Homi K. Bhabha and the "bene yisrael"

Postcolonial Probings into the Chronicler's Construction of Northern Israelian Cultural Identity

David J. Fuller, McMaster Divinity College

Old Testament scholars have long noticed that the Chronicler alternately views the inhabitants of northern Israel as "brothers" to the South and portrays them as apostate rebels. This tension has been widely commented upon but hitherto unresolved. The postcolonial theory of Homi Bhabha is a helpful analytical tool to apply to this problem, as it elucidates the valuable purpose played by ambiguity and tension in constructions of the Other. Understood in this framework, the articulation of cultural identity is always an exercise carried out in the context of comparison with a deficient culture, and thus happens in an "in-between" space. Therefore, the Other of northern Israel has to be placed in continuity with Judah before it can be understood as a defective version of Judah. Additionally, the various signifiers of Judahite authority (throne and cultus) have an unclear relationship that serves to mask Judahite power for the end purpose of making it all the more difficult to identify or challenge.

Introduction

Post-structuralist theories of cultural identity eschew totalizing or essentialist approaches, instead locating the "cultural" in interstitial, antagonistic spaces where "identity" is dependent on the identification of difference from an Other. "Identity," then, is in this perspective a liminal concept always fractured by the necessity of the positioning of the subject in the boundary state of the articulation of discrepant fantasies and the mutual negotiation of contested signifiers of authority. Existing scholarship on the book of Chronicles has noted the ambiguous way northern Israel is constructed. This article explores how the postcolonial theory of Homi K. Bhabha can be a helpful conceptual framework for explaining the discursive purpose behind these and other tensions present in the text heretofore unresolved within existing critical studies.[1]

---

[1] The nature of this mode of analysis situates it in its own liminal space between "historical-critical" and "postmodern" approaches to biblical studies. While the leading question of this study is drawn entirely from traditional forms of inquiry in OT studies, the introduction of a thinker such as Bhabha, steeped in "high theory," necessitates the abandonment of conventional disciplinary goals such as authorial intent and accuracy of historical description. Culler (1997, 3, 4, 14-15) helpfully lays out some general tendencies of "theory": its "speculative" and "analytical" nature renders meaningless the idea of validating or debunking it, it often involves the problematization of that which is usually considered common sense, and it is "enquiry into the categories we use in making sense of things." The application of this particular subtopic in "theory" to biblical studies places it under the disciplinary umbrella of "Ideological criticism." Bible and Culture Collective (1995, 277) defines ideological criticism as intending, "(1) to read the ancient biblical stories for their ideological content and mode of production and (2) to grasp the ideological character of

Previous Approaches to Northern Israel in Chronicles

For the purposes of the present study, it is important to note the general trends that have come and gone in the history of Chronicler studies. Particularly relevant are the guiding questions that have shaped scholarly investigations of the portrayal of and attitude toward the northern kingdom in Chronicles. A summary of research on this issue is provided by Dyck (1996, 90-96), whose work is more than adequate as a guide to the subject through the mid-1990's, although it is filtered through his own concerns of "exclusivist" or "inclusivist" positions on identity. Wellhausen took de Wette's view of the Chronicler having a general anti-Northern bias and adopted it to read Chronicles as denouncing the worship of the Samaritans on Mt. Gerizim, a move followed by Torrey and Noth. For von Rad, "all Israel" could be equated with "true Israel," which was the post-exilic Judahite community. Japhet and Williamson disagree with this previous trend toward anti-northern polemic, instead emphasizing the degree to which all twelve tribes are considered to be Israel, and the continued understanding of brotherhood and possibility of repentance when the northern kingdom fell into sin. Nonetheless, the temple at Jerusalem, and by extension, Judah functions as a representative centre of the nation.

It is also crucial to take note of the descriptive categories being used here. In earlier studies, the oppositions of "positive" and "negative" sufficed. When scholarship moved beyond this simplistic view,[2] however, it became customary to speak in terms of paradox. This articulation of paradox takes different forms. For Klein (2006, 46) and Riley (1993, 188-190), individual northerners are Israelites although their kingdom is depicted as invalid. Braun (1977, 59-62) isolates a number of passages and features that display a "positive" view of the north (his descriptive categories still determined by the older debate). Blenkinsopp (1988, 52) reviews much of the same textual evidence as the other scholars surveyed here, but evaluates it as having a negative view of the north in general. The theme of indeterminacy, or "tension" is highlighted by Siedlecki:

> [The north] is, so to speak, the result of Israel's self-alienation, having its origin inside Israel, while also belonging to the realm of the other. The resulting tension-between Chr.'s desire to incorporate the northern kingdom in its inclusive understanding of Israel and to define Judah as the legitimate kingdom governed by the house of David- characterizes the portrayal of the North in Chronicles and the puzzlement of modern scholars wrestling with this ambivalent portrayal (1999, 255).

Similar language is used by Japhet (2009, 243, 248, 254), whose detailed treatment of the topic begins with the difficulty posed by reconciling the religious and political sin of Jeroboam's rebellion with its divine ordination in 2 Chronicles

---

contemporary reading strategies." Thus not only is the intended object of study, "cultural identity," a phenomenon which resists simplistic definition by its very nature, but this study is not so much attempting to recover something intrinsic to the text (or intentions behind the text) as it is setting out to explore what results are generated when this theory is applied to this issue in the biblical text.

