Biblical patriarchs from a pre-canonical source mentioned in the *Dīwān* of Kanem-Bornu (Lake Chad region)*

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It is generally supposed that the ancient kingdoms of West Africa originated in the first millennium AD. This assumption is based on the silence of classical sources with respect to sub-Saharan West African polities, the relatively late evidence available for these kingdoms in Arabic sources, and the chronological telescoping in the internal Arabic king lists. It is reinforced by the post-colonial African historiography trying to minimize outside influences on Black African societies.¹

Yet, from recent historical research it appears that a number of West African polities were founded by refugees from the collapsed Assyrian empire c. 600 BC. The refugees were comprised mainly of deported people from Babylonia, Elam, Urartu and Kassite lands settled by the Assyrian authorities in Syria-Palestine and later dispersed by their hostile neighbours, but they consisted also of significant numbers of uprooted Israelites and Arameans.² This conclusion is reached on the basis of ancient Near Eastern royal names included in the chronicles of Kanem-Bornu and Kano, the king lists of the Hausa states Kebbi and Zamfara and the oral traditions of the Yoruba state of Oyo, all situated in present-day Nigeria. In these various cases we find a curious combination of Assyrian and other ancient Near Eastern royal names. The name of an individual Israelite leader figures prominently in the written records of Kanem-Bornu, Kano and Kebbi and in the oral traditions of the Oyo-Yoruba.³ On account of their marginal position in the dynastic records, Israelites and Judeans – who cannot be distinguished from each other in these sources⁴ – would at first sight seem to have been a small minority among the immigrant settlers.

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⁴ Only the traditions of the Oyo-Yoruba are clearly derived from the northern kingdom of Israel (Lange, Kingdoms, 239–241).
For the history of Kanem-Bornu, a kingdom situated on the eastern and western shores of Lake Chad, the main source is the *Diwân salâfîn Barnû* »Annals of the kings of (Kanem-) Bornu«. This short chronicle provides the names of 68 Sefuwa kings and some information on their successive reigns. Having founded the Chadian state at a date not yet firmly established, the Sefuwa ruled first in Kanem and later in Bornu until 1846, when the last king of the dynasty was killed. The prologue of the *Diwân* begins with a statement on the origin of the fictive dynastic founder Sayf b. Dhî Yazan, who was in fact a scion of the Himyarite dynasty living in Yemen at the end of the sixth century AD. It continues with a spurious Arab genealogy of the presumed dynastic founder comprising 22 names and ending with Isma’il/Ishmael, son of Ibrâhîm/Abraham. It proceeds by providing an ascending genealogy of the biblical patriarchs which comprises all twenty names from Abraham (20) to Adam (1) with the sole exception of Peleg (15). It has gone unnoticed until now that this list of patriarchs is extremely reliable insofar as it seems to derive from direct internal transmission and not from any Arab intermediary.

Since the ruling elite of Kanem converted to Islam around 1060, an influence of Arab-Islamic scholarship on the written sources of the Chadian state has to be expected from that period onward. In fact, Islamic feedback on the *Diwân* is apparent from the change of name of the dynastic founder from Sef to Sayf b. Dhî Yazan and from the attempt to connect the South Arabian hero with the North Arabian and biblical figure Isma’il b. Ibrâhîm through a number of awkward and obviously fictitious names. Although the usurpation of the Yemenite hero Sayf b. Dhî Yazan as the dynastic founder of Kanem was recorded from the thirteenth century onward by several Arab authors, the king lists and most other internal sources of Bornu remained faithful to the earlier tradition by calling the dynastic founder simply Sef or Sebu. Another example of Islamic feedback on the *Diwân* concerns the father of Abraham, originally called Târakh/Terah in the chronicle. Since according to the Koran his name was Āzar (VI:74), a Muslim corrector of the chronicle noted the difference and tried to solve it by turning Āzar into the real father of Ibrâhîm and Târakh into the brother of his father. The second copy of the *Diwân* suggests that the keepers of the chronicle may have originally preferred to regard Terah as the real father of Abraham.

