

The age of reinvented empire(s) in Africa in the light of Persian hegemonic power: Reading the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah in the context of Zimbabwe

Author:Ndikho Mtshiselwa¹**Affiliation:**¹Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies, University of South Africa, South Africa**Correspondence to:**

Ndikho Mtshiselwa

Email:

mtshivnn@unisa.ac.za

Postal address:

PO Box 392, Pretoria 0003, South Africa

Dates:

Received: 21 Mar. 2015

Accepted: 10 Aug. 2015

Published: 27 Oct. 2015

How to cite this article:

Mtshiselwa, N., 2015, 'The age of reinvented empire(s) in Africa in the light of Persian hegemonic power: Reading the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah in the context of Zimbabwe', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36(1), Art. #1450, 9 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v36i1.1450>

Copyright:

© 2015. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS
OpenJournals. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

It is generally accepted that historically Africa experienced colonialism. Thus, in the neo-colonial age articulated by the likes of Sugirtharajah, Segovia and Nkrumah, most African countries are faced with the challenge of power struggle in which imperialism and dictatorship inhibits the development of the Two-Thirds world countries. This challenge, it is argued, reveals an imperialistic tendency of the European Union, China and African government(s) to alter democracy and freedom. As such, the Zimbabwe context, amongst others, will be used as a main point of reference. This article examines the elements of imperialism in African states in the light of Persian hegemonic power in the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah. It investigates whether or not the Jews were free under the Persian hegemonic influence in the post-exilic period. The comparison of the influence of Persian hegemony in the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah with the evidence of imperialism in African government(s), leads to the argument that certain African states do not appear to be completely democratic and free.

Intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary implications: Based on aspects of Old Testament and political science studies, this article explores traces of imperialism in African governments in the light of Persian hegemonic power in the Hebrew Bible. In the end, the article argues that certain African states, for instance Zimbabwe, should not be considered as completely democratic and free nations.

Introduction

The first president of the democratic Republic of South Africa, the late Nelson Mandela, expressed his view of an ideal democratic and free nation in the following words:

I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for, and to see realised. But my Lord, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die. (Mandela 1964)¹

In line with Mandela's words, the situation of hegemony on the African continent, with Zimbabwe as the main point of reference, alters the principle of democracy² and freedom in that it dominates and oppresses certain group(s) of people, as would be argued below. In definition, Kwakye (2011:120–126) notes that 'authoritarianism/dictatorship', on the part of African governments, is about a rule of a president that is characterised by a tendency of domination which inhibits democracy and economic development. In this case, he correctly refers to the imperialistic governments of '... Gaddafi's Libya; Bongo's Gabon; and Mugabe's Zimbabwe, amongst others' which are often associated with dictatorship (Kwakye 2011:120; cf. Rugwiji 2013:206–207). Furthermore, the domination of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) political élites in Zimbabwean politics and governance, if proven, would show that the idea of equal opportunities for all is only an illusion. In a recent article, Mtshiselwa (2014) examines the various forms of oppression evident in a nation that espouses democratic principles, namely South Africa. In keeping with that approach, this article parallels the oppression of Zimbabwean people to that of the Jews under the Persian hegemonic power in the books of Deuteronomy

1.This ideal was expressed by Nelson Mandela as part of his defence statement during the Rivonia Trial in 1964. He also reiterated that ideal in closing his speech in Cape Town on 11 February 1990, the day he was released from 27 years of imprisonment.

2.This article acknowledges that the concept of democracy is a complex one. Limited by the scope of this article, democracy is defined here in the light of Mandela's ideal of equal opportunities for all, as well as his rejection of the unjust domination of one group by another. In addition, democracy is presented in line with Kwakye's (2011:122) understanding of the concept as a system that promotes economic development for all, safeguards civil liberties and human rights, does not imprison political opponents, and upholds freedom of speech and association.

and Ezra-Nehemiah. It argues that the Jews encountered oppression in the post-exilic province of Yehud.

In his discussion of the Jews' experiences in the Persian-controlled Yehud, Rugwiji (2013:10, 43–48) affirms that the Jews were not completely free (cf. Albertz 2011:488; Leuchter 2010:60; Lipschits 2006:38). He agrees with Smith (1989: 38–41) that the Jews were slaves in Babylonia, but he also shows that 'the Judeans were equally treated as slaves by the Persian authorities (cf. Neh 9:36–37; Ezr 9:7–9) and by their Jewish brothers (cf. Neh 5:1–8)' (Rugwiji 2013:47). Such an argument could elicit a discussion of the hegemonic power of the Persian empire.

Based on a review of literature on Persian hegemony in the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah and on the supposition that elements of imperialism are observable in some African state(s), this article will argue that certain African states (e.g. Zimbabwe) should not be considered a completely democratic and free nation.

