

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.

* For the discussion of the philological aspects of this contribution, I owe a great debt of gratitude to my colleague Klaus Schubert, University of Munich.

¹ J. D. Fage, *A History of Africa*, 1978, 22–24, 60–63; D. Lange, *Chronologie et histoire d'un royaume africain: le Dīwān des sultans du Kānem-Bornū*, 1977, 113–144; id., *The Chad region as a crossroads*, in: *General History of Africa*, III, M. Elfasi (ed.), 1988, 436–460.

² With respect to the situation in Syria-Palestine after the fall of Assyria see D. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*, 1992, 446–456, and H. Donner, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel und seiner Nachbarn*, 2nd ed., 1995, 388–404.

³ D. Lange, *Ancient Kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-Centred and Canaanite-Israelite Perspectives*, 2004, 235–254; id., *An Assyrian successor state in West Africa: the ancestral kings of Kebbi as ancient Near Eastern rulers*, *Anthropos* 105 (2009) (in print).

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 *Dīwān salāṭīn Barnū* »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 *Dīwān* begins with a statement on the origin of the fictive dynastic founder Sayf b. Dhī 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'īl/Ishmael, son of Ibrāhīm/Abraham.⁵ 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).⁶ 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.⁷

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 *Dīwān* is apparent from the change of name of the dynastic founder from Sēf to Sayf b. Dhī Yazan and from the attempt to connect the South Arabian hero with the North Arabian and biblical figure Isma'īl b. Ibrāhīm through a number of awkward and obviously fictitious names. Although the usurpation of the Yemenite hero Sayf b. Dhī 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 Sēf or Sebu.⁸ Another example of Islamic feedback on the *Dīwān* concerns the father of Abraham, originally called Tārakh/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 Ibrāhīm and Tārakh into the brother of his father.⁹ The second copy of the *Dīwān* suggests that the keepers of the chronicle may have originally preferred to regard Terah as the real father of Abraham

⁵ The Arab genealogy of the *Dīwān* has twice al-Ṣaḥḥ and three times Lu'ayy following each other. These sequences and strange names like Ṣaḥḥ, al-Ḥajj, al-Ḥājj, Jām, Hūd and the female names Ḥamla, Ḥalīna and Wardiyya are never found in Arab genealogies (W. Caskel, *Djamharat an-Nasab*, II, 1966, 101–614).

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

⁷ See D. Lange, *Immigration of the Chadic-speaking Sao towards 600 BC*, Borno Museum Society Newsletter, 72/75 (2008), 72–94, and id., *The early magistrates and kings of Kanem as descendants of Assyrian state-builders*, *Anthropos* 104 (2009), 3–24.

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

⁹ The Halle manuscript reads *أخو تاريخ أرغوا أزر* (*akhū Tārakh Arghū Āzar*) with the additional name *أرغوا* Regu (16) misspelled earlier as *أركوما* (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 *Dīwān* 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 *Dīwān* Shi't (شيت) instead of Shīth (شيث) for שח Seth (2), Yānush instead of Anūsh for אנוש Enosh (3), K.nān instead of Qīnān for קינין Kenan (4), Kh.nūkh instead of Akh.nūkh for חנוך Enoch (7), 'Abīr instead of 'Ābir for עבר Eber (14) and T.jūr (earlier: N.ḥūr) instead of Nāḥūr for נחור 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 Amīr takes the place of 'Abīr (14) (ms H has 'Abīr 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.kū (16) – ms H has Akurmā (أكورما) – is obviously a divergent spelling רעו Reu (16) reproduced by the Arabs as Arghū (أرغو). In two cases – Seth (2) and Enoch (7) – the orthography of the *Dīwān* 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 Arghū/Reu (أرغو) (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.

¹⁰ According to the London manuscript Abraham was the son of the brother of Āzar أخو أزر (*akhū Āzar*), thus indirectly confirming Terah, whose name is not mentioned, as father of Ibrāhīm (Lange, *Dīwān*, 23 n. 20).

