a Jewish people. In "Canaanite" historiography, the Jews were/are a confessional faith community that had developed in the Babylonian exile and whose mode of existence was/is intrinsically extraterritorial. In place of a Jewish state of Israel, the end result of which would inevitably be a ghetto-like Jewish theocracy, "Canaanism" saw the birth of a secular new Hebrew nation, which it envisioned as the first stage in the evolution of an emerging geopolitical region it called *erets ha-qedem* (the land of the East), *erets ha-Perat* (the land of the Euphrates), or *merḥav ha-shemi* (the Semitic region).

"Canaanism" thus reads the Bible as the literary expression of the new myth that the Israelite element of the polytheistic Hebrews exiled in Babylon propounded about their origins as they were transformed under the influence of Ezra's monotheism into Jews. Their "Return to Zion" was mandated on the basis of the reinterpretation of earlier material into stories about patriarchs, an exodus from Egypt, and a covenant with God.

"Canaanism" descends from a current in late Haskalah *fin de siècle* thinking that was in open rebellion against the Jewish past and Jewish religion. It builds on the question M. Y. Berdichevsky famously put to his contemporaries, "are we the last of the Jews or the first of a new nation?" (*Shinui ʿarakhin* [Transvaluation of Values], 1899) and on the sensibility in many of the works of Tchernihowsky, Shneour, Frischmann, and Brenner. More precisely, "Canaanism" represents an appropriation of 19th- and early 20th-century critical biblical scholarship for political ends. These ends were rooted in the maximalist wing of the Zev Jabotinsky's Revisionist party, but its idea of fulfilling the Zionist project by re-creating the Davidic empire from the Nile to the Euphrates was transmuted by Ratosh and his followers into a totalist, non-Zionist vision of a secular Hebrew Semitic region.

Though there was a brief attempt to work for this dream through some cultural activities that it was hoped would transform the consciousness of the Israeli body politic, it was ineffectual. Ratosh steadfastly refused to enter the Zionist Israeli political arena, and the movement petered out. The utopian nature of the "Canaanite" dream and its disregard for the realities of history and the abiding power of the inherited traditions of both Judaism and Islam were all noted early on and, for those reasons, it has been widely dismissed as an absurd phantasm. But its critique of the dialectics of Zionist ideology, which never could, nor ever even sought, to resolve the tension between the values and usages of the Jewish past and those of the post-Enlightenment present, is of continued relevance in the day-to-day life of the state of Israel. Whereas Zionism chose to accept and live with the conflicting claims of secular nationhood and Orthodox Jewish religion, "Canaanism" severed the nexus between them and to all things Jewish. Thus it resolved the tension by privileging the spatial and regional nature of Israeli nationhood of the present over its entanglements in the temporal and its historical ties to the Jewish past and to the Diaspora. This had important cultural consequences. In the early years of Israeli statehood, "Canaanism" catalyzed the development of a local and regional style in Israeli art and, in part, the turn away from the rabbinic and toward the biblical. David Ben-Gurion personifies this shift. A Zionist to the core, he became a vocal proponent of the HB as the ground of the new state's historical consciousness.

When used pejoratively today, "Canaanism" is an epithet applied to any kind of ultra-secular, anti-religious thinking or value-system that affirms or wants to foster Israel's identity as a secular nation-state over its mode of existence as a Jewish state. When taken seriously "Canaanism" can be seen to prefigure the post-Zionist thinking of the 1990s. Even while he was still alive, some of Ratosh's followers abandoned their mentor's anti-Arab position and articulated the idea of a United States of the Middle East. Today this notion resonates among advocates of a secular, democratic state between the Mediterranean and the Jordan, a pluralistic non-Jewish polity with a written constitution and strict separation of religion from state.

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James S. Diamond

Canaanite Woman

→Syrophoenician Woman

Canaanites

I. Introduction

Who was a Canaanite? The answer most often invoked is one intimately attached to the biblical image of the Canaanites or the land of Canaan, where the two terms are mentioned 160 or so times. In the narrative portions of the HB/OT, especially those contained in the books of Joshua and Judges, the "biblical" Canaanites comprise the ancient, indige-