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5 The Arab genealogy of the *Diwân* has twice al-Šâhî and three times Lu’ayy following each other. These sequences and strange names like Saḥî, al-Ḥajj, Jâmî, Hûd and the female names Hamla, Halina and Wardiyya are never found in Arab genealogies (W. Caskel, *Djamharat an-Nasab*, II, 1966, 101–614).

6 O. Blau, Chronik der Sultâne von Bornu, ZDMG 6 (1852), 307–8; Lange, *Diwân*, 23–24, 65. As brother of Joktan/Qaḥṭân Preleg was incompatible with the Yemenite genealogy of the Sefuwa.


8 H. R. Palmer, Sudanese Memoirs, II, 1928, 87, 94, 116; III, 36. For the insertion of the dynastic figure Sayf b. Dhî Yazan in the *Diwân* in consequence of Islamization see Lange, Chronologie, 157–9; for the substitution of his namesake Sef see Lange, Kingdoms, 243; and for the Sargonic identity of Sef see Lange, Arguments for the foundation of Kanem c. 600 BC (submitted).

9 The Halle manuscript reads (akhū Târakh Arghû Āzar) with the additional name  (n° 16).
and Āzar as his uncle.10 In any case, both solutions differ significantly from that adopted by Arab historians who consider Āzar as an alternative name for Terah.11 Hence, even in the case of Islamic feedback this influence is restricted to the Koran and does not derive significantly from Arab historians.

Another way of probing the possible influence of Arab scholarly writings on the prologue of the Diwân consists in comparing the orthography of the names of the biblical patriarchs.12 In this respect it should be noted that Arab historians begin their world histories with accounts of the successive patriarchs relying for this on translations of the Torah from Hebrew or Greek into Arabic.13 By comparing the spelling of their names in the chronicle with that of the Arab historians a number of significant differences show up. Thus we find in the Diwân Shi’t (شَيْث) instead of Shith (شَيْث) Seth (2), Yānush instead of Anūsh for Enosh (3), K.nān instead of Qīnān for Kenan (4), Kh.nūkh instead of Akh.nūkh for Enoch (7), ‘Abir instead of ‘Ābir for Eber (14) and T.jūr (earlier: N.jūr) instead of Nāhūr for Nahor (18).14 On the other hand some specificities of the list bear witness to a long independent transmission without major corrections on the basis of Arabic texts: in both versions Amîr (2) and Enoch (7) – the orthography of the patriarchal name in the chronicle is therefore fairly consistent with that of the Arab historians – but not by Enosh (3), Kenan (4) and many others – some corrections were attempted on the basis of Arabic texts as can be seen from the insertion of Āzar (19) and the addition of Ārghūb/Reu (أَرْجُحُ بِث) (16). However, the latter name is misplaced in both manuscripts: ms H has ‘Ābir in the margin and ms L has it misplaced to n° 9), Zayd (6) is in both versions made the son of Mabrak/Mahalel (5) and A.r.k (earlier: N.hūr) instead of Nāhūr for Nahor (18).14 On the other hand some specificities of the list bear witness to a long independent transmission without major corrections on the basis of Arabic texts: in both versions Amîr (2) and Enoch (7) – the orthography of the Diwân is closer to the presumed Hebrew original than that of the Arab authors.

Nevertheless some corrections were attempted on the basis of Arabic texts as can be seen from the insertion of Āzar (19) and the addition of Ārghūb/Reu (أَرْجُحُ بِث) (16). However, the latter name is misplaced in both manuscripts: ms H has it as an onomastic element of the full name of Terah (19) and in ms L it figures just before Arfakhshadh (12). Apparently the copyists did not realize that the manuscripts already had the name in the different form A.r.kū.15 The spelling of the patriarchal name in the chronicle is therefore fairly consistent though partly different from Arabic. As evidenced by the current names Adam (1), Seth (2), Noah (10) and Shem (11)16 – but not by Enosh (3), Kenan (4) and many others – some corrections in the Islamic period occurred but they were not always effective.