¹¹ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, Beirut, 1960, I, 23; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-russul w'al-mulūk*, I, M. Th. Houtsma (ed.), 1883, 217.

¹² Gen 5, 11, 17; I Chr 1,1–27; Lk 3,23–28.

¹³ H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Tawrāt* Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., X, 2000, 394.

¹⁴ The following books were consulted: Ibn Qutayba, *K. al-ma'ārif*, S. 'Uqāsha (ed.), 1960, 18–31; al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 8–23; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 164–224; al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūdj al-dhahab*, M. M, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (ed.), 1958, 38–44.

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 'ir, Sem *ger* (V. O. Orel/O. V. Stolbova, *Hamito-Semitic Etymological Dictionary*, 1995, n° 1012).

¹⁶ Of these figures only Adam (1) and Nūḥ (10) are mentioned in the Koran (II,31 etc.; III,33, etc.)

The most striking differences between the onomastic forms found in the *Dīwān* 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 קינן Kenan (4),¹⁷ Mahalāyil Malyil for מהללאל Mahalalel (5), Zayd *ibn* Mabrak for ירד Jared (6), M.tūsh.l.kh M.t.s.lim for מתושלח Methuselah (8), Arfakhshadh Makhshadh for ארפכשד Arpachshad (12) and Amir ʿAbir for עבר Eber (14).¹⁸ We will consider these double names one after the other by taking into account the two available manuscripts of the *Dīwān*, the fairly reliable ms H (Halle) and the deficient ms L (London).¹⁹

For קינן Kenan (4) we find in ms H of the *Dīwān* B.khayn.n (?) K.nān(ah) (Blau corrects to Qaynan 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 *hā* of K.nān(ah) (كنانه) – 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 *qōp* by *kāf* could result from the Greek form of the name Κοινον found in the Septuagint and in the genealogy of Jesus (Lk 3:23–28) or from the absence of the corresponding plosive sound in Kanuri, the language of Bornu, or the preceding Chadic language.²²

The name מהללאל Mahalalel (5) is rendered in ms H of the *Dīwān* as Mahalāyil Malyil, while ms L has the Arabic form Mabrak (ميرك) derived from Mahalāyil (مهلاييل). Apart from the preformative *mēm* it is based on two roots *hll* »to praise« and *ʿl* »god« and means either »praising God« or »praise of God«. ²³ The Yahwist genealogy has the form מהויאל Mehujael (Gen 4:18) and the Septuagint and Luke have Μαλαηελ, a form, which omits the letter *hē* 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 *Dīwān* keeps the *hē* 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 *hē* 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 ירד Jared (6) ms H of the *Dīwān* has Zaydīn (زيدين) b. Mabrak and ms L has Zayd (زيد) 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 خنوخ بن زيد بن ميرك بن فتى بن متوشخا بن شئت بن آدم, the following sequence may be reconstructed: Zayd/Jared (6) b. Mabrak/Mahalalel (5) b. Ftā/Kenan (4)

¹⁷ Blau reads بخينن (B.khayn.n) and corrects قينن Qayn.n (Chronik, 307) although the – bad – photocopy of ms H seems to have فشييار (F. shyār) (Lange, *Dīwān*, 23 n. 28).

¹⁸ Blau, Chronik, 307–8; Lange, *Dīwān*, 23, 65.

¹⁹ Halle, Library of the DMG, Arab. Ms n° 53; London, SOAS, Arab Ms n° 41 384; Lange, *Dīwān*, 22–23.

²⁰ Blau, Chronik, 307; Lange, *Dīwān*, 23 n. 28.

²¹ As written in ن س ك م ه for Diskam (ms H; § 20). In the *Dīwān* we find likewise دمسكه for Damasak (§ 26), كانه for Kanem (§§ 4, 31) and س ك م ه for Sakadam (§ 9), but also كنه for Kano (§ 35).

²² H. Jungraithmayr/D. Ibriszimow, Chadic Roots, 1994, I, XXIV–XXV.