nous peoples living in the land of Canaan (the proximate combined geographic equivalent of modern Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine-Israel, along with the southernmost reaches of Syria). According to the HB/OT, the Israelites clashed with these Canaanites over land claims after crossing into the land of Canaan, following Israel's exodus from Egypt a generation earlier. Yet, the answer to our question neither begins nor ends here. The origin of the terms Canaan and Canaanite has eluded experts. The lexical base for these terms was used in antiquity to refer to either a red, blue, or purple dye that the coastal Canaanites produced, which some have proposed as the origin behind the geographic name of Canaan. It is more probable that the dyes were named after those who produced them. In a few instances, the HB/OT describes the Canaanites as merchants, but rather than being the origin of the term, it more likely comprises a secondary development reflecting the reputation of the Canaanites as seafaring entrepreneurs. Another view understands the term Canaan as a derivative of a base word meaning "to bend, bow, be subdued," but this too offers little in the way of clarifying the origins of the term. Historians likewise take different positions when it comes to the socio-historical significance they attach to the terms Canaanite and Canaan. Some would hold the view that these terms refer to a people's ethnic affiliations. Others embrace the notion that these terms evoke a generally identifiable geographic region inhabited by a wide variety of peoples; still others recognize some combination of both.

II. Archaeology

Archaeologists have identified a major cultural break at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age (= MB; or the beginning of 2nd millennium BCE) in the greater region of Syria-Palestine. The ties this cultural break share in common with MB I culture in the interior of Syria have suggested to some that Canaanite culture has its origins in Syria. There was a significant development at about this time as regards the various extant modes of human communalism, which ranged from pastoralism to large, fortified urban centers that were accompanied by surrounding villages and towns, stratified social classification, and a boom in international trade.

The transition from MB to the Late Bronze Age (= LB) in Canaan included some limited destruction in the hill country, but for the most part, sites were resettled during the so-called Amarna Age (14th cent. BCE) at a more reduced size and number, with most centers located on the coast, in the valleys, and along major trade routes. International trade, now focused on Cyprus and the Aegean, continued to the end of the LB. For most of the LB period, Canaan was dominated by Egypt, though the latter's influence and presence in Canaan vacillated somewhat over those several hundred years. The Canaanite urban centers mentioned in the Amarna tablets were characterized by the Canaanite scribes responsible for the correspondence preserved at Tell Amarna, Egypt, as perpetually in conflict with one another and therefore in need of the Egyptian pharaoh's intervention. The Egyptian king apparently responded by sending his armies to the region and building fortresses and official Egyptian residencies throughout Canaan.

The ever-expanding archaeological data inform us in two major ways about Canaanite culture; it was diverse in its social constructions, as is hinted at in the diversity of burial customs, the architecture of palaces, temples, and domestic buildings, and the pottery, yet it shared an overall socioeconomic system (at least beginning with the 2nd millennium BCE) of city-state vs. rural village. Canaanites also shared a common language and various other cultural elements. In sum, Canaanite society at this time formed what modern historians can identify only vaguely as a common social boundary east and west of the Jordan. On another front, however, both the Canaanite ceramic assemblages and the Egyptian texts of the so-called Amarna period from the Late Bronze Age suggest that southern Canaan was not only physically distinct from northern Canaan via the geographic disjunction provided by the Jezreel valley, but perhaps also culturally unique, with the latter having greater affiliations with Syria and the Aegean, and the former with Egypt and perhaps Arabia.

Much of the seeming cultural homogeneity was the result of Egyptian imperial and/or colonial rule of Canaan in the Late Bronze age. Egypt controlled the international trade in the region and also centralized ceramic production in workshops. These and other related factors resulted in a rather uniform material culture. This unity in turn overshadowed somewhat those distinctive ethnic elements attested in the mortuary and cultic remains. With the demise of Egyptian control over Canaan in the 12th century BCE, Egypt's withdrawal from such sites as Beth-shean, Deir el-Balah, and others, and the ensuing crisis or transition that is widely recognized to have taken place at this time, the various people groups that made up what, from the "top down," appeared to be a homogeneous Bronze Age Canaanite society emerged in the aftermath of Egyptian withdrawal by the beginning of the Iron Age asserting their distinctive traits more explicitly.