Jews and Persian hegemony

Firstly, the manner in which the king strategically appointed his officials will be investigated in order to uncover possible elements of hegemony in the Persian government. Worth exploring also is the question of the Persian imperial authorisation of the Torah. At issue is the role of the Persian imperial pressure in the emergence of the Torah, which includes the book of Deuteronomy. Thirdly the elements of the Persian royal ideology in the book of Deuteronomy, in particular, are worth studying.

Strategic appointment of official(s) under the Persian hegemonic rule

On the one hand, Berquist (1995:144) argues that the Persian empire selected and appointed Jewish governors to administer local affairs in the province of Yehud. These governors included Sheshbazzar, 539–525 BCE (Ezr 5:14); Zerubbabel, 525–516 BCE (Hg 1:1; 2:2)³ and Nehemiah, 445–425 BCE (Neh 5:14). On their appointments, Berquist comments that:

Yehud's organization involved the presence of political leaders such as Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. These officials received their power on the basis of Persian appointment and fulfilled administrative tasks for the purpose of strengthening Persian influence and gain from Yehud. They also possessed ties to Yehudite culture and shared their allegiance with the goal of preserving Yehud as a state of its own, albeit a secondary state dominated by Persia. These governors managed the Persian program of intensification to increase the imperial use of resources. (Berquist 1995:144)

3. With respect to the names of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, Usue (2005:52) wonders whether such names refer to one person or to separate individuals. That the two preceding names have been accredited to the laying of the foundation of the temple (cf. Ezr 3:8; 4:3; 5:16) and that they refer to a person who exercised a certain form of leadership amongst the first group of returnees (cf. Ezr 1:11; 2:2; 3:2, 8; 4:2–4; 5:14) does not provide sufficient evidence for the view that they refer to a same person. Noteworthy, Usue rejects the argument that Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel are two persons. In his rejection, he does not do justice in his critical engagement with scholars such as Klein (1999:679), Kidner (1979:139–146), and Williamson (2004:13–14) who argue that Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel are two persons. Thus, I find no compelling reason to concur with Usue.

The above comment is confirmed by the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. Moreover, officials who were not of Persian origin were probably appointed to ensure loyalty to the empire. In a typical Persian hegemonic administration, loyalty to the empire from the less powerful was often required (Balentine 1996:138; Berquist 1995:131–137; Jonker 2010:298). It would have been unwise on the part of the Persian empire to appoint persons who would subvert their authority. Thus, it is reasonable also to argue that the appointment of non-Persian officials served the purpose of strengthening Persian hegemony. Commenting on Ezra and Nehemiah, Bolin (2014:152; cf. Wiesehöfer 2009:89–90) observes a tendency by the imperialist Persian government to employ local élites to help maintain imperial oversight. Obviously, Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah were appointed by the Persian empire; this makes Bolin's observation attractive.

On the other hand, textual evidence shows that the Persian empire appointed Persian officials who oversaw the local administration of the province of Judah (Rugwiji 2013:44; cf. Neh 2:7; 3:7; Ezr 5:3; 6:6; 8:36). Nehemiah 2:7 confirms the influence of the governors of Trans-Euphrates, whilst Nehemiah 3:6–7 shows that the repairs of the Jeshanah Gate were carried out under the authority of a Persian official. Furthermore, the authorisation of the rebuilding of the temple was monitored by Tattenai, the governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their fellow officials (Ezr 5:3; 6:6). Ezra 8:36 also confirms that the Persian empire appointed the Persian officials and the governors of Trans-Euphrates to assist the Jews. Such assistance was also financial, that is, the expenses were covered by the Persian officials (Scheffler 2001:139). Given the strategic appointment of Persian officials to assume oversight of the province of Judah in Ezra-Nehemiah, the argument that Persian officials dominated the Jewish officials makes sense. As such, it appears that the Persian political élites were strategically appointed by the empire to rule the Jews in the post-exilic period.

For his part, Albertz (2011:485–486) notes that Bagohi, a Persian governor under Artaxerxes III, is mentioned in the papyrus TAD A4.7–9, particularly in TAD A4.7:1. He reasons that after a Jewish governor, Nehemiah, had 'provoked conflicts with his harsh dissociating policy' it is not surprising that the Persian king appointed a governor of Persian origin, namely Bagohi (Albertz 2011:486). This appointment shows the tendency by an imperialist figure to appoint persons who are deemed loyal. The appointment of both the Persian and non-Persian officials was clearly intended to serve the interest of the appointer, the Persian empire. Thus, it makes sense to argue that the Persian empire was imperialistic in the manner in which the king(s) strategically appointed officials as governors of provinces.