²³ C. Westermann, Genesis Kapitel 1–11, 4th ed., 1999, 483; R. S. Hess, Mahalalel, ABD, IV, 472.

b. M.tūsh.khā/Enosh (3) b. Seth (2) b. Adam (1). These emendations imply that ms H has the supplementary forms *-yīn 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 *Dīwān*. 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 מְהוּשֵׁלַח Methuselah (8) is rendered in ms H of the *Dīwān* by the double name M.tūsh.l.kh M.t.s.lim (8) standing for Methuselah and Methusalem. Ms L has the corrupt but recognizable form M.s.t.lim (مستليم).²⁴ The double name joins the name Methuselah from the Hebrew Bible (Gen 5,21–27; I Chr 1,1–24) to its substitute Mathusalem witnessed by later texts. In fact, the Greek Septuagint and Lk 3,37 have the slightly abbreviated form Μαθουσαλα, while the Latin Vulgate has the forms Mathusala and Mathusale and Mathusalam in the accusative. Various non-canonical texts provide only the second name, which is mostly written in Greek Mathusala but sometimes also Mathusalek²⁵ and only texts of the old Church have the reading Methusalem.²⁶ From this brief survey it appears that Mathusala and Mathusalek 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 Šalaḥ »god of the infernal river« possibly rejected by faithful worshippers of Jahwe.²⁷ Hence, the double name in the *Dīwān* 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 אַרְפַּכְשָׁד Arpachshad (12) we find in ms H Arfakhshadh Makhshadh and in ms L Arfakhshadh Muḥammad. The latter is clearly a scribal error induced by the similarity between the written forms Makhshadh (مخشذ) and Muḥammad (محمد). The Septuagint and Luke have Αρφαξαδ and the Book of the Biblical Antiquities has Arfafa (IV:9; V:6).²⁸ 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 כַּשְׁדִּים (*kašdim*), the He-

²⁴ The name M.tūsh.l.kh appears in ms L in the truncated form متوشخا (M.tūsh.kha) in place of Enosh (3).

²⁵ Genesis Apocryphon II,19 (Methuselah); I Enoch CVI,1; CVII,3 etc. (Μαθουσαλέκ); Jubilees IV,27 etc. (Μαθουσαλα). The Latin version of the Book of the Biblical Antiquities has Matusalem (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).

²⁶ H. Seebaß, *Metuschelach*, NBL, II, 794. H. Schmid suggests an origin in the »old Church« (BHH, II, 1207). For the Latin translation of Genesis in 401 AD see D. C. Parker, *Vulgate*, ABD, VI, 860.

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.²⁹ Since from Old Testament times the name was understood to refer to the Chaldeans of Babylon,³⁰ 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* (כשד) – and its focus on the כשדִים or Chaldeans.³¹ 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 עבר Eber (14) the *Dīwān* has the double name Amīr ‘Abir found as such in ms H, while ms L as Amīr, the second element ‘Abir being inserted in ms L before Methuselah (8) in a wrong position.³² The first element of the name is the Arabic word *amīr*, which means »commander, lord« and which could correspond to an Arabic translation of a Hebrew or an Aramaic term.³³ 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 (עבר), 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 (עברי). 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 *ḥabiru* or *ḥapiru* the Hebrews were originally some kind of outlaws and a mobile population element.³⁴ Hence, Eber might have been considered as the »commander« of those *ḥapiru* 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.³⁵

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 Mahalāyīl Malyīl (5), M.tūsh.l.kh M.t.s.līm (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, Arpachschad, NBL, I, 175.

³⁰ According to Josephus Arpachshad was earlier the name for the Chaldeans (Ant I, 6,4).

³¹ Apart from the addition of the personalizing prefix *ma-* (cf. Mahalalel) the plusive *kap* became a guttural *khā*.

³² It should be noted that in ms H ‘Abir 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. Amīr figures also in the Arab genealogy (Lange, *Dīwān*, 22).