The lessening of Egypt's hold on Canaan left the region open to the emergence of several independent polities in the Early Iron Age, some of which, like earliest Israel mentioned in the Merenptah stele (about 1205 BCE), undoubtedly comprised a mixture of Canaanite tribal and kin-based groups made up of nomads, farmers, Apiru and Shashu, who constructed for themselves new ethnic identi-

ties including, at least in the one case we can trace (Israel), an epic narrative (now refracted, in part or in whole, through the HB/OT), as well as a new, shared religion (that of Yahwism). These various people groups included not only the Israelites, but also the Moabites, the (so-called) Phoenicians of the coastal cities, the Ammonites, Judahites, and Edomites. Philistia, with its marked Aegean orientation, comprises the exception to the otherwise Canaanite-dominated Iron Age polities of the region.

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III. Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament

1. The Ancient Near East. Whether or not the term "Canaan" or "Canaanites" appear in the 3rd millennium BCE texts from ancient Ebla in Syria remains a point of some debate. The term "Canaanite" is unequivocally attested for the first time in a text from the city of Mari in Syria from the 18th century BCE. In a letter written to a sovereign by one of his subjects, a complaint is filed against "thieves and Canaanites," but the text affords little else in the way of helpful details.

It is not until the 15th century BCE, and in this instance from Egypt, that the next occurrence of the term can be identified. The Canaanites apparently had a long, but rather seesaw, relationship with the ancient Egyptians. On more than one occasion, the Egyptians dominated the land of Canaan militarily and economically, and perhaps culturally. Pharaoh Amenhotep II proclaims on his victory stele the capture and deportation of Canaanites. The discovery in Egypt at the end of the 19th century of more than 380 texts from Tell Amarna composed on clay tablets and written in Akkadian, one of the languages of Mesopotamia, has provided an unprecedented window through which to view the international relations involving Egypt and the land of Canaan in the mid-14th century BCE. The vast majority of the Tell Amarna tablets record the communications sent to the Egyptian Pharaoh from various subjugated peoples. In these letters there are references to the "land of Canaan," the "province of Canaan," the "cities of Canaan," the "kings of the land of Canaan," a "man of Canaan," and "Canaanites." In another Egyptian text, Pharaoh Merenptah's victory stele (about 1205 BCE), Canaan is mentioned as an area that was devastated during the king's campaign in the late 13th century BCE. The earliest attested mention of Israel outside the HB/OT is also preserved in this text, and, like Canaan, Israel is described as overwhelmed. In other words, it seems that there was a geographic area in the south of the Levant that was referred to as Canaan at the end of the Late Bronze Age (as well as a people or a group named Israel).

Other contemporary sites have yielded written documentation of Canaan as a geographic region, such as the texts from the ancient Syrian sites of Alalakh and Ugarit. One text from Ugarit mentions, in the context of a judicial decree, both "the sons of Canaan" and "the sons of Ugarit." This may be understood to be evidence that Ugarit (and most of Syria) was not considered at that time as part of Canaan or, more importantly for many, as Canaanite culture, though this may be pushing the limited evidence here too far since Ugarit preserves a language and religious tradition closely related to those of the Canaanites.

2. The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. In the HB/OT, the term "Canaan" is used frequently as a geographical term, while in other contexts the term "Canaanite" verges on a general ethnic label that runs contrary to still other biblical references that list the Canaanites as just one among several different groups inhabiting that same general territory. Both the geographical and generalized ethnic overtones of the terms have their broad parallels in ancient Near Eastern traditions outside the biblical text. It has also been suggested that if at the end of the Late Bronze Age, numerous peoples migrated to the southern Levant, then the preservation of the term "Canaanite" alongside the various other people groups in the biblical lists, such as the Hittites, Hivites, Gergashites, and Jebusites, and perhaps the Horites and Perizzites, might preserve an echo of migratory peoples from areas farther north and south (so Na'aman). In Deuteronomistic texts, the term "Canaanite" is used ultimately in an ideological way in order to designate the autochthonous people with whom the Israelites shall not get into any relationship. The biblical opposition between Israelites and Canaanites is therefore an attempt of constructing a new collective identity.

In the final analysis, both the terms "Canaan" and "Canaanite" undoubtedly conveyed different meanings in ancient times. It is our limited knowledge that impedes our access to their full range of possibilities.

