with them since they could induce the Israelites to idolatry. «This would become a snare for you ...» (Exod. 23:33). «Be careful not to make a covenant with the natives of the land against which you are going, or they will prove a snare in your midst» (Exod. 34:12)⁶⁰: such indictments amplified by detailed prohibitions of «Canaanite» ritual and cultural practices are found in more than one passages relating the giving of the great Torah (cf. the so-called cultic decalogue

Exod. 34, the sacrificial regulations Deut. 12 or the list of sexual taboos in Lev. 18).

As the story goes on, Israel will eventually be ensnared, but as attentive readers we are presumed to distinguish between God's commandments to Israel on the one hand, and various abominable practices on the other which the story ascribes to the sinful peoples of the land.

4. *Exploring and blueprinting the land (Numbers)*

Leaving the mountain and approaching the land, one comes to wonder what «the land of Canaan» and its people will finally look like. Spies are sent out in Num. 13 and report how beautiful the country is, but also that its inhabitants are very strong and some even appear to be descendants of giants:

«Amalek who lives in the Negev, the Hittite(s), the Jebusite(s) and the Amorite(s) who lives (*sic*⁶¹) in the highlands, and the Canaanite(s) who lives by the sea and along the Jordan river» (Num. 13:29).

While Caleb remains confident that the Israelites will manage to occupy the country, other spies discourage the people: «The land will swallow whoever wants to live there ...». In Num. 16 some people will even wish to go all the way back to Egypt, considering that Egypt, not Canaan, were «a land of flowing milk and honey» (16:13). Of course, this is not the author's position for whom, once again, Egypt is not the place to stay for an Israelite.

In Num. 34 YHWH orders Moses to give the Israelites clear instructions about the extension and borders of the land to be inherited: This is the most detailed border description for «the land of Canaan» found in the Bible, conceived in much more restrictive borders than the territory between the brook of Egypt and the Euphrates promised earlier to Abraham (Gen. 15). Unfortunately, we are not told by the biblical authors how we should understand such differing territorial claims. It seems obvious that the variety of descriptions corresponds to various authors with as many differing concepts⁶², but one should probably consider the different context as well: the eponymic concept of Abraham is larger than that of Israel.

5. *Extermination, or what? (Deuteronomy)*

It is with the book of Deuteronomy that the Canaanite-Israelite antagonism reaches its climax, as far as ideology and language of antagonism and exclusion are concerned. Deuteronomy is a speech addressed in the plains of Moab to the generation which will finally enter the land. Chap. 7 foresees a conquest that will ultimately lead to extermination:

⁶⁰ For the snare topos, see further Deut. 7:16, Josh. 23:13, Judg. 2:3, Ps. 106:36.

⁶¹ See above, n. 56.

⁶² See above, n. 59.

«When YHWH your God brings you into the land which you are entering to occupy and drives out many nations before you – the Hittite(s), the Gergashite(s), the Amorite(s), the Canaanite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Hivite(s) and the Jebusite(s): seven nations more numerous and powerful than you – when YHWH your God delivers them into your power and you defeat them, you must put them to death.⁶³ You must not make a covenant with them or spare them. You must not intermarry with them, neither giving your daughters to their sons nor taking their daughters for your sons; if you do, they will draw your sons away from me and make them worship other gods. Then YHWH will be angry with you and will quickly destroy you. But this is what you must do to them: pull down their altars, break their sacred pillars, hack down their sacred poles and destroy their idols by fire, for you are a people holy to YHWH your God. YHWH your God chose you out of all nations on earth to be his special possession» (Deut. 7:1–6, cf. vv. 17–26).

