The Cushites in the Chronicler’s Version of Asa’s Reign: A Secondary Audience in Chronicles?¹

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ABSTRACT
In a previous contribution² I have indicated that the Books of Chronicles could be described as “reforming history” which stands in the service of a process of identity construction in late-Persian Yehud. I have indicated there that the unique perspective of the Chronicler³ can especially be detected in those passages where the author has made significant changes to the Deuteronomistic version. In the present contribution I focus on the Chronicler’s reinterpretation of the narrative about Asa’s reign. The Chronicler’s version (MT 2 Chron 13:23b-16:14) is much longer than the Deutero-

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³ It has become customary in almost all publications on Chronicles to specify how the term “Chronicler” is used. This has become necessary because of the diverging theories on the identity of the Chronicler and the scope of his/their work. When I use the term “Chronicler” I refer to the writer(s)/editor(s) of the Books of Chronicles. Although the term stands in the masculine singular, it functions as a collective for all those hands that contributed to the formation of the Books of Chronicles. The term “Chronistic writer(s)/editor(s)” is occasionally used as synonym for “Chronicler”. “Chronistic” refers to the Books of Chronicles then, and not to a so-called “Chronistic History” which includes the books of Ezra-Nehemiah. Although I am of the opinion that the time and place of origin of these works were more or less similar, I think that the relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah is too complex to be described merely with notions such as common or separate authorship. Briant’s (2002) use of the term “Chronicler” is quite confusing in this regard. He uses this term constantly referring to the books of Ezra-Nehemiah, but ignoring the Books of Chronicles completely. It seems as if he identifies the term exclusively as the author(s) of the books of Ezra-Nehemiah.
nomistic parallel (MT 1 Kgs 15:9-24). This narrative is studied in order to determine whether the Books of Chronicles were perhaps also directed toward a secondary audience – apart from the Jewish community in Yehud. The theory is advanced that these books were intended also to be overheard by the Persian officials in Jerusalem and Samaria.

A INTRODUCTION

It is very delightful that the Books of Chronicles are no longer the Cinderella of biblical scholarship! In a 2002 article in Theologische Rundschau Thomas Willi has charted the very rich and diverging research on Chronicles of the preceding twenty years. And even since the publication of Willi’s article a steady stream of journal articles, essays and even commentaries⁴ have appeared on the scene. Willi indicates that, whereas earlier studies concentrated on the historical value of Chronicles, recent studies focus more on understanding the unique theology and method of Chronicles⁵.

Within this development I also situate my own scholarship on Chronicles. In a previous contribution⁶ I have tried to answer the question “What is Chronicles?” I have proposed there that Chronicles should be seen as “reforming history”. The ambiguity of the designation “reforming history” is intentional: “It indicates that the Books of Chronicles are simultaneously an attempt to reformulate and sanitize the older traditions about the past, as well as an attempt to reformulate the identity of God’s people in the changed socio-historical circumstances of the late Persian era. The designation …. is … not primarily a genre indication, but rather an attempt to describe the intention or purpose of this work, and to characterize its hermeneutical dynamics” (Jonker, to appear in VT)⁷.

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⁴ The commentaries of Dirksen (2003 – only on 1 Chronicles), Knoppers (2003a and 2004 – only on 1 Chronicles) and Mckenzie (2004) have, for example, appeared since then. The commentary of Tuell (2001) probably appeared after Willi has submitted his article for publication.

⁵ As Willi puts it: “Es käme darauf an, sein Selbstverständnis und im Zusammenhang damit die Eigenbegrifflichkeit seiner geistigen Welt zu erfassen, zu verstehen und zu würdigen” (2002:70).

⁶ Jonker (to appear in VT).