[2] Braun (1977, 59) notes two key reasons for the breakdown of the earlier consensus: 1) The date for the Samaritan schism was pushed back to a time later than that of the Chronicler, making these concerns no longer relevant for the work, and 2) As common authorship of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles was no longer assumed, it was no longer necessary to squeeze the exclusivist views of cultural purity of Ezra-Nehemiah onto Chronicles.

10:15.[3] Finally, closest to the purpose of the present study are the approaches of Ben Zvi (2006b, 195-209) and Dyck (1996, 89-116), who sense a marginalization of the north but express this by signifying Judah as the centre of Israel and the north as the periphery.[4] Dyck, in particular with his use of simple sociological and anthropological concepts, makes sense of difficult features of the text as a deliberate marker of identity, not as an unsolvable puzzle. However, what if these aporia are a deliberate feature of the rhetoric of the text? What if apparent contradictions are signs of a deeper strategy of cultural construction taking place? In the next section, the postcolonial theory of Homi Bhabha, which deliberately embraces ambivalence as a means of constructing self and Other in relation to one another, will be introduced as a means of analyzing the construction of the cultural identity of northern Israel.

Methodology: Postcolonial Theory

The present study attempts a postcolonial analysis of the Judahite constructions of the cultural identity of northern Israel in Chronicles, and ensuing discursive dances performed to the describe the legitimacy of the southern cult and throne in comparison to the illegitimate north,[5] informed chiefly by the concepts articulated in Bhabha (1994). Bhabha's essays that make up *The Location of Culture* cover the broad sweep of rhetoric extant in contexts of colonization: The means by which colonizers *write* their own purity, and hence their right to dominance via the comparatively contaminated identity of the colonized, the means of textual resistance available to the colonized, and general reflections on the tortured textual terrain of postcolonial society. It is the first of these items that I will focus on in this article.

At the beginning of any exposition of Bhabha's thought, some definitions are necessary. Bhabha is a post-structuralist thinker with a "non-essentialist" under-standing of cultural identity. For Bhabha (1994, 2-3), identity emerges not as

---

[3] She states, "The Chronicler's attitude toward the northern kingdom may be described in terms of the tension between these two views," and, "Thus the Chronicler's attitude towards the northern kingdom is somewhat ambivalent: the kingdom is based on sin, yet its establishment fulfills the word of YHWH to Ahijah the Shilonite," but concludes by stating northerners were full Israelites, albeit rebellious ones.

[4] Dyck utilizes the concepts of vertical and lateral *ethnie* from anthropology, citing Ezra-Nehemiah as an example of the former (with its "concern for ethnic depth") and Chronicles as an example of the latter (Israel is a broad category without inside/outside distinctions). At the same time, the Chronicler saw a definite hierarchy between Jerusalem and the north. For Ben Zvi, northern Israel was no less Israel, but still peripheral compared to the true regnal and cultic centre of Jerusalem.

[5] To clarify: a postcolonial analysis of the Judahite discourse of self-identity in relation to the cultural Other of northern Israel is best understood as determining the internal symbolic world of the text. Of course, the existence of northern Israel rendered it as a separate body that was not ruled by Judah, but the means by which Chronicles describes the northern kingdom as both "authentic" Israel and "less-than" Israel can be insightfully illuminated by the use of postcolonial theory. The present study is only the beginning of this project, however. The actual political realities of the period would be nearly the opposite of that described in Chronicles: Judah was oppressed not only by foreign kingdoms but often overpowered by northern Israel. Thus situated, the marginalization of the north performed in Chronicles would be understood as a cry of resistance by an underdog. Such an analysis would be the second step of this work, however. My point is to flesh out the rhetoric of Judah as the dominant culture as expressed in the symbolic order of the text itself.

something intrinsic to an individual culture, but in the hazy, contested boundaries between different cultures.[6] One of his central insights is that the act of articulating cultural identity "introduces a split" into this given identity, insofar as a gap is produced between the fleeting ideal of cultural purity and the acknowledgement of insecurity regarding this purity made evident by the need for its continued articulation (1994, 34-35). The polyvalent nature of his area of concern, "postcolonialism," is made explicit in the definition of this phenomenon given by Ashcroft (1989, 2): "We use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day." Naturally, Bhabha must be understood as emerging from a confluence of influences, primarily the general post-structuralist thought of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, the cultural criticism of Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, and the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan (who himself drew heavily upon Sigmund Freud).[7]

The first Bhabhan concept that will be utilized in the present study is the notion of the split self, in that the projection of the "stereotype" (which will receive fuller discussion below) creates an identity that is partially dependent upon fear and desire for the Other.[8]Bhabha (1994, 44-45) isolates three aspects of this identity.[9] Regarding these constructions of the Other, Bhabha (1994, 49-52) states, "The image is at once a metaphoric substitution, an illusion of presence, and by that same token, a metonym, a sign of its absence and loss."[10]While this confusion of

---

[6] He states, "It is in the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. How are subjects formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)?" This applies both to those in power and to the underclass. Regarding different ways of understanding culture, namely the essentialist posture (such as articulated by Geertz, 1973) it should suffice to note that the perceived antagonism is diminished considerably if it is granted that Geertz and his ilk are primarily interested in understanding enduring or widespread similarities within a single culture, while Bhabha sets out to study the nature of cultural identity specifically in situations of antagonism between different groups. To further clarify Bhabha's aims, it is helpful to understand that he sets out differential definitions of "cultural diversity" and "cultural difference," the latter being his area of interest. So Bhabha (1994, 34), where he states: "Cultural diversity is an epistemological object—culture as an object of empirical knowledge—whereas cultural difference is the process of the *enunciation* of culture as 'knowledg*able*', authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification." Thus, the research energies are re-focused on the *attempts* to represent culture rather than the ineffable goal of the monolithic articulation of a pristine cultural identity.