The leading motor behind this violence is again the fear of getting «ensnared» in the ways of the «pre-Israelite» peoples – a motive already noted in Exod. 34 but increasing almost to paranoia in Deuteronomy. As a matter of fact, Israel is exhorted not to succumb to the ways of the nations even after the latter's physical elimination:

«When YHWH your God exterminates, as you advance, the nations whose country you are entering to occupy, you shall take their place and

⁶³ The terminology used here is that of the so-called «ban» (*herem*). It refers to a practice attested outside Israel, most conspicuously in an inscription of the Moabite king Mesha, (mid-9th cent. BCE). See M. WEINFELD, The ban on the Canaanites in the Biblical codes and its historical development, in: LEMAIRE/OTZEN (n. 53), 142–160. Originally a ritual killing of vanquished foes, the term became somewhat more general in later periods. According to G. MITCHELL, Together in the Land. A Reading of the Book of Joshua (JOT.S 134), Sheffield 1993, 15f., 117, the term should here be understood only «as a literary device for advocating a strict separation from the nations» (117), while Lohfink (op. cit. [n. 13]) has suggested that the incitement to extermination should be read as a «narrative symbol for radical faith» rings like an exercise in apologetics. In any case, the recognition of a literary device does not *per se* alter the violence implied in the phraseology. As faithful readers inspired by Deuteronomy and Joshua have demonstrated time and again from the Hasmonians to Yigal Amir (or from Spanish conquistadores to the Boers), «radical faith» based on the language of violence can all too easily turn into real violence. If Joshua's concept of faith is really what Lohfink thinks – «die gläubige Unmittelbarkeit mit Gott», *ibid.* 13 –, then this should be rejected on moral grounds. – Note that the biblical *herem* could be reinterpreted in terms of expulsion and confiscation of property in late Second Temple times, cf. W. HORBURY, Extirpation and Excommunication: VT 35 (1985) 19–38. This would seem to contradict a purely spiritual reading.

settle in their land. *After they have been destroyed*, take (still) care that you are not snared into their ways...» (Deut. 12:30).

In comparison to that, Deut. 20 sounds somewhat more rational:

«In the cities of these nations whose land YHWH your God is giving you as a patrimony, you shall not leave any creature alive. You shall annihilate them – the Hittite(s), the Amorite(s), the Canaanite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Hivite(s) and the Jebusite(s) – as YHWH your God commanded you, so that they may not teach you to imitate all the abominable things that they have done for their gods and so cause you to sin against YHWH your God» (Deut. 20:16–18).

It is of utmost importance not to isolate this rhetoric of annihilation from its storical context but to situate it correctly in the larger framework of the whole narrative, i.e. as a rhetorical climax addressed in the fields of Moab to the conquest generation⁶⁴, a high point in a drama which will neither stop at this point nor lead to complete fulfillment. As a matter of fact, the incitements to extermination contained in Deuteronomy will never be followed completely but find only a limited realization as we read along the actual conquest narratives in the book of Judges. Moreover, we should bear in mind that the conquest narratives form the background to the later «history of Israel» which will be told in the books of Samuel and Kings. 2 Kgs. ultimately ends with the total loss of Israelite/Judahite territorial control in Canaan/Palestine. In the larger context of this so-called Deuteronomistic History, we should understand Deut. 7:12 and 20 as part of a subjunctive rhetoric trying to justify through an utterly extremist command – never realized in actual history nor even accomplished *in toto* in narrated story – the causes of Israel's ultimate exile and the conditions of its return (cf. Deut. 4:29ff., 30:1–5). Obviously, such a rhetoric only makes sense if we postulate a post-exilic context, far removed from the imagined conquest situation, for the

⁶⁴ Cf. G. BRAULIK, Die Völkervernichtung und die Rückkehr Israels ins Verheissungsland. Hermeneutische Bemerkungen zum Buch Deuteronomium, in: M. VERVENNE/J. LUST (eds.), Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic Literature (FS C.H.W. Brekelmans; BEThL 133), Leuven 1997, 3–68; LOHFINK, op. cit. (n. 13). Both authors rightly insist that the incitements to extermination are exclusively and specifically addressed to the conquest generation and do not envisage extermination for the post-exilic return to Zion. However, the fact that the incitement is addressed to the past does not make it morally more acceptable. The reason for its limitation to the past is not growing recognition for Canaanites. It simply has always been easier to hold extremist views on a long gone foundational past than regarding on the usually more complicated present.

narrator and his audience. We shall return to this point in the last part of this paper. Here it shall suffice to recall that when moving along in the biblical story, we should really try to read the story as such before projecting it onto a factual historical screen.