⁷ In this respect I have been influenced by the work of Hardmeier who has proposed an alternative text theory which underlies his text-pragmatic approach towards the Old Testament literature. Cf. his recent formulations of this text theory and method (Hardmeier 2003 and 2004), as well as my own work (Jonker 2003a). Cf. also the methodological contributions of Blum (inter alia in 2004 and 2005) which, although somewhat differently from Hardmeier, emphasizes the “Aussage-intention” of biblical texts. In his discussion of the kind of history-writing that we find in Chronicles, Blum calls attention for the pragmatic aspect of these texts: “So unstrittig viele der von Van Seters hervorgehobenen Befunde sind und so verlockend die historische Analogie-
Willi (2002:81ff.)\(^8\) discusses a variety of studies on the rhetoric of Chronicles which have appeared in the past two decades and more. The following are (inter alia) discussed: Throntveit\(^9\) (who concentrates on the royal speeches and prayers), Duke\(^10\) (who uses the Aristotelian rhetoric of logos, ethos and pathos to interpret the historical narrative in Chronicles), Mason\(^11\) (who sees the Chronicler as a preacher who re-interprets the older traditions), Riley\(^12\) (who concentrates on the Chronicler’s reinterpretation of the Jerusalem kingship and cult), Kelly\(^13\) (who concentrates on the themes of retribution and eschatology in Chronicles), Dyck\(^14\) (who identifies a theocratic ideology in the Books of Chronicles) and Dörrfuss\(^15\) (who criticizes the theocratic interpretation of Chronicles by concentrating on the Moses image in these books).

In my analysis of Chronicles I broadly situate myself among those studies that focus on the rhetoric in answering questions such as “What did Chronicles want to achieve?”, or “For what purpose were the Books of Chronicles written?” On a broader methodological level I concentrate on the way in which the Chronicler has adapted the communicative structure of the synoptic parallel texts by excluding certain information, adding other information, changing the temporal framework as well as the framework of actors, introducing certain Leitwörter or themes, etc. However, I am strongly of the opinion that one cannot answer the question “What did Chronicles want to achieve?” without relating the texts in some or other way to a presumed historical context of origin. Rhetorical studies of Chronicles (or for that matter, of any biblical book) do not make sense when they merely concentrate on textual structures without contextualizing those structures in a historical milieu of origin. Texts do simply not communicate in a vacuum – they were intended to communicate in very specific circumstances in biblical times\(^16\).

\(^{8}\) “Der chr Rhetorik nehmen sich gleich mehrere Untersuchungen an. Das ist auffällig, aber nicht ohne Entsprechungen in der weiteren alt- und neutestamentlichen Forschung, und vor allem nicht ohne Sachlogik” (Willi 2002:81).
\(^{9}\) Throntveit (1987).
\(^{10}\) Duke (1990).
\(^{11}\) Mason (1990).
\(^{12}\) Riley (1993).
\(^{13}\) Kelly (1996).
\(^{14}\) Dyck (1996 and 1998).
\(^{15}\) Dörrfuss (1994).
\(^{16}\) In this regard, cf. my methodological contributions in Jonker & Lawrie (2005, ch. 8), as well as Jonker (2006).
If we see Chronicles as communication that wanted to persuade, we then have to ask the question “Who was the intended audience?” It is exactly on this point that the present article wants to contribute.

B THE AUDIENCE OF CHRONICLES?

There is almost a general consensus among Chronicles scholars that these books were addressed to the Jewish community in the late-Persian or early-Hellenistic province of Yehud. Scholarly views diverge on which part of the Jewish community was addressed (e.g., was it the religious leadership or the people of the land?) However, all these views seek the audience of Chronicles within the Jewish religious community. Because there are enough indications in Chronicles in this regard, I certainly support this consensus.

However, should our discussions on the audience of Chronicles simply stop with this indication? Should one not consider the possibility of multiple audiences, or the possibility that more than one audience were implied? Is it not too simplistic to merely imagine the Jewish religious community in Yehud to be the sole audience of the multifaceted communication that we find in Chronicles?

Above I have indicated that my point of departure when studying Chronicles is to see it as “reforming history.” The first aspect involved in such a designation, namely the fact that Chronicles reinterpreted and reformulated historical traditions in changed and changing circumstances, has been dealt with adequately and extensively in Chronicles scholarship. However, the second aspect, namely the fact that Chronicles simultaneously contributed to a process of identity formation in changed and changing circumstances, presenting a perspective on the present and future of the community, has been neglected in scholarship thus far. Willis has emphasized correctly “... (d)ie Literatur der zweiten Hälfte der Perserzeit ist nicht mehr vom Bewusstsein der Fortsetzung bestimmt. ... Nach dem definitiven Etablierung einer