[7] Huddart (2006, 16-17, 17, 26-27, 36, 42-43). For a comprehensive annotated bibliography of discussions and critiques of Bhabha, see Huddart, (2006, 183-188); an indepth discussion of weaknesses of Bhabha is found in Moore-Gilbert (1997, 130-151).

[8] Moore-Gilbert (1997, 117) clarifies this as involving the colonizer splitting into mutually exclusive domains due to the multiple ways it interacts with the Other.

[9] 1) Existence itself implies being understood in the context of relationships with other beings, 2) the act of identification thus involves "the tension of demand and desire" (such as the dream of the slave to hold his master's authority while simultaneously retaining his resentment for his master), and 3) the gap between one's self and the self projected by this complex and demand and desire makes this process of identification *transformative*.

[10] All constructions of the Other have a certain vagueness, and reveal a deficiency. Unlike the older structuralist model, a model of "depth," wherein the signifier was merely an arbitrary stand-in for the signified, post-structuralism uses a figure of "doubling" in which neither signifier or signified is assigned any transcendent value. Just as the self is split (as above), the understanding of the

the identity of the other can be a means of oppression, it also gives the cultural Other a place to hide, and thus a means of resistance (1994, 62).

An effective stereotype must be concrete. At the same time, it will waver between being a generalization of the colonizer and a trope that must be articulated over and over (1994, 66). A difference between the colonizer and colonized is identified and pronounced fatal (1994, 70). The stereotype can be understood as a fetish, as it dreams of a pure, undifferentiated origin and experiences "anxiety" upon encountering divergences from this mythical purity (1994, 70-75). Nevertheless, this stereotype is inevitably unsettled by encounters with the Other which challenge it (1994, 81). Furthermore, any given stereotype will inevitably contain an internal tension (as in the case of stereotypes of African-American slaves, between savagery and passivity) that corresponds to the "development" of a subject population that the colonizer is responsible for; this development, however, never reaches the point of the colonized overcoming their perceived contamination (1994, 82-83).

Bhabha's concept of the stereotype emphasizes difference. His "mimicry" emphasis similarity, but only to a point. He states:

[C]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (1994, 86).

Mimicry is additionally, "the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" (1994, 86). With this construction of the colonized used by the colonizer, the "presence" of the Other is both "incomplete" and "virtual" (1994, 86). Thus, the Other can never quite be made pure. Finally, there will always be a recognition of the inadequacy of this construction of the Other that occurs alongside it, a "splitting" that is part of the ambivalence of colonial authority (1994, 91).

The final key Bhabhan concept is "hybridity," referring to the inevitable slippage of meaning that occurs when one culture interprets the artifacts of another culture (1994, 105).[11] A master culture creates an identity with the slave culture that gives it its rights to hegemony (1994, 111).[12] Thus, the "discriminatory" effects of this discourse are not so much between "mother" and "alien" cultures as they are between "mother" and "bastard" cultures (1994, 111). However, in this system, the Other can reiterate the discourse of the colonizer (the internal instability of which was explained above) with the meaning twisted to destabilize its authority (1994, 112).[13]

Other is "doubled," involving a division of the unconscious desire for the other and the linguistic (or otherwise) representation of this desire.

[11] An example of this would be the unpredictable effects of the British introduction of the Bible (intended to be a tool of colonial domination) into India; discourse meant to instil authority can be subverted.

[12] Specifically, Bhabha states, "Colonial authority requires modes of discrimination...that disallow a stable unitary assumption of collectivity. The 'part' (which must be the colonialist foreign body) must be representative of the 'whole' (conquered country), but the right of representation is based on its radical difference" (1994, 111).

[13] Bhabha states, "Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through

1 Chronicles 1 – 2 Chronicles 9

The main issue that has provoked scholarly uncertainty regarding the status of northern Israel in Chronicles is the apparently simultaneous continuity and discontinuity between the peoples of the north and the south. The tracing of this theme, and others related to it (namely, the Judahite articulations of Self and Other in relation to each other and the function of the cultus/throne in creating/masking power) through a Bhabhan conceptual lens will be determinative of the main body of this study.