The Persian empire apparently appointed officials who could make imperialistic decisions, that is, decisions made on behalf of certain provinces at times without their involvement. According to Eshel (2007:228–229; cf. Albertz 2011:496–497, 500), the decision to allow the Jews to reconstruct their temple

in the second letter of the Elephantine Jews (in 407) was made by Bagohi with only the consent of Delaiah, a governor of the province of Samaria. On this decision, Albertz (2011:497) correctly claims that 'Bagohi and Delaiah made a positive cultic-political decision on the Persian governmental level without any participation of the Judeans as supposed by TAD A4.9'. This instance validates the view that the Persian government officials were imperialistic in the way they made decisions.

Moreover, the book of Deuteronomy seems to shed light on the strategic appointments of officials by the Persian empire. Scheffler (2005:103) claims that Deuteronomy 15:1–18:

reveals a possible urge to lend to other peoples and rule over them. This can be interpreted either positively (Israel as blessing for the nations) or negatively (an imperialistic urge).

The command statement, *וּמְשַׁלְתָּ בְּגוֹיִם רַבִּים וּבְךָ לֹא יִמְשְׁלוּ* [and you will rule over many nations but none will rule over you] (Dt 15:6) appears to be imperialistic. The conjunctive particle *וְ* attached to the second person masculine singular Qal verb *מְשַׁלְתָּ* can either be translated as, [to rule over you], [to have dominion over you] or [to reign over you]. The type of sentence that is contained in the translation of Deuteronomy 15:6 hints at hegemony. The text presupposes some element of imperialistic dominance whereby the appointed individual could rule with power and force. If this was not the case, there would have been an indication that others accepted the influence and leadership of the appointee. Instead, verse 9 prohibits other people from ruling over the appointed official(s), that is, from dominating such officials. Hence, a hint of imperialism is detectable. Also, the appointment of an official was determined by the relationship between the appointer and the appointee.

The phrase *אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְאֶת־אָחִיו* [from his friend or brother] in Deuteronomy 15:2 suggests that a preferential treatment is given to the brother or friend, in this instance, on the payment of loans. It is noteworthy that this preferential treatment is not extended to non-Israelites, that is, to *נֶזְכָּרִי*, a foreigner in favour of a *אָח*, a brother (cf. Dt 15:3). Scheffler (2005:107) clearly shows that Deuteronomy 15 distinguishes between *אָח* and *נֶזְכָּרִי*. However, it is difficult to prove that Deuteronomy 15 points to the appointment of any official by the Persian empire based on brotherly relationship or friendship. If brotherhood is viewed not as being limited to biological relationship, but instead refers to persons from the same tribe or nationality, then one could fairly argue that the rulers of the Persian empire preferred to see fellow Persians in positions of power. Textual records show that the Persian empire appointed persons of Persian origin as government officials (cf. Neh 2:7; 3:7; Ezr 5:3; 6:6; 8:36).

Deuteronomy 17 seems to allude to the appointment of government officials based on close relationships. On the rules used to determine the eligibility of a king, for instance, Scheffler (2007a:776, 2007b:128; cf. Dt 17:15) notes that foreigners were not the preferred candidates for positions of power. The prohibition on the appointment of a foreigner

as king is rooted in the view that such a person is not a brother, that is, there is no close relationship. The statement *שׁוּם תִּשִׁים עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ* [be sure to appoint over you the king] (Dt 17:15) shows that it is not only Yahweh who was involved in the appointment of leaders, but the empire also had a say in the matter. If the rereading of Deuteronomy 17 took place in the post-exilic context, as I am inclined to believe, the possibility that the post-exilic scribes had in mind the tendency by the Persians to strategically appoint officials could not be ruled out.

Thus, in all probability, non-Persians were appointed to positions of power based on their loyalty to the Persian empire, whilst officials of Persian origin who had close relationships with the rulers of the empire were preferred candidates for high positions in the government.

Imperial authorisation of the Torah: Evidence of Persian hegemonic influence?

The influence of Persian hegemony is evident in the restructuring of Yehud around the temple and the Torah (Balentine 1996:130; Rugwiji 2013:45). Berquist (2010:11) claims that the Yehudite community was formed as a result of imperialism, not because of internal organisation amongst the Jews. That is, in the restructuring of Yehud, the emergence of the Torah was not induced by processes amongst the Jews, but by the Persian imperial power. Unlike Otto and Römer, Berquist rejects the internal role of the Jewish impact on the formation of the Torah. This view will be discussed later. The claim that Persian hegemony influenced the lives of the Jews triggers the thought of a well contested theory of Persian imperial authorisation of the Torah.

At issue here is the influence of the Persian empire in the emergence of the Torah. Frei (2001:7) defines Persian imperial authorisation as, 'A process by which the norms established by a local authority are not only approved and accepted by a central authority, but adopted as its own'. The approval, acceptance and the making of the laws and norms that are embedded in the Torah would then confirm Persian imperial authorisation. Frei (2001:9–12) brings to light Darius' legislation in Egypt and Ezra's work in Judah which are inferred in the Diordodus of Sicily 1.95.4 and Ezra 7. The concluding verse of Ezra 7:12–26 states that:

All who will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgement be strictly executed on them, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of their goods or for imprisonment.