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17 Cf. the different commentaries for the arguments that underlie this consensus.
18 The majority of Chronicles studies support the theory that the religious-cultic community (and leadership) in Jerusalem (the so-called city-elites) were the intended audience of Chronicles. Levin (2003:245), however, claims from the genealogies of 1 Chron 1-9 that the “... ‘people of the land’ within and without the political boundaries of the Judean province, were both the object and the audience of the Chronicler. This audience, living in a society that was still to a large extent ‘tribal’, could easily understand the Chronicler’s message of the basic unity of all Israel in all of its land, in the past and in the present. The Chronicler, as opposed to the separatist, maybe anti-Samaritan, Priestly author of Ezra-Nehemiah, is not telling his ‘history’ from the perspective of the urban elite of Jerusalem. When the Chronicler, in his genealogical ‘introduction’, lays out the ethnic and geographical framework of his ‘Israel’, his perspective is that of the tribal, village society, which was very much alive and functioning in his day. The villages of the hill-country of Judah and Benjamin, but also those of Ephraim and Manasseh, were both the Chronicler’s source of information and his audience.”

Elsewhere I have indicated that insights from the field of social psychology can help us to a better understanding of how identity construction takes place. Intra-group identity construction takes place when a group defines itself in terms of the dynamics within the own group (e.g. the discussions on the position of the Levites and the remainder of the priesthood in Chronicles). Inter-group identity construction takes place either by self-categorization in terms of an inter-group (e.g. the priestly elite over-against the people of the land), or by self-categorization in terms of an outer-group (e.g. the Yehudite religious leadership over-against the Persian Empire and religion).

Or, to translate this into communicational terms: In the complex process of identity formation through literature, the implied audience is not always the same as the real audience. The implied audience could be multifaceted - self-categorization takes place in terms of different in- and out-groups. It is not necessarily so that all implied audiences will in the end hear the communication. However, that does not deny the author the chance of directing his/her communication also to secondary implied audiences.

In this article I focus on aspects in Chronicles that could be an indication that self-categorization in terms of an outer group, could also have been part of the Chronicler’s rhetoric. The Asa narrative (2 Chron 13:23b-16:14) will serve as example text. This will hopefully contribute to a more complex description of the implied audience of Chronicles in order to account for the multifaceted communication embodied in these texts.

In formulating a hypothesis on this issue, I have analyzed the Asa narrative in synoptic comparison with the Deuteronomistic version in 1 Kings 15. I have concentrated on three prominent aspects which, to my mind, could support the theory of multiple audiences for Chronicles: (i) The Chronicler’s adaptation of the communicative structure; (ii) The prominence of certain Leitwörter and themes; and (iii) The prominent role of prophets in this story. Space does not permit me to present my full analysis here. I will rather summarize the findings of my textual analysis by indicating the communicative intent of the Chronicler’s Asa narrative (section C), and then focus on one of

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20 Cf. also Jonker (2002 and 2003b).
21 This will be done in a forthcoming publication.
those novel aspects in the Chronicler’s version which could be an indication of a secondary implied audience (section D).

C COMMUNICATIVE INTENT

There is apparently no logical relationship intended between the two sections which function as “body” of the Deuteronomistic version of Asa’s reign in 1 Kings 15 (Cf. Appendix A). The positive evaluation of Asa in 1 Kings 15:11 is not in any way related to the second section on the war against Baasha and the alliance with Ben-Hadad (vss. 16-22). The Deuteronomistic narrative therefore communicates (i) a positive image of Asa being a king who assured religious-cultic purity, and (ii) an episode in his successful military strategy and diplomacy career. One could say that the Deuteronomistic narrative presents religious-cultic and political information about Asa’s reign.

The Chronicler’s account is very much different, however (cf. Appendix B). The Chronicler has built a new logic into this narrative, and has thus shaped it into a paraenetic-didactic narrative, as Ruffing has called it. The two sections of the narrative have now been reformulated into two theological alternatives that are presented to the audience. There is a clear change from “having rest / peace / not war” in the first section, to “having wars from now on” in the second (as we can see from the distribution of the different Leitwörter). The break between the two is established by the two specific temporal indications in 15:19 and 16:1. Until the thirty-fifth year of Asa’s reign one scenario existed, but it then suddenly turned around from the thirty-sixth year of his reign.

The narrative as a whole receives a logic into which the introduction (13:23b) and conclusion (16:11-14) are also integrated. The introduction and conclusion are no longer mere notes about political history and royal succession. They now signify the turnaround from the land having rest (13:23b), to a king getting ill and dying, because he did not rely on Yahweh (16:11-14). These sections also become part of the narrative’s logic.