The degree to which the unity of the twelve tribes of Israel is emphasized in Chronicles prior to the division of the monarchy has been noted by many scholars (Williamson 1982, 25). It will be revisited here for the purpose of observing how it functions as a "set-up" for the later break-off of part of this unified group, a significant phenomenon when considered in light of Bhabha's emphasis upon the colonizer's desire for an "other" that has deviated from a pure state of origin. Sparks's (2008, 287) study of the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9 argued that בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ("sons of Israel," introducing the list of Jacob's sons and their descendants in 1 Chronicles 2:1) and כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל ("all Israel," in the mention of the exile prior to the list of those who resettled the land in 1 Chronicles 9:1) are complementary pairs that sit at the same level of the large-scale chiastic structure he finds in the genealogies, driving home the point that the unity of the twelve tribes lies at the heart of Israel's core identity. This same point is made by Williamson (1977, 96) in his analysis of the period of the united monarchy: "[A]ll twelve tribes of Israel are regarded as necessary to the fullness of the people." Fleming (2012, 52-53) also notes this characteristic of the Chronicler to "universalize Israelite identity in a way that loses touch with the political realities suggested in the versions of Samuel and Kings." Braun (1973, 508) isolates this theme of universal "support" for the king in the Chronicler's portrait of the reign of Solomon. The intrigue and dissension at the end of David's reign in DH (1 Kings 1-2) disappears, replaced by a smooth transition of power and notices that he was powerful over כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל ("all Israel," 1 Chronicles 29:23) and obeyed by כָּל־בְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִיד ("all the sons of king David," 1 Chronicles 29:24).

Read in light of the later division of the kingdom and subsequent denunciation of the north, this earlier material serves an important (postcolonial) purpose. For Bhabha, Otherness cannot exist except as it is viewed as a deviation from a pure origin, "an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (1994, 67). An account of a pure origin of a social group is necessary to lend credence to the marginal status assigned to those who fail to live up to this pure identity (1994, 74). The practice of *fetishism* culturally understood involves obsession with an "object," in which this obsession renders impossible acceptance of Otherness. It also includes, in Bhabha's words, "vacillation between the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity...and the anxiety associated with lack and difference" (1994, 74). It is only on this stage of a robust origins story that the

---

disavowal" (1994, 112). To return to the example of the English Bible in India, the Bible was received without its intended effect of symbolizing English authority (thus becoming only a "partial presence," the signifier becoming "less than one"), but as it still was perceived as a *general* mark of authority that could be appropriated by Indian interpretation (thus functioning as a "metonym of presence" that "doubled" its intended effect in an unforeseen way) (1994, 119-120).

articulation what constitutes deviance can be carried out.[14] But more so than mere articulation, the colonizer has a *desire*, a desire for this primal, pure state that is under fire from the mere existence of the Other, or other knowledges (1994, 75). This pure state is determinative of the identity of the colonizer, and identity that is performed, as Bhabha (1994, 77) states, "like all fantasies of originality and origination—in the face and space of the disruption and threat from the heterogeneity of other positions." Finally, the apparent rift between the assertion of cultural purity and the presence of Otherness is a form of "splitting," far from a mere "contradiction," but instead a productive rhetorical strategy for enacting social power, though one that is not impervious to subversion.[15]

Thus applied to the textual phenomena under consideration in Chronicles, a "pure" state of existence of the twelve tribes of Israel, with all supportive of the throne and cult at Jerusalem, is necessary as a historical backdrop from which to describe a degeneration into political fragmentation and religious apostasy; those who inhabit this transgressive state are worse than foreign unbelievers, they are deviant mutations of a pure Judahite self (to invoke the concept of hybridity). Fixation on a time of unified worship at Jerusalem produces an *anxiety* related to the dissolution of this state; but this fixation is necessary for this dissolution to hold its terror. Inhabitants of the southern kingdom, faithful to this identity constructed by the Chronicler, have a space from which to simultaneously denounce those who fail to live up to these standards, and suggest the deviants repent. At the same time, this "official" historical knowledge, upon which the legitimacy of exclusive worship at Jerusalem and the ruling rights of the Davidic monarchy are based in Chronicles, ever exists alongside the "secret" knowledge of the messy narrative of David's troublesome rise to power, slow expansion of territory, and Solomon's multiple fraternal rivals for the throne as explained in Samuel-Kings.

Analysis: 2 Chronicles 10-13

In 2 Chronicles 10, the pristine state of tribal unity and unanimous support for the Jerusalem cult is shattered, as Jeroboam leads a rebellion of the northern ten tribes away from Rehoboam king of Judah in protest against the latter's unjust policies. Of particular interest here is the unusual way in which Rehoboam's assumption of power and early decisions are depicted. First of all, Rehoboam is recorded as having gone to Shechem for his enthronement festivities (2 Chronicles 10:1).[16]

---

[14] Bhabha writes: "For the scene of fetishism is also the scene of the reactivation and repetition of primal fantasy—the subject's desire for a pure origin that is always threatened by its division, for the subject must be gendered to be engendered, to be spoken" (1994, 75).

[15] On paradoxical yet coexisting beliefs, Bhabha (1994, 80-81) states that "one [is] official and one secret...one that allows the myth of origins, the other that articulates difference and division...a defence towards external reality." As a place from which to articulate constructions of Otherness, it becomes aligned with cultural symbols of power, or, in Bhabha's words, "[T]he exertions of the 'official knowledges' of colonialism—pseudo-scientific, typological, legal-administrative, eugenicist—are imbricated at the point of their production of meaning and power with the fantasy that dramatizes the impossible desire for a pure, undifferentiated origin."

