Gottes versus Prädestination? Missionstheologische und anthropologische Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen Katholiken und Protestanten im Entdeckungszeitalter (679–703)

[32] Horst Seidler, „Die biologi(sti)schen Grundlagen des Rassismus" (705–726)

[33] Wolfgang Essbach, „Elemente biologischer Mengenlehren: Rasse, Klasse, Masse" (727–755)

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Dierk Lange: Ancient kingdoms of West Africa: Africa-centred and Canaanite-Israelite perspectives. Dettelbach: J.H. Röll 2004. xiv + 586 pp.

"Ancient kingdoms of West Africa" is a compilation of previously published essays on early Hausaland and Gao, with three 'new essays' updating and synthesizing Dierk Lange's theses, namely that there are direct connections between the religious practices, political systems and social structures of certain areas of West Africa and those of the ancient Near East; that this resulted from diffusion from North Africa and the Arabian peninsula in pre-Christian times; and that these similarities remain discernible both in oral traditions collected during and since colonial rule, and in contemporary ritual practices. This is an audacious line of reasoning – does Lange's evidence support it?

Taken together, these essays afford a chance to plot Lange's intellectual odyssey. There is a palpable progression. For example, in 1987 he treated the rise of the Bayajidda story fairly critically and in its known historical context (155–169). By 1995 he was writing that 'Bagauda, the great conqueror of Kano, who is specifically said to have been called Da'ud (David) would appear to be identical [sic] with King David of Jerusalem (ca. 1010–970 BC)' (203). In 2004 he amplifies his argument: '[i]t seems more likely that the early people of Kano looked at their city as being a second Canaanite Jerusalem which was successively conquered by incoming Israelites under the leadership of Moses, Joshua and David' (249).

Given its length, its currency, its attempt at synthesis, and its being indexed, I concentrate on the essay entitled 'Hausa history in the context of the ancient near eastern world' (125–305). This is the longest and the one in which Lange has invested the most.[1] He sets the stage by rehearsing five theories that have been advanced to explain the emergence of the Hausa states (217–221). The oldest of these, the one he attempts to revive, is the culture-morphology school of Leo Frobenius. This requires accepting that neither cultural practices nor the sources documenting them ever change very much through time. Thus centuries-old practices can be identified and dated from modern observation, a view that was commonplace during colonial times, when this kind of information was being both solicited and elicited, but one that has had great problems in surviving critical scrutiny of the evidence behind it.

Lange proceeds predictably. While he criticizes himself (559) for his earlier use of 'haphazard etymologies', this in no way prevents him from repeating the practice in the new essays, where onomastic fancy runs riot, reaching a peak when he credits (355–356) several members of the Yoruba pantheon with 'Canaanite' names. Thus, among others, 'the name Olodumare is probably derived from Olu/El and from *demaros* a word probably based on the Aramaic *dī marus*, "the one of the height"'. This leaves Lange no choice but to treat (366–372) the Ife New Year festival as a *simulacrum* of second-millennium-BCE Levantine practices, introduced by Phoenician slave-raiders operating south of the Sahara, and preserved unexpurgated ever since.

It is not often that Kassite royal names figure in treatments of sub-Saharan Africa. None-

theless we are told (252), *inter alia*, that '[t]he fact [sic] that Burnaburiaš, who was the first Kassite ruler of Babylon, is also the first king of the king list of Kebbi [camouflaged as Burumburum] deserves special attention'. On the face of it, this assertion is astonishing, not to say out of date; it was demonstrated long ago that Burnaburiaš I was not the first Kassite hegemon.[2] In any case, does 'Burumburum' really look and sound so like 'Burnaburiaš', or 'Tasgari' so like 'Tazzigurumaš', or 'Azarah' so like 'Zartai' that they must be closely connected? If this kind of eyeball etymology is to be treated as definite evidence, why not equate Edo in Japan with Edo in Benin, Manco Inca with Mansa Musa, and the 'Śaka' (pronounced Shaka) rulers of early northern India with the Zulu name Shaka?[3]