One could furthermore say that the introduction is expounded by the first section of the narrative. The introductory phrase of 13:23b “In his days the land had rest …” receives content from the section that follows (14:1-15:19), culminating in the Gestaltschliessung in 15:19 “And there was not war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa’s reign”. The temporal indication at this point (15:19) sounds an ominous note that this condition of having rest, ended at some stage.

The second section (16:1-10) opens with a new period in Asa’s history (cf. the temporal indication in 16:1). This period ends when Asa dies in the forty-first year of his reign. The temporal indication in 16:13 therefore creates another Gestaltschliessung that relates the second narrative section (16:1-10) with the conclusion (16:11-14).

It is clear that the Chronicler did not want to communicate mere historical information about a past king. He rather wants to urge an audience into making a choice between two basic modes of existence. Steins calls this a *Rhetorisierung of the Vorlage*\(^{23}\). These two modes of existence are given content by the clever way in which the Chronicler relates *Leitwörter* and their associated themes to one another. The following constellations of concepts are built by the narrative: Those seeking Yahweh and relying on him, experience rest, peace and absence of war. Successful building projects, religious reforms and victory in battle are associated with this style of existence. The opposite mode of existence is formulated by the negation of the same constellation of concepts: Those who do not seek Yahweh and do not rely on him (or rely on worldly powers such as foreign kings or doctors!), will experience war and unrest. The conclusion to the narrative makes clear that disease and death should be associated with this constellation.

The communicative intent of this narrative is given a theological slant by the actantial organization. Yahweh (who never acts in the Deuternomistic version) is always the subject of *Hif'il* ("give rest") in the Chronicler’s narrative. When Asa relies (\(\text{\ldots}\) ) on Yahweh, Yahweh wins the battle on Asa’s behalf. When Asa relies (\(\text{\ldots}\) ) on Ben-Hadad of Aram for his battle, wars (in the plural!) are the result. When Asa and the people seek (\(\text{\ldots}\) ) Yahweh, they experience rest and security. When Asa does not seek (\(\text{\ldots}\) ) Yahweh, the king becomes ill of a foot disease and dies. These two modes of existence are then highlighted by the two prophetic speeches in the two main sections of the narrative. The prophets Azariah and Hanani are presented as those mouthpieces of Yahweh who ensure the right interpretation of reality\(^{24}\). The military

\(^{23}\) This confirms what Steins (2005:152ff.) has called a “Rhetorisierung der Darstellung” in Chronicles: “Der Chronist schafft nicht nur eine neue eigene ‘Geschichtsdarstellung’ unter Verwendung älterer Texte als Quellen; diese Auskunft ware umgänglich und ginge am Kern des literarischen Verfahrens der Chronik vorbei. Die chronistische Darstellung ist in hohem Masse rhetorisiert ... Die Rhetorisierung funktioniert nicht nur innerhalb der erzählten Welt, sondern bezieht die Rezipientinnen und Rezipienten selbst in den Vorgang der Besprechung von Tradition ein. Sie erinnern ... an das gemeinsame theologische Fundament und provozieren in der je eigenen Gegenwart zur Stellungnahme” (2005:152). Although one could confirm Steins’s emphasis on the rhetorical function of Chronicles, this point of view does not necessarily mean that there was no rhetorical intention involved in the Vorlage, or that the rhetorical intention of Chronicles exclusively relates to its historical content. The new rhetoric introduced by the Chronicler is therefore rather a rhetoric which adapts the rhetoric of the Vorlage, and which manifests on historical, literary, exegetical and theological levels. Cf. also Knoppers (1996 and 1999).

\(^{24}\) Quite a number of studies have been done in the past decade or more on the role of prophecy in Chronicles. The more recent studies of Beentjes (2001) and Gerstenberger (2004) provide useful overviews. Cf. also Kegler (1993) and Schniedewind (1995). Gerstenberger (2004) advances the theory that prophecy and Torah should not be differentiated in Chronicles: “Das Prophetische sollte weder formal noch inhaltlich, noch qualitativ von den Tora-Vorschriften Jahwes abgesetzt werden. Oder: Die Tora,
strategies of Asa are turned into theological paradigms by means of the prophetic speeches in this narrative.