[16] While for Dillard (1987, 85) this choice is on the basis of Shechem's superior logistical location and continuity with the procedure followed on the occasion of David's ascent to power, Ben Zvi (2006a, 119) sees it as a deliberate violation of the protocol of cultic purity. With Solomon's power base consolidated in Jerusalem alongside the temple, for Rehoboam to not

Further complications are induced for not just Rehoboam's character but the stability of the world of Chronicles when a debate ensues over the legitimacy of continued forced labour of native Israelites (2 Chronicles 10:3-14), an institution the Chronicler has already *specifically denied ever existed* (2 Chronicles 8:7-10) (Ben Zvi 2006a, 120-121).[17] But rather than treating this issue as a sign of sloppy editing or a redactor doing his best to make sense of an already ambiguous source (Japhet 1993, 653), it can be read as symptomatic of the situation in which, "the social virtues of...cultural cohesion...assume an immediate, Utopian identity with the subjects on whom they confer a civil status. The civil state is the ultimate expression of the innate ethical and rational bent of the human mind" (Bhabha 1994, 43). This all-important status of the state demands the articulation of the supremacy of the united monarchy explicated above, and the disavowal of odious practices such as forced labour. Hence, "Forms of social and psychic alienation and aggression...can never be acknowledged as determinate and constitutive conditions of civil authority...They are always explained away as alien presences," (1994, 43) and thus the institution of forced labour must be denied for the sake of the identity of the state (2 Chronicles 8:7-10). But significantly, this mask will inevitably slip, for colonial discourse, to be effective must conceal violence *within* virtue, a "splitting of the colonial space of consciousness," (1994, 43) and hence the existence of forced labour being admitted against all efforts otherwise. By extension, the purity of the original state of unity is called into question (1994, 84). This textual "neurosis" manifests itself in the anomalous character of Rehoboam, whose actions become the site upon which the Chronicler's suppression of DH's reasons for the division of the monarchy are spilled; with the sins of Solomon safely hidden away, Rehoboam's incompetence alone must be made to bear the brunt of this split. This approach is far preferable to the Chronicler than reverting to the reason given for the division of the monarchy in DH: 1 Kings 11:29-39 records the prophet Ahijah giving Jeroboam the northern ten tribes due to Solomon's failure to worship YHWH alone (2 Chronicles 10:15 notes this event but not its content), a situation inadequate for the Chronicler's rhetorical purposes. Rather than blaming a sloppy editor (Japhet 1993, 657), it is far more compelling to argue that an attempt to articulate the superiority of one culture over another will inevitably contain certain disruptions.

After those loyal to Jeroboam renounce their affiliation with the Davidic dynasty (2 Chronicles 10:16), Rehoboam responds by sending out Hadoram, head of the forced labour (2 Chronicles 10:18). Despite the difficulties relating to this topic noted earlier, Ben Zvi (2006a, 121) notes the powerful point made by this act in the context of the textual world of the Chronicler: by attempting to conscript the

---

celebrate his kingship in Jerusalem (following Solomon) with attendant sacrifices, offerings, and involvement of priests and Levites constitutes an enormous religious and political faux pas. Ben Zvi critiques the approach of finding a parallel with David's coronation, noting that this happened prior to the conquering of Jerusalem and the building of the temple. Japhet (1993, 652), concurs, stating, "the very fact that Rehoboam journeyed to Shechem—for either some kind of negotiation or approval—is already a telling sign of either weakness or of political ineptitude or probably both."

[17] For Ben Zvi, this absurdity continually compounds in the three stage process of a complaint being issued about this labour, Rehoboam's advisors admitting it exists, and Rehoboam's pledge to make it increase. For further discussion of the difficult issue of harmonizing accounts of Israelite forced labour in and between DH and Chronicles, see Dillard (1981, 294-295); Kalimi, (2005, 39-40); Rainey (1970, 191-202).

people of the north into a form of humiliating service (מַס "forced labour") previously reserved for foreigners (2 Chronicles 2:16-17; 8:7-8), Rehoboam is effectually telling them they are no longer Israelites; part and parcel of the strategy of domination founded on the disavowal of difference, rendering the Other as a "degenerate type" (Bhabha 1994, 70). But degenerate or not, the Other is still an object of desire (1994, 41), in this case for an object of domination (in the act of attempted enslavement), territorial possession, and supply of labour. At the end of chapter 10, a summary statement provides a bleak appraisal of the status of the northern kingdom: וַיִּפְשְׁעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּבֵית דָּוִיד עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה ("So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.") To fully grasp the harshness of this charge, it is crucial to note that this same verb designating rebellion, פָּשַׁע, is only elsewhere used by the Chronicler in describing the rebellions of the peoples of Edom and Libnah (2 Chronicles 21:8, 10), effectively putting the northern kingdom at their level. Understood in postcolonial terms, this Judahite text is describing the north through a stereotype, that northerners are "rebels."[18]

In 2 Chronicles 11:13-17, Rehoboam receives a population influx of priests, Levites, and faithful followers of YHWH, as Jeroboam has abandoned the worship of the Jerusalem cult. Unlike DH (see 1 Kings 12:26-30, where, interestingly, Jeroboam's creation of alternative worship space has a specifically political motivation),[19] this is the first description of Jeroboam's apostasy in Chronicles. Japhet (2009, 242-43) has observed how Jeroboam's rebellion against the throne and against the cult—separate incidents in Kings—are telescoped together by the Chronicler,[20] an act that undoubtedly reinforces their close connection. A number of features of this short passage are significant from a Bhabhan point of view. The "desire" for the Other of northern Israel is partially satiated by this population gain and migration of cultic personnel. It is critically at this time that the degeneracy of northern Israel is written as a lack of cultic purity (2 Chronicles 11:14-15), with this description of Jeroboam's idols. This timing is crucial, for the reason that this damning "lack" of the north is apparently overcome (v. 16) by relocation to the land of Judah for the purpose of correct worship—northerners who defect to the south seem to be stripped of all marginal status (Boer 1999, 376-377). But what is the end effect of this migration for cultic

[18] First of all, a stereotype, according to Bhabha (1994, 41, 66), is something "fixed," which produces an "excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed." Such a sweeping statement is well understood under this rubric; under this definition the very existence of the northern kingdom is an offense to the south, regardless of the piety of any of its inhabitants (yet rendered unalterable by the fixed degree of YHWH). Secondly, the identity of northern Israel is made to revolve chiefly around its "lack" of submission to the throne in Jerusalem and this "difference" between the south and the north is clearly viewed as a problem. Finally, this construction of a stereotype also discloses deep fear—not only of political difference but of an opposing power base.