6. *Conquering and settling the land (Joshua)*

The book of Joshua relates how the Israelite tribes entered the land west of the Jordan river and conquered the towns of Jericho and Ai before campaigning first in the south, later in the north of the country. There is clearly one tendency in the text that wants us to believe that the Israelites took control over the entire land (e.g. Josh. 10:40–42; 11:23),

«over the highlands and the lower hill country, the Arabah and the flanks of the hills, the steppe and in the Negev: the Hittite(s), the Amorite(s), the Canaanite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Hivite(s) and the Jebusite(s)» (Josh. 12:8),

since Joshua slaughtered all the kings of the land (Josh. 12:7.9–24). Consequently, when all the land has been allotted to the tribes, one voice declares that all promises given by YHWH to the «house of Israel» were now fulfilled (Josh. 21:43–45).

Another line, however, runs contrary to this assertion: First of all, there is the curious story about a treaty which the people of Gibeon were able to conclude with the Israelites thanks to a clever ruse (Josh. 9). Second, there is a notion of some «land which remained to be conquered» particularly in the coastal areas of Philistia and Phoenicia (Josh. 13:1–6; 23:1–16; cf. Judg. 3:1–6) considered to have remained «Canaanite» or «Amorite».⁶⁵ Third, there are cities in the midst of conquered territory where «Canaanites» are said to have remained, such as in Gezer (Josh. 16:10 = Judg. 1:29), Beth-Shean, Yibleam, Megiddo, Taanak and Dor (Josh. 17:11ff. = Judg. 1:27f.).

7. *The snare becomes a test (Judges)*

The latter line continues into the book of Judges, which opens with the Israelites' attempt to fight remaining Canaanites after Joshua's death. The tribes are now said to have acted individually or in small coalition, not succeeding, however, in completely eliminating the lo-

⁶⁵ R. SMEND, *Das uneroberte Land*, in: G. Strecker (ed.), *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit* (GTA 25), Göttingen 1983, 91–102 = *id.*, *Zur ältesten Geschichte Israels. Gesammelte Studien Bd. 2* (BevTh 100), München 1987, 217–228.

cal inhabitants.⁶⁶ This is particularly the case for territories in northern Palestine (Judg. 1:30ff.). But Gaza, Ashkelon and Ekron are also said to have remained unconquered, so that the tribe of Judah had to limit its claim for the hill country (Judg. 1:18f.). Even if Judah is said to have destroyed Jerusalem (Judg. 1:8), the tribe of Benjamin was unable to drive out the Jebusites living there (Judg. 1:21). In narrative terms, this double treatment of Jerusalem is surely related to 1 Sam. 5:6–8, the Benjamite house of Saul will have to wait for the Judahite house of David, and only David, then king of Judah and Israel, will ultimately succeed and bring Jerusalem under his control.

Still another line ties together the recognition of remaining land and remaining «Canaanites», «Amorites» etc. with the religiously-motivated rhetoric of Deuteronomy and Josh. 23–24. Judg. 2–3 explain that the Israelites did not adhere wholeheartedly to the divine commandments transmitted by Moses and followed other gods of the peoples living around them (or rather, in their midst). YHWH therefore decided not to expel any more inhabitants out of the country but to let them live amidst the Israelites as a permanent temptation (Judg. 2:20–23).

«These are the nations which YHWH left as a means of testing all the Israelites who had not taken part in the battles for Canaan (...): the five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanite(s) and the Sidonite(s) and the Hivite(s) who lives in Mount Lebanon from the mountain of Baal-Hermon to Lebo-Hamat. His purpose was to test whether Israel would obey the commands which YHWH had given to their forefathers through Moses. Thus the children of Israel lived among the Canaanite(s), the Hittite(s), the Amorite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Hivite(s) and the Jebusite(s). And they took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and they worshipped their gods» (Judg. 2:1.3–6).