The question now arises: In which historical context would this communication have made sense? For what purpose would the Chronicler have reformulated the historical tradition of Asa in this way? These questions bring us to the main part of this contribution’s argument, namely to hypothesize that multiple audiences were implied in this narrative.

D WHY THE CUSHITES?

One could confirm the scholarly consensus that this narrative (as part of Chronicles as a whole) was addressed to the people of Yehud – most probably the city-elite. The strong emphasis on Jerusalem, the cult and the temple, reflects the religious-cultic circumstances in Yehud during the late post-exilic era. The prominence of themes such as “seeking Yahweh” and “relying on Yahweh” (instead of on foreign political leaders) are probably indications of a process of identity formation in a historical milieu where the Jews were subject to imperial rule, and where Yahwism was only one religion among many.

However, does this socio-historical milieu only remain in the background, or are there any indications in this narrative that it also becomes the object of discourse and polemic of the Chronicler? In my opinion many of the novel aspects that the Chronicler introduced into his Asa narrative could perhaps point into that direction25. However, in this contribution I am going to focus on only one of these, namely the introduction of the Cushites into the narrative.

From the synoptic comparison it has become clear that the account of the war against Zerah of Cush (14:7-14) is a novel element in the Chronicler’s narrative. The contrast in military power between Judah and Cush is made clear with reference to the numbers of armed men and chariots. Asa had at his disposal 300,000 men from Judah armed with large shields and spears, and

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25 Grabbe (2004:2) warns: “Trying to write a history of Judah during the Persian period is fraught with dangers but also promises great rewards.” This view is also reflected in other studies which indicate that there remain large gaps in our knowledge of this time. It is, however, significant that three major contributions in this regard have appeared in the very recent years, namely Briant (2002 – the English translation of his general “History of the Persian Empire” which appeared in French in 1996), the work by Grabbe mentioned above (2004 – who concentrates on the history of Yehud) and Gerstenberger (2005 – who also concentrates on the history of Israel in the Persian era of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE). These studies are the culmination of many essays and articles by the respective authors, and have brought together a vast knowledge of the time under discussion. In my presentation of the socio-historical data I will therefore mainly rely on these authors.
280,000 troops from Benjamin who carried shields and drew bows – in total therefore 580,000 men. Zerah the Cushite, however, had one million men and 300 chariots at his disposal. It is clear that the narrative dynamics want to emphasize the miraculous nature of Judah’s victory over the Cushites, emphasizing the role of Yahweh as the one who actually fought the battle on Asa’s behalf. The success of Asa can thus not be attributed to his military power – it was solely the result of his relying on Yahweh. This fact is confirmed again in the second half of the Asa account when Hanani reminds Asa of the miraculous nature of this victory: “Were not the Cushites and the Libyans a huge army with exceedingly many chariots and cavalry? Yet because you relied on Yahweh, he gave them into your hand” (16:8). Here the Libyans are mentioned in combination with the Cushites.

The question now comes to mind: When the Chronicler picked an event from Asa’s past to make this particular point, why did he choose the battle against the otherwise unknown Zerah the Cushite? There were certainly many other battles that equally could have served as illustrative material.

Most commentaries published during the past 25 years provide a summary of the scholarly views on who Zerah the Cushite could have been. In order to prove the historicity of this battle against the Cushites during Asa’s time, scholars have advanced the following theories: (i) Zerah should be associated with the Pharao Osorkon I (who was of Libyan origin). The argument goes that, because Osorkon was already an old man during Asa’s reign, he probably sent a Nubian general to fight the battle on his behalf (Kitchen). (ii) Pharao Shoshenq has established a buffer state around Gerar which was populated by Nubian mercenaries. The mentioned battle could have been against this buffer state (Albright). (iii) No connection with Egypt should be made, but the Cushites should rather be associated with a small ethnic group, living in the vicinity of Judah (mentioned as Cushan in Hab 3:7). The clash would then have been a bedouin raid (Hidal). This last-mentioned hypothesis represents the majority view.