[19] Within the analytical framework of the present study, it can be suggested that this passage was omitted from Chronicles to reduce the chance that readers would detect a similarly political use of worship space in the southern kingdom.

[20] Japhet states, "The account in Kings speaks of two separate phases—the revolt against David's dynasty and, at a later stage, calf worship and the prohibition against pilgrimages to Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:26-28). According to Chronicles, the two go together. The second stage is a direct result of the first; in fact it is part and parcel of it. From the schism to its downfall, the northern kingdom represents rebellion against God; only Judah is 'the kingdom of the LORD' (2 Chronicles 13:8)."

purity? 2 Chronicles 11:17a uses two parallel statements to express this point: וַיְחַזְּקוּ אֶת־מַלְכוּת יְהוּדָה וַיְאַמְּצוּ אֶת־רְחַבְעָם בֶּן־שְׁלֹמֹה ("And they made strong the kingdom of Judah. And they made firm Rehoboam son of Solomon.") In a discussion of cultic practice, the issue of the strengthening of the power of the throne emerges—the lack of which being the central fear expressed in the face of the rebellion back in 2 Chronicles 10.[21] Northern Israelites are said to move south to participate in the temple worship, but at the same time they become a means of supporting the throne. Worshippers become soldiers. The political dimension to the insistence upon the exclusive validity of the Jerusalem cultus (under control of the Jerusalem throne) can be helpfully understood by Bhabha's concept of the "metonymy of presence." So to adapt the words of Bhabha (with some clarifying comments drawn from his larger context), "Such objects of knowledges [unique native interpretations of the Bible] make the signifiers of authority [the Bible as English presence] enigmatic in a way that is 'less than one [subversion of English interpretations] and double [introduced to Indian interpretations]'" (Bhabha 1994, 119). With multiple signifiers of authority (cult and throne), and the north considered severely lacking in both respects, it is unclear whether one signifier hides behind the other or if they go together. Northerners come to join the cult and become a means of strengthening the throne. But the true location of Judahite authority remains mysterious. Unlike Bhabha, the present study is not so much interested in the potential ways of destabilizing this authority as inquiring as to its location and the hybridity of its signifiers.

This theme of the twin authorities of throne and cult is made even more explicit in Abijah's speech in 2 Chron 13:4-12. Confronting a much larger military force commanded by Jeroboam, he emphasizes the intrinsic right to rule of the Davidic monarchy (vv. 5), Jeroboam's rebelliousness (v. 6), Rehoboam's tenderness (v. 7), Jeroboam's apostasy (vv. 8-9), Abijah's cultic faithfulness (vv. 10-11), and consequent assurance of victory (v. 12). While the characterization of northern Israel as deficient by virtue of its lack of submission to the Jerusalem throne and cult is a familiar refrain by now, it is interesting to note Abijah's mode of presenting the split, particularly his omission of its divine ordination and implicit shaming of Jeroboam by presenting Rehoboam as "young and inexperienced."[22]

---

[21] This close inter-relation of temple and throne would suggest that in the political import suggested by the text, the (power of the) worship centre can possibly act as a mask for the desire of power of the kingship. Bhabha comments upon this overlapping of different cultural institutions in the concealment of power. It is an effective strategy, because it is difficult to untangle the true seat of authority. Bhabha (1994, 83) states, "And if my deduction from Fanon about the peculiar visibility of colonial power is justified, then I would extend that to say that it is a form of governmentality in which the 'ideological' space functions in more openly collaborative ways with political and economic exigencies. The barracks stands by the church which stands by the schoolroom; the cantonment stands hard by the 'civic lines'. Such visibility of the institutions and apparatuses of power is possible because the exercise of colonial power makes their *relationship* obscure, produces them as fetishes, spectacles of a 'natural'/racial pre-eminence. Only the seat of government is always elsewhere—alien and separate by that distance upon which surveillance depends for its strategies of objectification, normalization and discipline."