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10 According to the London manuscript Abraham was the son of the brother of Āzar (أَخُو أَذَر akhū Āzar), thus indirectly confirming Terah, whose name is not mentioned, as father of Ibrāhīm (Lange, Diwân, 23 n. 20).
12 Gen 5, 11, 17; I Chr 1,1–27; Lk 3,23–28.
15 The rendering of Hebrew ‘ayin by kāf is phonetically less appropriate than the quasi-transliteration followed by the Arabs which has ghayn instead of ‘ayin. An example is the root for »town« Hebr ‘îr, Sem ġer (V. O. Orel/O. V. Stolbova, Hamito-Semitic Etymological Dictionary, 1995, n° 1012).
16 Of these figures only Adam (1) and Nûh (10) are mentioned in the Koran (II,31 etc.; III,33, etc.)
The most striking differences between the onomastic forms found in the Diwān and those of the Arab historians — and hence the canonical text of the Book of Genesis corresponding to the final Priestly edition — concern six double names, for which there is no previous written evidence: Qayn(n) (?) K.nān for ِكنان Kenan (4),17 Malāḥāyīl Malīyl for مالحلايل Mahalalel (5), Zayd ibn Mabrak for زيد بن مربك Jared (6), M.rūsh.l.kh M.t.s.lim for مالخ Shalum Methuselah (8), Arfakhshad Makhshad for آفخشاد Arpachshad (12) and Amir ‘Abīr for ابير Eber (14).18 We will consider these double names one after the other by taking into account the two available manuscripts of the Diwān, the fairly reliable ms H (Halle) and the defective ms L (London).19

For ِكنان Kenan (4) we find in ms H of the Diwān B.khayn.n (؟) K.nān(ah) (Blau corrects to Qaynān Kinān), while ms L omits the double name.20 Blau rightly considers the first half of the name as a different orthographic rendering of the same name. It should be noted that the final letter bā of K.nān(ah) (كنان) — added customarily to certain proper names in Bornu writings — most often represents a sukūn on the preceding consonant, i.e. the vowellessness of the preceding consonant.21 The transliteration of that the final letter of the name as a different orthographic rendering of the same name. It should be noted that the first name of the chronicle eliminates the letter bā due to the impossibility to represent in Greek a word-internal h-like sound. Like the reading of the Arab historians, the first name of the Diwān keeps the bā but omits one lāmed. It is thus truncated in a way similar to the Greek transliterations but by another letter. In addition to the missing lāmed the second name of the chronicle eliminates the letter bā like the Greek texts. It therefore reveals the awareness of the existence of a second form of the name attested as early as the third century BC.

For زيد بن مربك Jared (6) ms H of the Diwān has Zayd ibn Mabrak and ms L has Zayd b. Mabrak, in which Zayd appears to be a scribal error or an Arabic interpretation for Yarid (يريد). The Arabic forms of both elements of the name suggest a modification of the original version in the Islamic period. On the basis of ms L, which has from Enoch (7) onward خنوح بن زيد بن مربك بن فتى بن متوسخا بن شنت بن أدم the following sequence may be reconstructed: Zayd/Jared (6) b. Mabrak/Mahalalel (5) b. F.tā/Kenan (4)

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17 Blau reads َخنين (B.khayn.n) and corrects Qayn(n) (Chronik, 307) although the − bad − photocopy of ms H seems to have ِقينن (F. shyār) (Lange, Diwān, 23 n. 28).
18 Blau, Chronik, 307–8; Lange, Diwān, 23, 65.
19 Halle, Library of the DMG, Arab. Ms n° 53; London, SOAS, Arab Ms n° 41 384; Lange, Diwān, 22–23.
20 Blau, Chronik, 307; Lange, Diwān, 23 n. 28.
21 As written in ِسکمه for Diskam (ms H; § 20). In the Diwān we find likewise ِسکمه for Damasak (§ 26), َکنه for Kanem (§s 4, 31) and ِسکمه for Sakadam (§ 9), but also for Kano (§ 35).
22 H. Jungraithmayr/D. Ibriszmow, Chadic Roots, 1994, I, XXIV–XXV.
b. M.tūsh.khā/Enosh (3) b. Seth (2) b. Adam (1). These emendations imply that ms H has the supplementary forms -yin bin Mabrak deriving from an attempted correction under the influence of Arabic names. A similar wrong Arabic form can be found below in the name added to Arpachshad (12). The analysis of the apparent double name Zayd b. Mabrak thus shows that Kanuri copyists were induced by their Arabic knowledge to change some names in the patriarchal list of the Diwān. On the other hand, there is no evidence that in recent times they confronted these patriarchal names with those transmitted by Arab authors.