However, I think we miss the point when we look to the period of King Asa for a clue on who the Cushites were. The clue should rather be found in the Persian era when the Chronicler wrote. Welten (1973), in advancing his theory that this battle account was pure fabrication by the Chronicler, has shown that the technical indications of weaponry and warfare provided in this account,

26 The second battle account in this narrative (Asa against Israel) proves just the opposite from the first account (Asa against the Cushites). Ironically, both these accounts of victory and defeat, prove that Asa’s earlier divine invocation, publicly declared before his battle, “O Lord, there is for you no difference between the mighty and the weak” (14:10), was absolutely correct. [I thank Gary Knoppers for pointing this out to me in a personal communication.]

rather point to a Greek background. Although Welten has been criticized (inter alia by Williamson 1982) on his theory, his view that the referent of the Chronicler’s account should be sought during the time of origin of the Books of Chronicles, should in my opinion be revisited. De Vries (1989:307) also hinted in this direction when he stated in his commentary: “Nevertheless, Chrh presents the attacking army as a world power, with the Cushites as actual Ethiopians having hallûbîm, ‘the Libyans’, 16:8, as allies. As has been suggested, the typology of a Gog world power menacing God’s people in Jerusalem must have been in Chrh’s mind28 …. He surely intended it to typify still other world powers, viz., those that actually threatened the postexilic Jews (my italics – LCJ).”

In the following discussion I will assess some information from the fifth century BCE and onwards in order to find some clues what the intention of this narrative could have been in the late-Persian era.

Briant (2002) mentions on several occasions that Ethiopia (or Cush) was regarded by the Persians (and Greeks) as the southern extreme of the known world. Briant quotes Herodotus (III.26), for example, where Herodotus blamed Cambyses who “at once began his march against Ethiopia, without any orders for the provisions of supplies, and without for a moment considering the fact that he was to take his men to the ends of the earth” (2002:55). Briant acknowledges that the deliberate bias of Herodotus against Cambyses might have influenced his description of this campaign, and that the campaign was probably less disastrous for the Persians. However, excavations in Nubia have indicated that the Persian invasions never managed to take complete control of this remote part of the world. Cush/Nubia was often the place to which Egyptian kings fled in search of protection against Persian invasions29.

The reputation of Cush is probably also reflected in an anecdote in Herodotus (III.30). Briant (2002:101ff.) discusses the difficult relationship between the two sons of Cyrus, Cambyses and Bardiya. He then quotes from Herodotus who has told an anecdote about these brothers: “The king of the Ethiopians gave the ambassador-spies sent by Cambyses a bow, along with the following message: ‘The king of Ethiopia has some advice to give him: when the Persians can draw a bow of this size thus easily, then let him raise an army of superior strength and invade the country of the long-lived Ethiopians (III.21)’, an insolent challenge that could not be met by any Persian in Cambyses’ entourage. Smerdis/Bardiya, on the other hand, was ‘the only Persian to succeed in drawing – though only a very little way, about two fingers’ breadth – the bow’ (III.29) …” (Briant 2002:101). Again one should

28 Johnstone (1997:62) also makes the interesting connection with 1 Chron 1:9 where Cush is indicated as the father of Nimrud “the first warrior to spread chaos through the world of the nations … (H)ere is a recrudescence of the primordial threat to the order that God conceived for relations between himself and human society.”
29 Cf. e.g. the case of Nectanebo who gave up his defense of Memphis against Artaxerxes II, preferring to flee to Nubia (Briant 2002:687).
acknowledge the deliberate bias involved in this anecdote. However, it reflects – at least – the reputation which was associated with Cush during the days in which Herodotus wrote (the middle to the end of the fifth century BCE).

Another classical writer who might shed some light on our text in Chronicles, is Diodorus. Briant (2002) discusses how Diodorus described the revolt of Inarus, the Libyan against Persian rule: “According to Diodorus, the news of the assassination of Xerxes and the subsequent turmoil incited the Egyptians to try to win back their freedom. Their first rebellious act was to expel the Persian tribute-collectors and to bestow royal authority on a Libyan, Inarus (463-462). He gathered an army conscripted from the Egyptians and Libyans, reinforced by mercenaries from everywhere. He was aware of the disproportion of forces and sent an ambassador to Athens empowered to negotiate an alliance … and to promise the Athenians considerable future benefits and even a share in the control of Egypt … The Athenians responded enthusiastically to Inarus’s request and soon sent a fleet to the Nile …. Diodorus reports that the Persians took refuge in the Memphis fortress after being defeated. To put down the revolt, Xerxes (sic! Artaxerxes? - LCJ) then sent an army under the command of Achaemenes, ‘son of Darius and his own uncle’ …. Reinforced by the Athenian contingents, Inarus’s army achieved victory at Papremis in the Delta, and Achaemenes lost his life there …” (Briant 2002:574). Although there were different degrees of dominion by the Libyans in the Nile delta area, it seems that the influence of Inarus’s line continued until at least the end of the fifth century BCE.