Ostensibly, this situation is in tension with Deut. 7, or rather it represents the reversal of the latter text's rhetoric of annihilation. As we have noted, this rhetoric does not reflect a historical reality but rather an extreme hypothesis implying that Israel's history *would* have taken another course *if* Israel had followed the ways once prescribed by YHWH to the conquest generation. Moving on from Deuteronomy to Judges, we now understand that Israel chose other ways, as is most

⁶⁶ On this, see A.G. AULD, *Judges 1 and History: a Reconsideration: VT 25* (1975) 261–286 = *id.*, *Joshua Retold. Synoptic Perspectives*, Edinburgh 1998, 70–101.

explicitly stated in Judg. 2. At this point, Deuteronomy's incitement has vanished in *utopia* and leaves the stage to a more ambiguous «historical» reality, which should be experienced by Israel as a test how to live with permanent temptation. Once again, this outlook does not stand historical illusions: V. 6 makes clear that the narrator knows very well that Israel ultimately failed to pass the test, connubium having lead to apostasy. As it stands at the opening of a book that relates the story of Israel by now settled in the land of Canaan, the text again foreshadows Israel's ultimate loss of the land because of its mixing up with the pre-Israelite inhabitants.⁶⁷

8. No permanent inheritance rights

The land theology embedded in our story is not the main focus of this paper. Nevertheless, a word of caution seems at order: According to the Deuteronomistic History YHWH repeatedly promised to Abraham, to the Exodus and to the conquest generation the inheritance of the land of Canaan from its previous inhabitants. As we have seen, this promise is not always delivered in the same phraseology. As a matter of fact, and as the above reading may have recalled, the promise has a story of its own within the evolution of the larger narrative. The promises extended in Gen. 17 in the context of an «everlasting covenant» are crucial for land theology. In v. 8 YHWH promises that He shall give to Abraham and his descendants «the land of your sojourn (i.e. the land where Abraham then sojourns as a resident alien!), the whole land of Canaan, for an everlasting heritage». This promise clearly implies the concept of a permanent right of sojourn and settlement for Abraham's descendants in the limits of «the land of Canaan» (on which see below, Num. 34). However, this does not mean *exclusive* right to ownership as the example of Abraham himself, who will never become a ruler of all Canaan of any sort, plainly shows.

The more the story of the promise moves on, the more it becomes restricted. Sure, the story considers the later generations to be Abraham's descendants, but they are *not* Abraham himself. Rather they are thought to have later got their own promise, which was not exactly the same. The descendants should thus not claim for themselves what had once been promised to Abraham, and certainly not

⁶⁷ See most recently P.D. GUEST, *Dangerous Liaisons in the Book of Judges: SJOT 11 (1997) 241–269.*

more than that. They will rather be considered on their own merits or failings.

The biblical story does not want us to consider later generations of faithful Jews as plain inheritants of earlier promises. For the biblical historians there was a time when God repeatedly promised the land to Israel. But this time had gone with the earlier generations of the Exodus, with the conquest as well as with generations of kings who led Israel's history towards a failure. At no point is the Pentateuchal story of Israel's origins and settlement in the land designed to legitimize a *permanent* claim for *exclusive* ownership of the land, not to speak of a *new* conquest and settlement in a later historical period.⁶⁸ True, the books of Ezra-Nehemiah describe the exiles' return from Babylon and, as we shall see later, draw again upon the antagonism of Canaanites and Israelites in order to legitimate their rejection of connubium. Still, they do not consider the story of Israelite origins and the original promises simply to legitimize their *own* claims on property rights. Persian-period biblical editors clearly distinguished between a *foundational story* of the past (the story of what once could have happened in the wished-for ideal but ultimately did not happen because of various failures) and what seemed possible under the very different conditions of their own present under the conditions of Persian overlordship (see especially *Neh.* 9–10!).

Now, if such a realistic distinction between an imagined past and the differently-conditioned present is already drawn within the canonical text, it would seem to be abstruse to legitimize the modern history of the Jewish return to Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel in terms of a fulfilment of earlier promises to Abraham, Moses or Joshua.⁶⁹ That this distinction became blurred since antiquity may be due particularly to the Hasmonean rule over large parts of Palestine in the 2nd and 1st cent. BCE and to subsequent ideological re-readings of the biblical promises in Jewish tradition (e.g., the Mishna, or Nahmanides, but not Maimonides). From the standpoint of the Bible alone, however, no text can lay the foundation of a permanent right for Jews to exclusively possess and control the land promised to Abraham and his descendants.