The name רֹדֵבש אַרְפַּחְשָד Methuselah (8) is rendered in ms H of the Diwān by the double name M.tūsh.l.kh M.t.s.l.im (8) standing for Methuselah and Methusalem. Ms L has the corrupt but recognizable form M.s.t.l.im (مثولسليم). The double name joins the name Methuselah from the Hebrew Bible (Gen 5,21–27; I Chr 1,1–24) to its substitute Mathusalam witnessed by later texts. In fact, the Greek Septuagint and Lk 3,37 have the slightly abbreviated form Μαθοσαλμα, while the Latin Vulgate has the forms Mathusala and Mathusale in the accusative. Various non-canonical texts provide only the second name, which is mostly written in Greek Mathousala but sometimes also Mathousalek and only texts of the old Church have the reading Methusalem. From this brief survey it appears that Mathusala and Mathousalek are evidenced as substitute names for Mathuselah from the late pre-Christian era. In addition to neglect of the Hebrew letters hē and hēt in Greek transliterations – see n° 5, 20 and n° 8, 10, 13, 19 – the motivation for this replacement could have been the religious meaning of the theophoric name composed of the West Semitic mutu »man, husband« and the divine name Šalāh »god of the infernal river« possibly rejected by faithful worshippers of Jahwe. Hence, the double name in the Diwān possibly reflects the tendency to substitute the earlier Canaanite name by a less compromising alternative form of the name and as such, it could have been in oral use much earlier than its written attestation.

For אֵרַפְּחְשַׁד Arpachshad (12) we find in ms H Arfakhshadh Makhshadh and in ms L Arfakhshadh Muhammad. The latter is clearly a scribal error induced by the similarity between the written forms Makhshadh (مَخْشَد) and Muhammad (مُحَمَّد). The Septuagint and Luke have Ἄρφαξδ and the Book of the Biblical Antiquities has Arfaxa (IV:9; V:6). Scholars suppose that the first part of the name stands for Arrapxa, a town of the Hurrians corresponding probably to modern Kirkuk, and the second for קַסְדִים (kāsdīm), the He-

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24 The name M.tūsh.l.kh appears in ms L in the truncated form מִתוּשְׁחַא (M.tūsh.khā) in place of Enosh (3).
25 Genesis Apocryphon II,19 (Methusalah); I Enoch CVI,1; CVII,3 etc. (Mοθοσαλακ); Jubilees IV,27 etc. (Μαθοσαλα). The Latin version of the Book of the Biblical Antiquities has Matusalam (I:18). The First Book of Enoch was composed between the fourth century BC and the turn of the era (G. Nickelsburg, Enoch, First Book of, ABD, II, 508; M. T. Walcker, Henochschriften, NBL, II, 117).
27 Westermann, Genesis, 484; R. S. Hess, Methuselah, ABD, IV, 800–1.
28 Originally composed c. 50 BC in Hebrew or Aramean, the Book of the Biblical Antiquities exists only in Latin translation (A. Dupont-Sommer et al., La Bible, écrits intertestamentaires, 1987, 1227).
brew ethnic name for Chaldeans. Since from Old Testament times the name was understood to refer to the Chaldeans of Babylon, the first part of the name might have been eliminated in order to obliterate the reference to Arrapxa and hence to the Hurrians and to reinforce the meaning of the second part of the name – kešed (כּוּסֶד) – and its focus on the or Chaldeans. In view of the dwindling importance of the Hurrians in the first millennium BC and the successful war of the Chaldean rulers of Babylon against Assyria, the reshaping of the ethnically significant name Arpachshad for the benefit of the Babylonians seems to be a plausible explanation for the early emergence of the modified name Makhshad. If these considerations are correct, the end of the seventh century BC was the most probable period for such a modification, which may later have been forgotten again.