One should certainly not make too courageous conclusions from this scanty evidence from the classical writers. However, Knoppers (2003b) has recently indicated that one should not underestimate the influence of classical Greek writers on the Chronicler. Although Knoppers argues his point from the genealogical analogies between the first part of Chronicles and some classical writers, he convincingly argues that one could imagine Greek influence in biblical writings far earlier than the enigmatic date of 332 BCE which is normally seen as a threshold for Greek influence on Judah: “Achaeological studies of the Levant carried out during the last few decades shed much light on the history of this land during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian eras. Analysis of the material remains from ancient Palestine no longer supports the use of 332 BCE as the threshold for Greek influence on Judah. Archaeological and written evidence for Greek contacts with the eastern Mediterranean predates the Macedonian conquest by centuries. The end of the Neo-Babylonian period and the advent of the Persian period witnessed a great expansion of international travel and commerce. … One could argue that Yehud was initially isolated from western influence, but it would seem hazardous to deny any contacts whatsoever, especially among the elite. …. That western influences are present in the material culture of Samaria and Yehud is evident by developments in pottery, numismatics, weights, weaponry, fortifications, and glyptic art” (Knoppers 2003b:648-649).
Admittedly, the reputation of the Cushites/Nubians and Libyans was certainly not known among the Jews in Yehud only on account of classical Greek literature. The existence of the Elephantine community on the southern border of Egypt with Nubia since (seemingly) long before the Chronicler’s time, would have established at least a vague acquaintance with these peoples. The introduction of the Cushites into this narrative would therefore have made perfect sense for the intended primary audience, namely the Jewish religious-cultic community.

However, should one not also assume another level of intended communication here? Could one perhaps imagine that these classical Greek traditions about the relationship between Persia and Nubia/Libya were also in the back of the Chronicler’s mind when he adapted the narrative about Asa’s reign? One should certainly not argue that there was any direct influence of classical written sources in Chronicles. However, in the light of the above evidence presented by Knoppers, one may suggest at least some sort of indirect influence. One could imagine that the traditions about Cush being the most extreme part of the known world, as well as the military reputations of Cush and Libya – particularly in relation to the Persians - were probably also known among the elite in Jerusalem and Samaria through the classical Greek literature. As shown above, the Persians are portrayed in this literature not in the position of the conqueror, but with the insinuation that they are weak.

Could it perhaps be that the Chronicler used those traditions to emphasize also in the direction of the Persian officials (probably the provincial leadership in Jerusalem and Samaria?) that Yahweh’s power is even greater than that of the Cushites (and per implication, greater than that of the Persians)? The Persian officials in Jerusalem and Samaria were most probably Judaean/Samarian, and would have understood the work of the Chronicler. However, as representatives of the Persian Empire, pursuing the larger imperial

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30 However, it is significant that the Cushites never feature in any of the known Elephantine literature.
32 Cf. e.g. the indications in the books of Ezra-Nehemiah, as well as the indications given by e.g. Wiesehöfer (1993:97-98) and Briant (2002:64) that local people/princes were normally employed by the Achaemenid Empire as officials on satrap level and below. Wiesehöfer (1993:97) indicates that these minor officials were often seen as the eyes and ears of the Persian king. [I thank Gary Knoppers for calling my attention to the work of Wiesehöfer.]
cause, they would probably have realized that the Chronicler’s message in the Asa narrative was a subtle polemic in their direction.

E SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Let me close with a short summary of my argument: I started off my presentation by situating my analysis among those studies that seek to describe the rhetorical function of Chronicles. I have argued that, if we accept that Chronicles contributed to a process of identity formation, we should also focus on the self-categorization in terms of out-groups that is witnessed in Chronicles. I therefore have posed the question whether we should not assume an implied secondary Persian audience for Chronicles.