[22] Ben Zvi (2006a, 127-129, 140) further notes that this portrayal of Rehoboam's softness clashes rather badly with his hard-headed behaviour noted in 2 Chronicles 10. Furthermore, the phrase וְרַךְ נַעַר ("young and inexperienced") used by Abijah of Rehoboam in 2 Chronicles 13:7 is also used of Solomon by David in the context of his capability to build the temple (1 Chronicles

Abijah asserts the intrinsic divine support for the throne of Judah (v. 5), assures Jeroboam that YHWH is on the side of the south (v. 12), but at the same time expresses concern that Jeroboam bullied Rehoboam (v. 7). Such a twin expression of domination and fear fits well with Bhabha's characterization of the need for the Other to lose their difference; the difference that is both a source of fright and the source of the legitimation to dominate the Other (1994, 61). The accusations of Jeroboam's mistreatment of Rehoboam (v. 7) and expulsion of cultic personnel (v. 9) are well explained by Bhabha's concept of the creation of a monolithic, fixed Other as "despot": Jeroboam is constructed as one who is not only politically and religiously deviant, but also tyrannical (his divine mission being set aside for the moment); the rhetorical expedience of such a portraiture is significant for its ability to wipe away other narratives about Jeroboam's past.[23] Nonetheless, language of kinship is not far away with the reminders that the north and south are supposed to serve the same God and share this heritage in common (vv. 11-12), a sure example of Bhabhan mimicry, in which the colonized are depicted in very close terms to the colonizer, to make their shortcomings all the more apparent.[24] Finally, the close connection between the cult and throne is visible in this speech: Abijah's cultic faithfulness (vv. 10-11) is presented as a guarantor of YHWH's support in battle (v. 12), which itself ensure military victory. With the character of YHWH—who shows himself to be no respecter of persons when it comes to dealing with the sins of the south—operating as a bridge between the cult and the throne, their roles in legitimizing Judah's political authority are again conflated, albeit indirectly. Such ambivalence is a key part of colonial discourse, as authority cannot be challenged if it cannot be located (Bhabha 1994, 107-108, 110-111). Judahite authority is signified by the cult and throne, their unclear relationship making their power all the more difficult to challenge.

2 Chronicles 14-36

For the sake of space constraints, only select themes relating to the portrayal of northern Israel will be surveyed through the rest of the Chronicler's history. In three places the formula statement וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ("He walked in the way of the kings of Israel") is used as a generic summary of a Judahite king being disobedient to YHWH.[25]This generic reference to northern kings as paradigms of

---

22:5; 29:1); Ben Zvi suggests the relevant link being drawn is the mysterious will of YHWH in the choice of Solomon as king and the inscrutable splitting of the kingdom.

[23] Bhabha (1994, 98) states, "In all these, the strategic splitting of the colonial discourse...is contained by addressing the other as despot. For despite its connotations of death, repetition and servitude, the despotic configuration is a monocausal system that relates all differences and discourses to the absolute, unidivided, boundless body of the despot." Furthermore, Bhabha notes this image has the effect of erasing concerns raised by the ambivalences of the narrative, "the idea of despotism homogenizes India's past." For Williamson (1977, 110-111), Jeroboam's rebellion is justified on political grounds (due to 2 Chronicles 1:15; 11:4), but the legitimacy of his reign was nullified by his apostasy, and Rehoboam's death should have been the grounds for joining back with the south.

[24] This is also an example of hybridity, in that Judah asserts the right to act as an authoritative representative center for all Israel.

[25] 2 Chronicles 21:6, 13; 28:2. Note, however, the plural form used for "way" in 28:2. Also note the unflattering comparison with the house of Ahab in 22:3, 4.

unfaithfulness is an element of the stereotype, both its rigidity as well as its need to be repeated (1994, 66).

Of particular interest is various ways in which the north and south display forms of unity (or disunity), and how this relates to the hybridity of the throne and cult as symbols of authority (discussed above). King Asa initiates cultic reform at the prompting of the prophet Azariah (2 Chronicles 15:1-8) and as a result of his faithfulness, רֹב ("many") came to him from the north. Japhet (1993, 724) observes, "the realm of Judah expanded…by accepting northerners who attached themselves to the righteous and prosperous southern kingdom."[26] At the same time, the accounts of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 19:1-2; 20:35-37), and Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25:6-10) clearly show that political alliances with the north were off-limits for Judah (Knoppers 1996, 612-622). In 2 Chronicles 30:1, 5-9 Hezekiah invites all those living in northern Israel to Jerusalem for a Passover celebration. Two features of this account are significant for the purposes of the present analysis. First, in two separate places the impurity of the north is noted (v. 10—some refused the invitation; v. 20—many northerners who did come were not ceremonially clean) in contrast to the united spirit of the Judahites (v. 12), a feature behind which one can sense the lurking specter of "mother/bastard" hybridity described above. Second, no connection can be made in this account of the Jerusalem cultus either legitimizing Judah's political authority or acting as a means for population growth (2 Chronicles 31:1) (Knoppers 1989, 82). In light of the above discussion concerning the relationship between the cult and throne in Jerusalem, and the former as a possible "metonymy" of the latter, one more Bhabhan concept seems relevant: the way metonymy works like Derrida's concept of the supplement (Bhabha 1994, 54-55). As a sort of surrogate for the presence of what it represents (Bhabha 1994, 55), it merely leads to a longer chain of representations that stand for the item in question (Derrida 1997, 157).[27] Significantly, for Asa, the lure of access to the temple led to him having more subjects in his domain (Dillard 1987, 121); contrast this with the explicit lack of the theme of population growth or allegiance to the southern throne in the story of Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chronicles 31:1). Thus, with this additional textual data and theoretical apparatus, it is possible to hypothesize that both the throne and the cult are "supplemental" signifiers of authority in the sense that although they may collaborate with each other, neither is directly pointing to the seat of authority; they merely point to more signifiers, with the presence of Judahite authority endlessly deferred elsewhere.