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Brian B. Schmidt

IV. Judaism

The rabbis explain the command to expel or destroy the Canaanites (Deut 7 : 1–6 and parallels) and biblical warnings against following their practices

(Deut 12:29–31) by saying that they "were steeped in idolatry more than all the other nations of the world" (*SifDev* 60); their deeds were more corrupt than those of all other nations (*Sifra Aḥarei Mot* Par. 9; ibid. *Pereq* 13; see already *Jub.* 25:1: "All their deeds are fornication and lust"). "Five things did Canaan command his sons: love one another, love thievery, love lewdness, hate your masters, and don't tell the truth" (*bPes* 113b). The Canaanites had accumulated enormous wealth, as may be inferred from Judg 1:7. Seventy kings gathered food under the table of Adoni-bezek who was so unimportant that Scripture did not even mention him among the kings of Canaan (*SifDev* 353). They were punished only after having been admonished. The Canaanites had been offered the alternative to let the Israelites in and to accept both tribute and forced labor; they were sent into exile because of their deeds (*SifDev* 173, 200, 254). But there are also righteous descendants of Canaan, such as Abraham's servant, Eliezer, who was a slave because of his descent, but merited to join Israel (*BerR* 60:7).

In the reality of their own time, the rabbinic halakhah speaks of Canaanite male and female slaves as a synonym for all non-Jewish slaves (e.g., *mMSh* 4:4; *mQid* 1:3). They have an inferior status and cannot contract valid marriages. They cannot act for their masters in a religious context (they cannot, e.g., establish a valid *ʿeruv* for their owners: *mEr* 7:6). They are not redeemed after seven years as Hebrew slaves, but go free only as compensation for serious injuries inflicted upon them by their master (Exod 21:26–27). Only rarely does "Canaanite" stand for non-Jews in general, e.g., in the printed edition of the Mishnah (*mToh* 5:8), where it replaces the term *nokhrit* of manuscript Kaufmann (in 7:6 it replaces *goi*). Subsequently, Gen 9:25 ("Cursed be Canaan; lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers") was used by Jews as well as Christians as a justification for enslaving black Africans.

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Günter Stemberger

V. Film

Most cinematic adaptations of biblical texts create the impression that Abraham and his descendents were all alone in their promised land. The Canaanites and other inhabitants of the land appear onscreen only when necessary to the storyline. When they do appear, Canaanites serve as visual and moral contrasts to Israelites. They are depicted as more ornamented, more sensual, more primitive, and more corrupt than the Bible's ancestral heroes. Often these quintessential "others" are also swarthier than the white Western actors who are typically cast as Israelites.

For example, in *The Bible: In the Beginning* (dir. John Huston, 1966) Abram warns Lot against settling near the wicked sinners who live in Canaan's cities. He pointedly contrasts those who take refuge behind city walls with those who take refuge in God. These Canaanites appear onscreen only during Lot's flight from Sodom, when Huston devotes several minutes of screen-time depicting that city as a sensual spectacle of writhing, painted bodies.

Similarly, the made-for-television films *Jacob* (dir. Peter Hall, 1994) and *Joseph* (dir. Roger Young, 1995) contrast Canaanites and Israelites. The former film discredits Esau by emphasizing his sexual dalliances with Canaanite women (cf. Gen 26:34–35, where he marries Hittite women). While Jacob cares about the traditions of his people, Esau tends toward cultural assimilation and builds a Canaanite stone house. The film *Joseph* deliberately contrasts the false charges brought by Potiphar's wife with the actual rape of Dinah by the Canaanite prince Shechem. Later in this film, Judah brings a pregnant Tamar to Jacob for judgment. Blatantly revising the biblical text (Gen 38:24), Judah claims that he is torn between more humane Israelite customs, which dictate that he banish Tamar, and harsher Canaanite customs, which mandate her execution.

Viewers might also expect a glimpse of Canaanites at the end of exodus films as the Israelites prepare to enter Canaan. However, in most of these films the promised land is portrayed as an uninhabited paradise. Two exceptions are *Moses the Lawgiver* (dir. Gianfranco De Bosio, 1974) and a made-for-television film entitled *Moses* (dir. Roger Young, 1995). In both of these films Moses sends out spies whose report of the land's inhabitants alarms the Israelite camp.

Departing from the traditional biblical epic, the West African film *La Genèse* (dir. Cheick Oumar Sissoko, 1999) reads the biblical text in light of modern conflicts in Somalia, Liberia, and the Congo. Sissoko uses the story of Esau and Jacob to explore themes of fratricidal strife and competition over scarce resources. Clan leaders in the film represent different modes of production: the hunter-gatherer Esau, the nomadic pastoralist Jacob, and the settled agriculturalist Hamor (son of Canaan).

Rhonda Burnette-Bletsch

Canada

→North America

Cananaeans

→Zealots