Instead of Eber (14) the Dīwān has the double name Amîr ’Abîr found as such in ms H, while ms L as Amîr, the second element ’Abîr being inserted in ms L before Methuselah (8) in a wrong position. The first element of the name is the Arabic word amîr, which means «commander, lord» and which could correspond to an Arabic translation of a Hebrew or an Aramaic term. No other patriarch mentioned in the Dīwān is singled out by a similar epithet having a precise meaning. It seems to imply that Eber was the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews, a supposition which is only indirectly supported by the Bible. According to Gen 10:21, Shem (11) was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber (אָבֶר), a statement which seems to indicate that Eber was a prolific patriarch having had many descendants. As such, he could have easily been the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews (אָבֶר). It is only Josephus who clearly states in 93 AD that the Hebrews were called after Eber (Ant I, 6:4). On the other hand it is generally supposed that as members of the widely known äabiru or äapiru the Hebrews were originally some kind of outlaws and a mobile population element. Hence, Eber might have been considered as the «commander» of those äapiru who constituted the early Israelite Hebrews. Such a concept could have been particularly significant for Israelites who for one reason or another were forced to leave their country and to seek refuge elsewhere.

From the preceding onomastic analysis of the patriarchal names included in the prologue of the Dīwān it can be excluded that these names were borrowed from Arabic sources. Most significant for our question are the double names Mahalâyîl Malyîl (5), M.tûš.l.kh M.t.s.lîm (8) and Arfakhshadh Makhshadh (12). In each case the name known from the Priestly edition of Genesis is followed by a slightly divergent form of the name which in two cases – n° 5 and n° 8 – is evidenced by texts from the early Christian period. Though for Arfakhshadh Makhshadh (12) there is no written testimony of the second name, its form appears quite plausible as a shortened ethnic designation referring exclus-

29 R. S. Hess, Arpachshad, ABD, I, 400; M. Görg, Arpachshad, NBL, I, 175.
30 According to Josephus Arphaxades was earlier the name for the Chaldeans (Ant I, 6,4).
31 Apart from the addition of the personalizing prefix ma- (cf. Mahalalel) the plosive kap became a guttural kbâ.
32 It should be noted that in ms H ’Abîr is written in the margin of the manuscript but inserted by a line in its correct position.
33 E. W. Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 1863, 1, 97. Amîr figures also in the Arab genealogy (Lange, Dīwān, 22).
34 N. P. Lemche, Ḥabarû, Ḥapistu, ABD, III, 6–10. For a possible ritualistic definition of the Ḥabarû see Lange, Das Überleben der kanaanäischen Kultur in Schwarzafrica: To-tenkultbünde bei den Yoruba und in Ugarit, SMSR 72, 2006, 307–322.
35 Lange, Immigration, 101–3; id., Successor state (in press). It is also possible that the epithet amîr resulted from Eber’s position as father of Peleg and Joktan/Qâhtan.
ively to the Chaldeans. In spite of the fact that the four double names in the Diwān (the two others having only orthographic significance) are highly original in their form insofar as there are no other surviving testimonies for such explanatory additional names, they appear to bear witness to oral and perhaps even written variations with respect to patriarchal names in Old Testament times. Since none of the juxtaposed onomastic forms is evidenced in Judaic texts, although the latter testify to the existence of modified forms of these names, it may be supposed that emigrants to the region of Lake Chad in the pre-Christian era brought with them the knowledge of these disparities. In a context of ethnic and religious heterogeneity, the author of the first outline of the Diwān must have felt it appropriate to commit these divergences to writing without any indication of his own preference.

The main annalistic section of the Diwān begins after the prologue with its Arabic and biblical genealogies. The successive paragraphs are characterized by their conformity to a strict model defined by the type of information included. Besides the name of the king and that of his father, they also give the length of reign and the place of death of the different rulers. More particularly, in fifty percent of all cases they indicate the name of the king’s mother and in twenty percent, the name of her father. Similar information is found in the biblical Books of Kings and in the Chronicles based on the chronicles of Israel and Judah but not in the king lists and chronicles of Assyria and Babylonia. Most extraordinary is the parallel information concerning the king’s mother and her origin, reflecting the important role of the queen-mother and the place of the king’s death.36 In spite of this remarkable similarity of the Diwān with an Israelite model, it should be noted that the orally transmitted name girgam, designating in various languages of the Central Sudan king list and chronicles, is not derived from an Israelite name but from the Sumero-Akkadian term gir-ginakku »box for tablets, library«.37