Conclusion

To briefly summarize, the utilization of Bhabhan theories is helpful for making sense of the ambivalent portrayal of northern Israel in Chronicles in three ways: 1) The dependence of any given articulation of cultural identity on a (negative)

---

[26] Williamson (1982, 270) argues that the Chronicler meant to show that the presence of a pious ruler in the south would lead to "religious allegiance" from some northerners.

[27] To quote Derrida: "Through this sequence of supplements a necessity is announced: that of an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception. Immediacy is derived. That all begins through the intermediary is what is indeed 'inconceivable [to reason].'"

comparison with another group. Bhabha's concept of the stereotype requires a fatal lack to be present in Other, as evidenced in the negative references to Northern Israel's piety and legitimacy by way of comparison with the south. 2) The tension between expressions of continuity with and contempt for northern Israel. People need to first be considered Israelites in order to be constructed as deviant Israelites, in keeping with the need for an Other that is nearly but not-quite like oneself in Bhabhan mimicry. To cite but two examples, Abijah's speech referred to the inhabitants of the northern kingdom as "brothers," and on different occasions, northerners came to celebrate the Passover in Judah. 3) The nature of unity in worship at the Jerusalem temple having an intentionally indirect relationship with the power of the southern monarchy. The investigation of the hybridity of the Jerusalem throne and cult for the northerners (both assimilating and visiting) bears out the assertion that power can be more effective when it is concealed. While further avenues of research remain unexplored here, [28] the present study demonstrates how a conceptual framework which explains the purpose behind ambivalence in the articulation of cultural identity is helpful for understanding various elements of mystery in Chronicler studies.

Bibliography

Ashcroft, B. et al. 1989. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989.

Ben Zvi, E. 2006a. "The Secession of the Northern Kingdom in Chronicles: Accepted 'Facts' and New Meanings." In *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles*, 117-143. London: Equinox.

——. 2006b. "Ideological Constructions of Non-Yehudite/Peripheral Israel in Achaemenid Yehud: The Case of the Book of Chronicles." In *History, Literature and Theology in the Book of Chronicles*, 195-209. London: Equinox, 2006.

Bhabha, H.K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. New York and London: Routledge.

Bible and Culture Collective. 1995. *The Postmodern Bible*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Blenkinsopp, J. 1988. *Ezra-Nehemiah*. Old Testament Library. London: SCM Press.

Boer, R. 1999. "Utopian Politics in 2 Chronicles 10-13." In *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, ed. M.P. Graham et al, 360-394. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 263. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic.

Braun, R. 1977. "A Reconsideration of the Chronicler's Attitude toward the North." *Journal of Biblical Literature* no. 96: 59-62.

——. 1973. "Solomonic Apologetic in Chronicles." *Journal of Biblical Literature* no. 92: 503-516.

Culler, J. 1997. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

---

[28] In particular, making sense of all the times Judah fell into sin, the times military invasion by the north was used by YHWH to punish the south, and the varied uses of the term "Israel." Another example would be found in 2 Chronicles 11:1-4, where Rehoboam prepares for take over northern Israel by military means, but is rebuked by a prophet. In Bhabha's appraisal, the entire of point of colonial discourse is to justify conquest and exploitation, and at this level, this passage seems to fall outside the confines of his theory.

Derrida, J. 1997 [1967]. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. G. Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dillard, R. 1987. *2 Chronicles*. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco: Word.

——. 1981. "The Chronicler's Solomon." *Westminster Theological Journal* no. 43: 289-300.

Dyck, J. 1996. "The Ideology of Identity in Chronicles." In *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. M. Brett, 89-116. Leiden: Brill.

Fleming, D. 2012. *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Huddart, D. 2006. *Homi K. Bhabha*. London and New York: Routledge.

Japhet, S. 2009. *The Ideology of the Book of the Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

——. 1993. *I & II Chronicles*. Old Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.

Kalimi, I. 2005. *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

Klein, R. 2006. *1 Chronicles: A Commentary*. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.

Knoppers, G. 1989. "A Reunited Kingdom in Chronicles?" *Proceedings* no. 9: 74-88.

——. 1996. "'Yhwh Is Not with Israel': Alliances as a *Topos* in Chronicles." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* no. 58: 601-626.

Moore-Gilbert, B. 1997. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*. London: Verso.

Rainey, A.F. 1970. "Compulsory Labour Gangs in Ancient Israel." *Israel Exploration Journal* no. 20: 191-202.

Riley, W. 1993. *King and Cultus in Chronicles: Worship and the Reinterpretation of History*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 160. Sheffield: JSOT.

Runesson, A. 2011. *Exegesis in the Making: Postcolonialism and New Testament Studies*. Biblical Interpretation Series 103. Leiden: Brill.

Samuel, S. 2007. *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*. Library of New Testament Studies 340. London and New York: T&T Clark.

Siedlecki, A. 1999. "Foreigners, Warfare and Judahite Identity in Chronicles." In *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, edited by M. Patrick Graham et al., 229-266. JSOTSupp 263. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999.

Sparks, J.T. 2008. *The Chronicler's Genealogies: Towards an Understanding of 1 Chronicles 1-9*. Academia Biblica 28. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.

Spivak, G.C. 1997. "Translator's Preface." In *Of Grammatology*, ix-lxxxvii. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Williamson, H.G.M. 1982. *1 and 2 Chronicles*. New Century Biblical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

-----. 1977. *Israel in the Books of Chronicles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.