⁶⁸ We are not concerned here with prophetic approaches to the issue of living again in the land. Note, however, that the post-exilic return is not generally considered in military terms let alone in terms of extermination.

⁶⁹ On this, see again LOHFINK, *op. cit.* (n. 13).

We may leave the Story at this point where it acknowledges a reality (the problematical co-existence of Israelites and remaining Canaanites) rather than an ideal (be it annihilation or total separation). Interestingly, it is as if the admission of these nations' continuing existence in the land had broken the biblical authors' illusions about Israel's own non-Canaanite nature – and as if «Canaanites», «Amorites» etc. faded together with such illusions. Although we just learnt from Joshua and Judges that the indigenous peoples of the land remained in the midst of the Israelite tribes, the later «historical books» contain only occasional and rather dispersed references to Canaanites and other «pre-Israelite» peoples. After a memorable battle (Judg. 4–5), the Canaanites and their pair disappear from the stage as leading players.⁷⁰ From now on, the Israelites are said to have been confronted with new and different enemies: Aramaeans, Moabites, Ammonites, Midianites or Philistines, i.e. peoples with a distinct *historical* profile (however un-historical many of the stories may be). When new polities appear on the stage, the old inhabitants of the land remain only as a rather amorphous, anonymous population, a kind of paria substratum of the land's population. Only the «Jebusites» sitting in Jerusalem will have to wait for David's conquest of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:6–8) before being released from the story.⁷¹ Generally speaking, one may conclude that the biblical historiographers considered «Canaanites», «Amorites» and the like as essentially a problem of the past.

(To be continued)

⁷⁰ Peaceful relations between Israelites and *Amorites* are considered in 1 Sam. 7:14. Individual *Hittites* are mentioned as soldiers in David's entourage (Ahimelek in 1 Sam. 26:6, Urija in 2 Sam. 11–12). Jerusalem is said to have been taken from «the *Jebusite(s)*» by David (2 Sam. 5:6–8). It is from a Jebusite named Arauna that David bought a threshing floor in order to build an altar (2 Sam. 24). «Hivite(s)» and «Canaanite(s)» are mentioned together in 2 Sam. 24:7 as inhabitants of southern Lebanon. «Canaanites» living in the city of Gezer are said to have been killed by an Egyptian pharaoh who gave the town as a present to Solomon (1 Kings 9:16). The whole populace of «the Amorite(s), the Hittite(s), the Perizzite(s), the Hivite(s) and the Jebusite(s)» purportedly served as *corvée* workers for Solomon's monumental building projects and kept this status «until the present day» (1 Kings 9:20–21). These references, which are not exhaustive, demonstrate the rather spurious interest of the biblical historiographers in Canaanites outside the antagonistic settlement framework.

⁷¹ Given the enormous scholarly literature concerned with the so-called Canaanite antecedents and traditions of Jerusalem, it is notable that not one single biblical text identifies «pre-Israelite» or later inhabitants of Jerusalem as «Canaanites».

CHRISTOPH UEHLINGER

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

* 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 remove 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 «historical» 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 IIInd to the ISt millennium BCE. However, having read the Story, we may have recognized here and there bits and pieces of the scholarly hypotheses 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 «Canaan» and «Canaanites» from extra-biblical sources.⁴ It goes without saying that the following section is not the place for a detailed source analysis 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 certainly learnt from his study. However, I would express some reservation, particularly regarding his treatment of IIInd-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 uncertainties. 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. IIInd-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 IIInd-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» (^{lu}*kinabnu/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 kinabhi*), 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 Textual Evidence: *BAJOR* 304 (1996) 1–15 (reply by Lemche on *EA* 151 in *BAJOR* 313 [1998] 19–24). See also N. NA'AMAN, *Four Notes on the Size of Late Bronze Age Canaan: BAJOR* 313 (1999) 31–37, and R. S. HESS, *Occurrences of «Canaan» in Late Bronze Age Archives of the West Semitic World*, in: Sh. IZRE'EL/I. SINGER/R. ZADOK (eds.), *Past Links: Studies in the Languages and Cultures of the Ancient Near East (IOS 18; FS A.F. Rainey)*, Winona Lake IN, 1998, 365–372 (the latter not available to me at the time of writing).