A similar combination of Israelite and Mesopotamian influences can be observed in other aspects of the Diwān. According to the opening line of the chronicle the mother of the dynastic ancestor was the daughter of the king of Baghdad, a claim of origin referring most likely to a pre-Islamic city situated close to the Abbasid capital.38 At the beginning of the annals – i.e. after the biblical genealogy – the Diwān covers the pre-Islamic period of the Sefuwa in nine paragraphs referring to nine enigmatic kings who can be shown to correspond to ancient Near Eastern rulers as intimated by different versions of the origin-chronicle of Kanem-Bornu.39 Suffice to say for the purpose of the present note that the first three royal names refer to three great personalities of the early imperial period of the Fertile Crescent: Sargon of Akkad, Abraham and Hammurapi. The following six figures correspond to Pûl or Tiglath-pileser III (744–727), the Assyrian conqueror of Syria-Palestine, to three national kings of important deportee communities of Syria-Palestine – Urartians, Elamites and Amorites of Nairi – and to the last Assyrian king Assur-uballit II (612–609) and his Babylonian challenger Nabopolassar (625–605).40 Thus, the first section of the Diwān briefly records those aspects of ancient Near Eastern history which were of crucial import-

37 CAD, V, 86–87; Lange, Ancient Kingdoms, 245.
40 Lange, Arguments (submitted); id., Magistrates, 9.
ance for groups of refugees comprising mainly Assyrian deportees and Israelites from Syria-Palestine who settled in the region of Lake Chad.

Moreover, in conjunction with the origin-chronicle, the information in the Diwân concerning Assur-uballiṭ II can be understood to refer to the last Assyrian king as the leader of a great exodus who died in Zaylan/Zawila in Fezzan.\(^{41}\) Since parallel information with respect to the early imperial period, the Neo-Assyrian expansion, the deportee groups, the collapse of the Assyrian empire and the retreat of refugee groups can be deduced from the king list and the chronicle of Kebbi, the validity of the analysis of the Diwân with respect to its ancient Near Eastern information is supported by comparable written evidence from another state of the Central Sudan which originated under similar circumstances.\(^{42}\) These conclusions deriving from textual comparisons show that the information in the early sections of the chronicle is on the whole extremely accurate. On the basis of this and other circumstantial evidence\(^{43}\) it is not unreasonable to suppose that the extensive and valid information in the Diwân concerning ancient Near Eastern genealogical figures and dynastic predecessors was transmitted from around 600 BC onward in a written form, either in Hebrew or in Aramaic, until a keeper of the chronicle translated the document into Arabic in the early Islamic period of Kanem.\(^{44}\)

Finally attention should be drawn to Israelite influences on the institutions of Kanem-Bornu. The most obvious instance of this impact concerns the Ark of the Covenant. Called by the name Mune, apparently derived from Heb. מanna (»Manna«), this object was destroyed by the radical Islamic reformer Dunama Dibbalemi (1203–1242).\(^ {45}\) A contributor to the Diwân deplores the destruction of the sacred object, which gave rise to many conflicts within the kingdom.\(^ {46}\) Ibn Furtū, the grand Imam of Bornu, wrote in his chronicle on the wars of Kanem in 1578 that the Mune of Kanem was inherited from the Israelites of King Saul. He considered its destruction as a sacrilegious act that led to civil war among the Sefuwa and caused the loss of Kanem, the central province of the kingdom.\(^ {47}\) Another aspect of Israelite institutional influence on Kanem concerns the important office of the queen-mother, whose name Magira is apparently derived from Hebrew מָגבִּירָה: ma-gebîra Magira.\(^ {48}\) Known to have presided in former times over the cult of the divine patron-

\(^{41}\) Smith, Legend, 49; Palmer, Memoirs, II, 93; Lange, Diwân, 67 (§ 9).

\(^{42}\) Lange, Successor state (in press).

\(^{43}\) Following fn 21 it should be noted that the writing of the suffix -hā` in proper names, probably derived from the Hebrew be locale, tends to disappear towards the end of the Diwân. Thus we find the spelling Alaw (‘Alaw) and not Alawoh (‘Alawoh) for Alawo and Ghala (‘Ghala) and not Ghalah (‘Ghalah) for Ngala (Diwân §§ 54, 66) in conformity with general Arabic usage.