The Chronicler’s Asa narrative served as example text. It was shown how the Chronicler adapted the communicative intent of the Deuteronomist’s version of Asa’s reign, and how a new rhetoric was introduced to this narrative. I have discussed one of the novel elements of the Chronicler’s narrative in order to argue that a secondary audience was probably implied here. The socio-political and socio-religious circumstances, as well as classical Greek literature from the mid-fifth century BCE onwards could possibly hold clues to the hypothesis that a secondary audience, probably the Persian officials in Jerusalem and Samaria, should be assumed for Chronicles.

This hypothesis does not want to replace the consensus of present scholarship that Chronicles were written for the Yehudite religious community in the Late Persian era, and that it contributed to a process of identity construction in those circumstances. It would rather complement our present scholarship with an attempt to give account for the multifaceted communication that we find in Chronicles.

It brings me back to the question: What kind of literature do we find in Chronicles? In calling the Chronicles “reforming history”, it is emphasized that this literature was probably also a very subtle polemic voiced by a minority group in a huge empire33. This polemic formed part of a more complex process of identity formation, both on a socio-political and a socio-religious level.

Could this perhaps hold the key for the interpretation of this literature in similar societies today?

33 Cf. also my discussion of Gen 1 in Jonker (2004).
**APPENDIX A**

**MACRO-STRUCTURE OF 1 KINGS 15:9-24**

| 15:9-10 | Dtr Introduction:  
| "In the twentieth year of King Jeroboam of Israel, …" (15:9)  
| "… (Asa) reigned forty-one years …" (15:10) |
| 15:11 | Positive evaluation of Asa |
| 15:12-15 | Asa’s reforms |
| 15:16-22 | War with Baasha of Israel “… all their days …” (15:16)  
| | Alliance with Ben-Hadad |
| 15:23-24 | Dtr Conclusion:  
| "… in his old age …" (15:23) |
### APPENDIX B

**MACRO-STRUCTURE OF 2 CHRON 13:23b-16:14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 13:23b | Chr Introduction (adapted from Dtr Introduction):  
In his days …  
the land had rest (…)
… for ten years |
| 14:1 | Positive evaluation of Asa (slightly changed) |
| 14:2-4 | Asa’s reform (expanded and altered)  
Command to seek Yahweh (vrđ) (14:3)  
the kingdom had rest (…) (14:4) |
| 14:5-6 | Asa’s building projects (added)  
the land had rest (…) (14:5)  
no war (…, …) (14:5)  
… in those years … (14:5)  
Yahweh gave him rest (…) (14:5)  
We have sought Yahweh (vrđ) (14:6)  
Yahweh has given rest on every side (…) (14:6) |
| 14:7-14 | Battle against Cushites (…, …, …) (14:9), and its aftermath (added)  
Relying on Yahweh (…) (14:10)  
Yahweh defeated Cushites (14:11)  
Asa/people chased Cushites away and gathered booty (14:12-14)  
Asa/people returned to Jerusalem (14:14) |
| 15:1-15 | Speech by Azariah and reaction to it (added)  
“Yahweh is with you, while you are with him. If you seek (vrđ) him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you.” (15:2)  
“In those times there was no peace” (15:5)  
When Asa heard these words … (15:8)  
When they saw that Yahweh was with him (15:9)  
In the third month of the 15th year of Asa’s reign (15:10)  
… on that day (15:11)  
Sacrifices (15:11)  
Making of a covenant to seek Yahweh (…) (15:12)  
Whoever would not seek (…, …) Yahweh … (15:13)  
Yahweh gave them rest (…) (15:15) |
Asa’s reforms (continued – slightly changed)

15:16-19
... all his days ... (15:17)
There was no more war (hyyh al hnj lm) (15:19)
... until the 35th year of Asa’s reign (15:19)

In the 36th year of Asa’s reign (16:1) ....

16:1-6
War with Baasha of Israel (expanded and altered)
Alliance with Ben-Hadad from Aram

16:7-10
Message by the seer, Hanani (added)
At that time ... (16:7)
Relying on Ben-Hadad and not on Yahweh (3X in 16:7-8)
From now on you will have wars (tmj lm) (16:9)
At that time ... (16:10)

16:11-14
Chr Conclusion: (expanded and altered from the Dtr Conclusion)
In the 39th year of Asa’s reign (16:12)
In his illness he did not seek (Yahweh) (16:12)
... in the 41st year of his reign (16:13) he died
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