Lange suffers grievously from his lack of awareness of currents in biblical studies, where opinion outside fundamentalist circles rejects as history pretty much everything before the United Monarchy – and often much later. Lange cannot expect to make progress without addressing the biblical sceptics, but he ignores them entirely – and gives no hint that he is aware of their work, much of which has been carried out in Germany. Historians presume that there were reciprocal and recurrent influences and assimilation along shifting and porous Islamic/non-Islamic frontiers in West Africa for over a millennium, and such contact seems by far the best explanation for such things as Old Testament-like names, all of which appear in the Qur'an, as well as in other Islamic literature.[4] To maintain his case, Lange must pit his hypothesis of 'faithfully preserved' (1) tradition against all competitive possibilities. This he does not even attempt to do, but instead he brusquely dismisses the notion of feedback as hypercritical. Yet feedback, not least from the biblical text, is so globally ubiquitous that it can never be ruled out as having been instrumental in shaping the content of recorded oral traditions.[5]

Lange's abiding faith in repeated accurate transmissions of oral data numbering at least in the hundreds ineluctably precludes his considering other possibilities and simply creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. He might have profited from investigating the role of the hugely influential H. Richmond Palmer – and similar scholars in purveying outside information to traditionalists eager to put it to use. And he might have wondered why the second edition (1966) of S.J. Hogben's work on the northern Emirates managed to include pre-*jihad* kinglists that were so much longer than those in the first edition of 1930. Any such opportunities are squandered.

Instead, Lange desperately wants to take the Gobir kinglists seriously, even though they are probably the most outlandish one ever concocted (e.g., 220n, 242n). They are exceedingly discrepant, the longest of them listing over 372 rulers occupying over 7000 years of time: reigns are shown in years and months, and sons succeed fathers after intervals of as long as 145 years, all *sui generis* in the substantial genre of oral kinglists – or any other kind.[6] These are all solemn nonsense, which unquestionably results from an ensemble of relatively recent improvisational moments, and are no older than those moments.

Since Lange relies heavily on his own observations in the field or on practices to which he ascribes origins and meanings that are idiosyncratic, it is a distinct pity that the field notes on which he apparently bases his conclusions do not seem to be available to other interested parties. This deficiency is especially unjustifiable in a world with efficient scanning, and it renders hypotheses apparently based on them vacuous because non-testable. Such iterations as '(FN97, 16–32; FN00, 9–27; FN01, 3–75) become pointless alphanumeric confabulations (232n57). This absence of field notes is singularly striking when the reader encounters such suggestive statements as: '[t]he deeper meaning of the rituals was no longer understood by those who practised them' (179) or '[recent] changes reveal the basic message of the story'

(155). These, and numerous other examples, imply unacceptably leading questioning, high levels of investigator input and tendentious interpretation, and beg for more details.

Some of Lange's hypotheses about routes of ancient transmission are not impossible, just entirely lacking in evidence. But the notion that knowledge of the ancient Levant was painstakingly preserved, perhaps embedded in ritual, for over 2000 years virtually unscathed is wildly panglossian. It has been demonstrated repeatedly that ritual practices are no more immune to change than any other cultural phenomena. No doubt inadvertently, Lange makes that case with particular potency himself when, referring to a tradition collected only a few years ago, he writes that '[u]nfortunately [the informant] did not pass on his knowledge of court history to any of his children nor [sic] to any other person' (287). Without addressing this counter-evidence, Lange posits innumerable cases in which accurate, even verbatim, transmission w a s successfully carried out.

Of course, it is the dead hand of early twentieth-century hyperdiffusionism that is being revived here. Lange's work represents a flamboyant embrace of such arguments, as well as a contribution to the torrent of recent efforts to resituate the biblical lands at the centre of world history – an effort initiated for chronology by Imanuel Velikovsky over fifty years ago, and continuing apace at the present day. Lange's instance of this is also a *réchauffé* of the discredited Hamitic hypothesis. One even scents a whiff of Mormon doctrine here.