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 documents⁹ 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 IIInd-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 debate¹⁰, 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 Shasu¹¹ 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

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-IIInd-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 gentilitium* «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 IIInd-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 *b-*). 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» (𐎗𐎎𐎗𐎎 *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-IIInd- 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 IIInd-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 Ägypterzur 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 Ba'al 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 IIInd-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

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 identify 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 IIInd and of the IInd 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 Merneptah 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 referring to the inhabitants of Late Bronze age urban Palestine since in all probability it does not reflect the latter's 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 mention 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 Merneptah 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 referring 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

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 1st-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 2nd-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-

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).

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 IIInd-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 IIInd-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 categories²⁷:

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 coincide with the notion of «greater» Canaan (Exod.

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 Deuteronomistic Literature* (FS C.H.W. Brekelmans; BETL 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. 16:3²⁹), 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 II millennium BCE.³⁴

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 basically 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-ethnonyms come from? And what is the pragmatic use and *function* of the concept of «pre-Israelite» peoples in the biblical historiography of the Persian period?

It seems obvious that the biblical historiographers of the Persian period 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 sometimes even antiquarian curiosity. This does not mean that they were generally 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 old³⁵, religious teaching, etc. in order to produce 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. Hurtado (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 1st-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 authoritative 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 relative pristine original document, extending the life span of the actual original document.»

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 IIInd-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 IIInd-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

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 forthcoming 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 strife 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 Judaeen 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.

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

In such a context neither the emergence of a pseudo-ethnonym «Canaanites» 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 «Canaanite(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 specifically *historiographical* connotation of Canaanites as (pre-Israelite) inhabitants 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 reference 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-

⁴¹ Cf. M. WEIPPERT, *Synkretismus und Monotheismus. Religionsinterne Konfliktbewältigung 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 kanaanischer Religion*, in: *Ugarit. Ein ostmediterranes 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 practices 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 (*Yebud*) 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 Judaeen territory. After a para-monarchical experiment under Zerubabel towards the end of the 6th cent. BCE⁴⁴, 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 northern 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 claimed 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 commercial interests meanwhile netted over the country, but also against indigenous 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 protagonists 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 returnees⁴⁶, although we may safely doubt that the latter's call to banishment was primarily motivated by theology.

⁴⁴ See F. BIANCHI, Le rôle de Zorobabel et de la dynastie davidique en Judée du VI^e siècle au II^e siècle av. J.-C.: *Transeuphratène* 7 (1994) 153–165; A. LEMAIRE, Zorobabel et la Judée à la lumière de l'épigraphie (fin du VI^e 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 (*JOT*, 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-communal «brotherhood» solidarity (*ad intram*). The contemporary reader cannot avoid thinking 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. Braulik⁴⁷ has recently demonstrated on the basis of Dtn. 29–30, these regulations on *berem* 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 community».

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

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 *berem* 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 prophets⁴⁹, 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 limp: 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

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 antagonism was almost inevitable. While the practical implementation of dissociating measures served the needs of the new polity's structural consolidation, 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

⁵⁰ «If Yehud was as small and as poor as the archaeological data suggest, and if members of the *gôlâh* community found themselves in some cases residing within other provinces of the Persian empire, then the need for both ritual purity and ethnic boundaries 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. Whitelam⁵³ – 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 worthwhile 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-

⁵² For a thorough critique of this approach, see P.R. DAVIES, In Search of «Ancient Israel» (*JOT*, 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 days⁵⁶, it should at the same time participate in the new historiographical re-orientation⁵⁷ such as is beginning to take shape with the recent publication of monographs on, e. g., Edomite⁵⁸, Moabite⁵⁹, Ammonite⁶⁰ and early Arab history.⁶¹

What remains to be called for is an integrated *regional history* of a broad scope⁶², which would take into account Palestine as a whole, albeit generally fragmented and rarely unified, and eventually consider the land itself as 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 Judaeans 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 is 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 1989; 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, 1990.

For the present, there still remains the more immediate task, to deconstruct and oppose ideologies which claim all the land for one nation alone. Exegetes and theologians, whose job it is to investigate and explain 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-contextualization of the biblical master story might contribute to a better understanding 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.

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