³⁴ N. P. Lemche, Ḥabiru, Ḥapiru, ABD, III, 6–10. For a possible ritualistic definition of the Ḥabiru see Lange, Das Überleben der kanaanäischen Kultur in Schwarzafrika: Totenkultbünde 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 *amīr* resulted from Eber’s position as father of Peleg and Joktan/Qāḥṭan.

ively to the Chaldeans. In spite of the fact that the four double names in the *Dīwān* (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 *Dīwān* must have felt it appropriate to commit these divergences to writing without any indication of his own preference.

The main annalistic section of the *Dīwān* 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 *Dīwān* with an Israelite model, it should be noted that the orally transmitted name *gīrgam*, 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 *gīrginakku* »box for tablets, library«.³⁷

A similar combination of Israelite and Mesopotamian influences can be observed in other aspects of the *Dīwān*. 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 *Dīwān* covers the pre-Islamic period of the Seifuwa 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 *Dīwān* briefly records those aspects of ancient Near Eastern history which were of crucial import-

³⁶ S. Ackermann, The queen mother and the cult in ancient Israel, JBL 112 (1993), 385–401; E. Platte, Frauen in Amt und Würden, 2000, 230–9.

³⁷ CAD, V, 86–87; Lange, Ancient Kingdoms, 245.

³⁸ H. R. Palmer, Bornu Sahara and Sudan, 1936, 99. Baghdad was founded by al-Manṣūr in 762 AD (Ph. Hitti, History of the Arabs, 1937, 292).

³⁹ A. Smith, The legend of the Seifuwa, in: Studies in the Pre-Colonial History of Bornu, Y. B. Usman/M. N. Alkali (eds.), 1983, 44–50; Palmer, Memoirs, II, 93–95.

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 *Dīwān* concerning Assur-uballiṣ 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 *Dīwān* 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 evidence⁴³ it is not unreasonable to suppose that the extensive and valid information in the *Dīwān* 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. מַן (»Manna«), this object was destroyed by the radical Islamic reformer Dunama Dibbalemi (1203–1242).⁴⁵ A contributor to the *Dīwān* deplores the destruction of the sacred object, which gave rise to many conflicts within the kingdom.⁴⁶ Ibn Furṭū, 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 גַּבִּירָה *gēbīrah*: *magēbīra* 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, *Dīwān*, 67 (§ 9).

⁴² Lange, Successor state (in press).

⁴³ Following fn 21 it should be noted that the writing of the suffix *-hāʾ* in proper names, probably derived from the Hebrew *he locale*, tends to disappear towards the end of the *Dīwān*. Thus we find the spelling *Alaw* (أَلَو) and not *Alawoh* (أَلَوَه) for Alawo and *Ghala* (غَلَا) and not *Ghalah* (غَلَاه) for Ngala (*Dīwān* §§ 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).

⁴⁶ Lange, *Dīwān*, 71–72 (§ 17); id., The Mune-symbol as the Ark of the Covenant between Duguwa and Sefuwa, Borno Museum Society Newsletter 66/67 (2006), 15–21.

⁴⁷ Ibn Furṭū, *Ghazawāt Kānim*, transl. Palmer, Memoirs, I, 69–71; Lange, Mune-symbol, 16–20.

⁴⁸ The *ma-* may be a verbal participle prefix (similar to בְּרַךְ – »blessing«).

ess of the royal dynasty the queen-mother, similar to the *gebirah*, had great authority.⁴⁹ In the pre-Islamic period her power in Kanem was so great that she could sanction the king himself and even depose him.⁵⁰

Hence, the list of biblical patriarchs included in the *Dīwān* 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 innovations 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 Christian missionaries is very unlikely in view of other important Israelite aspects of the chronicle 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 *Dīwān* seems even more improbable if we consider that the royal chronicle was a document surrounded by great secrecy, of which the Grand Imam Ibn Furṭū himself did not have any knowledge in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁵¹ Therefore, according to the most likely hypothesis, the list of patriarchs of the *Dīwān* 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 composition of the first outline of the chronicle at the beginning of the state, before it was subsequently 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 concerning 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 *Dīwān* 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 contenues 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 *Dīwān* des rois du Kanem-Bornu. Apparemment, ces connaissances furent transmises dans la région de Lac Tchad par des immigrants israélites qui quittèrent, avec d'autres groupes ethniques, la Syrie-Palestine lors de l'effondrement de l'empire assyrien à la fin du VII^{ème} siècle av. J.-C.