\(^{44}\) A similar procedure has to be taken into account for the composition and transmission of the king list of Kebbi (Lange, Successor state, (in press)).

\(^{45}\) Heb 9,4 describes the Ark of the Covenant as consisting of the »testimony«, i.e. the tables of the covenant, placed in the Ark and two objects placed before it: a golden urn holding the manna and Aaron’s rod that budded (see also Exod 25,16, 21).


\(^{48}\) The ma- may be a verbal participle prefix (similar to מָגבִּיר - »blessing«).
ess of the royal dynasty the queen-mother, similar to the gebîrah, had great authority.\textsuperscript{49} In
the pre-Islamic period her power in Kanem was so great that she could sanction the king
himself and even depose him.\textsuperscript{50}

Hence, the list of biblical patriarchs included in the Diwân is certainly not an isolated
instance of Israelite influence on the early state of Kanem. From the onomastic analysis it
appears that the names are characterized by a number of specific features which largely rule
out any late or secondary provenance. On account of their orthographic specificities and
their extended forms comprising different pre-canonical second names, recent chance inno-
vations may be excluded with the same certainty as borrowings from Arabic sources. Also,
any earlier addition to the chronicle through the intermediary of travelling Judaic or Chris-
tian missionaries is very unlikely in view of other important Israelite aspects of the chron-
icle such as its general form and its positioning of Abraham as the second ancestral figure of
the Sefuwa dynasty. Moreover, secondary outside interference with the Diwân seems even
more improbable if we consider that the royal chronicle was a document surrounded by
great secrecy, of which the Grand Imam Ibn Furtû himself did not have any knowledge in
the second half of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{51} Therefore, according to the most likely hypo-
thesis, the list of patriarchs of the Diwân reflects biblical knowledge of a written nature
with respect to the patriarchs as it seems to have existed in Israel at the end of the seventh
century BC and as it appears to have been committed to writing in Kanem for the composi-
tion of the first outline of the chronicle at the beginning of the state, before it was subse-
quently handed down by careful written transmission and then translated into Arabic. In
this restricted sense, the preceding onomastic analysis of the patriarchal names supports the
idea of a prominent contribution of Israelite immigrants to the foundation of Kanem
around 600 BC as a consequence of the fall of the Assyrian empire.

Scholars generally suppose that information in West African king lists and chronicles con-
cerning the ancient Near East is derived from the Arab writings. This does not seem to be
the case with the list of biblical patriarchs included in the Diwân of the kings of Kanem-
Bornu. In all likelihood Israelite immigrants brought this knowledge with them when they
left Syria-Palestine with other ethnic groups after of the fall of the Assyrian empire at the
end of the seventh century BC.

Il est généralement admis que les informations sur le Proche-Orient antique contenus dans
des listes dynastiques et des chroniques de l’Afrique de l’Ouest ont été empruntées à des
écrits arabes. Cette provenance semble être exclue dans les cas de la liste des patriarches
bibliques contenue dans le Diwân des rois du Kanem-Bornu. Apparemment, ces connaiss-
ances furent transmises dans la région de Lac Tchad par des immigrants israélites qui quit-
tèrent, avec d’autres groupes ethniques, la Syrie-Palestine lors de l’effondrement de l’empire
assyrien à la fin du VII\textsuperscript{ème} siècle av. J.-C.

\textsuperscript{49} G. W. Ahlström, Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion, 1993, 57–88; Ackerman,
Queen mother, 389–401.

\textsuperscript{50} Lange, Diwân, 69–70 (§ 14); id., Kingdoms, 185, 225;

\textsuperscript{51} Ibn Furtû refers explicitly only to a chronicle written about Idrîs Katakarmabe
(1487–1509) and the genealogy of his own king Idrîs b. ’Ali (1564–1596) shows that he
was not acquainted with the Diwân (H. Barth, Travels and Discoveries in North and
Central Africa, II, 1857: 16–17; D. Lange, A Sudanic Chronicle: The Borno Expedi-
tions of Idrîs Alauma (1564–1576), 1987, 34; Palmer, Memoirs, I, 15).
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