I confess that my attempts to come to terms with this work have been impeded by Lange's discursive style, which combines with my own sense of the plausible to leave me uncertain as to whether he is constantly hypothesizing or has actually come to believe what he writes. Is the use of 'identical' as mentioned above really meant to mean what it implies? What are we to make of the following:

> [i]ndeed, since Sarkin Anna represents Karbagari/Ishmael and the king Bawo/Isaac-Jacob, the antagonism refers not only back to the distinction between the Azna/Anna and the Hausa clans but also to the ancestral division between the Hausa and Banza states and thus to the difference between the Israelites and the Arabs (226)?

Is this really an argument in favour of serial mitosis over large chunks of time and space? Or a solution to the endless Near East crises?

There is nothing inherently improbable in believing that the Bible is more true for the Patriarchal Age than most biblical scholars contend, or that oral traditions can live longer than most historians believe, or that the culture of the ancient Near East lives on in West Africa. However, those who choose to accept a l l of these notions simultaneously can do so only because they want to, not because they have been persuaded by the weight of evidence and argument. In sum, the verdict can only be that Lange has not proved his case, nor gone very far in the direction of winning sympathy for his arguments. These lack intrinsic plausibility, the extraordinary evidence that extraordinary claims require, a disciplined methodology and an awareness of the dynamics of tradition and ritual; in addition, we lack access to his field notes. The essays here are characterized by a great deal of energy, but also by much indifference as to alternative possibilities. We have faith-based historiography, a potpourri of special pleading that allows those who wish to believe to do so, but which fails to provide them with defensible reasons for their choice. Most dismayingly, "Ancient kingdoms of West Africa" is recidivist in insufflating the moribund body of thought that denies the possibilities of producing autonomous early African history along accepted contemporary guild principles.

1 At least to judge from the material at www.dierklange.com

2 Lange cites a source from the 1930s and another that mentions Burnaburiaš bereft of context. Most recently see Sassmannhausen (2004).

3 The malevolent effects of undisciplined onomastic argument are illustrated by Balakrishnan

(2005), who also involves the Yoruba and who also imputes early migrations as a *deus ex machina*.

4 See, e.g., Schwarzbaum (1982).

5 E.g., for Adam and Eve stories in south Sulawesi via Islam, see Gibson (2005:53–55 *et passim*).

6 Kühme (2003:221–236). Kühme was Lange's doctoral student.

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Maiken Umbach, and Bernd Hüppauf (eds.): Vernacular modernism: Heimat, globalization and the built environment. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005. 265 pp.

Today's built environment was and still is strongly influenced by key ideas of modernism: a major twentieth century movement in art, architecture, design and literature. After many years of critical analysis of this movement, scholars now question modernism's alleged 'inhumanity' and begin to re-evaluate its original conceptual ideas. The view has shifted from rejecting modernism as a style of pure aesthetic formalism without any relation between art and society to a perception that takes into consideration regional variations of modernist visions and local differences within their application.

Looking at geographical, historical, and philosophical aspects of our ongoing complex relation with this period of art history, "Vernacular modernism" contributes to the current interdisciplinary debate and proves that modernism is neither monotonous nor faceless.

Modernism's so-called 'international style', established between the two World Wars, is usually interpreted as a reaction to scientific, economic and social developments such as industrialization, rationalization and acceleration. The art world and especially its branch of architecture attempted to create a future modern outlook through formal innovation with a tendency towards abstraction. French architect Le Corbusier with his call for purism and his famous metaphor of the "machine aesthetics" constitutes an outstanding example. The same is true for the housing project "Weißenhof-Siedlung" in Stuttgart (1927): an experiment of architectural 'internationalism', which "Vernacular modernism" refers to as an example for both, the vernacular and the modern.

As 'any attempt to provide a consistent definition of vernacular modernism runs into semantic problems', the editors argue in their