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

⁵⁰ Lange, *Dīwān*, 69–70 (§ 14); id., *Kingdoms*, 185, 225;

⁵¹ Ibn Furṭū refers explicitly only to a chronicle written about Idrīs Katakarmabe (1487–1509) and the genealogy of his own king Idrīs b. 'Alī (1564–1596) shows that he was not acquainted with the *Dīwān* (H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, II, 1857: 16–17; D. Lange, *A Sudanic Chronicle: The Borno Expeditions of Idrīs Alauma (1564–1576)*, 1987, 34; Palmer, *Memoirs*, I, 15).

List of biblical patriarchs in the canonical Genesis and in the <i>Dīwān</i>					
N°	Conventional English name	Genesis Hebrew	Genesis Septuagint	<i>Dīwān</i>	Arab historians
1	Adam	אדם	Αδαμ	أدم	آدم
2	Seth	שֵׁת	Σηθ	شئت	شيث
3	Enosh	אנוש	Ενωσ	يانش	أنوش
4	Kenan	קִינָן	Καιναν	(بخينن/قنين) كنانه Qayn.n (?) K.nān(ah)	قينان
5	Mahalalel	מהללאל	Μαλελεηλ	مهلاييل ملييل Mahalāyīl Malyīl	مهلائيل
6	Jared	יָרֵד	Ιαρεδ	زيد (بن مبرك) Zayd bin Mabrak	يرد
7	Enoch	חֲנוֹךְ	Ενωχ	خنوخ	أخنوخ
8	Methuselah	מתושלח	Μαθουσαλα	متوشلخ متسليم M.tūsh.lakh M. tusalim	متوشلخ
9	Lamech	לָמֶךְ	Λαμεχ	لامك	لمك
10	Noah	נֹחַ	Νωε	نوح	نوح
11	Shem	שֵׁם	Σημ	سام	سام
12	Arpachshad	אַרְפַּכְשָׁד	Αρφαξαδ	ارفخشذ مخشذ Arfakhshadh Makhshadh	أرفخشذ
13	Shelah	שֵׁלַח	Σαλα	شالخ	شالخ
14	Eber	עֵבֶר	Εβερ	عبير امير Amir 'Abir	عابر
15	Peleg	פֶּלֶג	Φαλεκ/Φαλεγ	Missing	فالغ
16	Reu	רְעוּ	Ραγαν	اكرما/اركو [=ارغو]	أرغو
17	Serug	שְׂרׁוּג	Σερουχ	شَارُوْخُ	ساروخ
18	Nahor	נָחוֹר	Ναχωρ	تجور	ناحور
19	Terah	תְּרַח	Θαρα	تارخ	تارخ
20	Abraham	אַבְרָהָם	Αβρααμ	إبراهيم	إبراهيم

Afrika-Forscher gehen im Allgemeinen davon aus, dass Nachrichten zum alten Vorderen Orient in den Königslisten und Chroniken Westafrikas aus arabischen Schriften entlehnt wurden. Im Fall der im *Dīwān* der Könige von Kanem-Bornu enthaltenen Liste der biblischen Patriarchen ist eine ältere, innere Überlieferung anzunehmen. Übermittler dieser Nachrichten waren vermutlich eingewanderte Israeliten, die zusammen mit anderen ethnischen Gruppen gezwungen waren, das Gebiet von Syrien-Palästina beim Zerfall des assyrischen Reiches am Ende des 7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr. zu verlassen.