Based on Frei's observation of Darius' legislation, one is hesitant to reject claims relating to the influence and involvement of the Persian government. In his response to Frei's definition and view of the Persian imperial authorisation of the Torah, Schmid remarks that:

... [P]rocesses of authorization do not imply the creation and maintenance of a central archive for authorized norms,

the personal involvement of the Persian king in each act of authorization, or the necessary initiation of such a process by the Persians. Still, this does not mean that little remains of the theory—we must continue to emphasize that no analogy exist in the ancient Near East for the fact that central Persian government lent its authority to local norms. (Schmid 2007:38)

It is thus difficult to prove the centralisation of the records of the Persian authorised laws in the Torah. Also, one finds it challenging to validate the personal involvement of the Persian king in the authorisation of the Jewish norms or the Torah. One is also wary of ruling out the possibility of an imperial influence on the canonisation of the Torah and the rereading of the book of Deuteronomy. Interestingly, Schmid (2007:29) asks: ‘How and in what manner the Torah is connected to its historical Persian context and what political forces influenced its creation?’ In turn, he does not answer the question in a convincing way. Instead, he concludes that the manner in which the formation of the Torah should be connected with such processes of authorisation currently remains an open question (Schmid 2007:38).

Rejecting the theory of the authorisation of the Torah by the Persian empire, Otto (2002:413, 2005:38; cf. Brueggemann & Linafelt 2012:402; Römer 2007:179) claims that the authorisation of the Torah cannot be ascribed to the Persian empire, but rather to the Jewish scribes during the Persian era. Against such a claim and explaining the emergence of the Torah during the Persian rule, Schmid (2007:38) argues that ‘the statement that the Torah is a product of Jewish scribal scholars will not suffice’. His reason is that there is textual evidence (that is, the Artaxerxes decree in Ezra 7 which will be discussed below), which confirms the Jews’ familiarity with the process of Persian authorisation of local norms. Thus, Otto’s explanation that the Persian empire influenced the rereading of the Pentateuch or the completion of the Torah does not appear to be a cogent argument. However, Otto partly makes a valid point in his rejection of the theory of Persian imperial authorisation of the Torah, as will be shown later.

In Ezra 7:26, we read that, ‘Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king must surely be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment’. Grätz rejects the theory of Persian imperial authorisation of the Torah and argues that Ezra 7:12–26 cannot be used to prove claims of Persian imperial policy, because that text is a Hellenistic fiction (Grätz 2004:130–140). Nonetheless, he does not provide a compelling evidence for his claim. Although he locates Ezra 7 within the Hellenistic context he observes a link between Ezra 7:26 and the post-exilic Deuteronomistic text in Deuteronomy 17:11–12 (Grätz 2004:181). With context in mind, Grätz’s view of Ezra becomes more unattractive.

Unlike Grätz, Albertz, in his interpretation of Ezra 7, concludes that:

... Ezra was ordered to prepare, publish, and implement a document that can be inferred from the Artaxerxes re-script

(Ezra 7:14, 25–26). This document, called ‘the law of God of heaven’ (v. 21), probably consists of the entire Pentateuch ... Considered in this way, the publication and implementation of the Pentateuch in the provinces Judah and Samaria, induced by the Persian king, can be seen as a religious-political device for helping to stabilize and pacify the southwestern border of the empire at the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E. (Albertz 2011:483–504)

This shows an imperial command by the Persian empire to prepare the law or Torah, that is, the ‘words of the commandments of Yahweh’ (Davies 2014:37). The particle preposition כִּי [according to], that is attached to the construct noun תּוֹרָה [law] to form כִּי תּוֹרָה [according to the law] which forms part of the statement $\text{כִּי תִלְבַּח לְיְהוָה}$, [according to the law of Elohim] in Ezra 14, confirms that the Jews’ actions ought to be based on the law. That is, the implementation of the law is, in this instance, instructed by the Persian empire. If imperial authorisation includes the preparation, publishing and implementation of the law, then one might rightly consider an element of Persian imperial authorisation in Ezra 7:14. Verses 11–12 show that Artaxerxes, the Persian imperialist king, who is identified as מֶלֶךְ מְלָכִים [king of kings] gave orders to Ezra. Issuing an order is in fact authorising someone to act according to that order. Thus, it might be difficult to ignore this point in the discussion of the imperial authorisation of the text.

Going around the textual evidence of Ezra 7 in arguing against the theory of the Persian imperial authorisation of the Torah seems to be a difficult task. Unless a strong and convincing argument is presented by scholars who reject the theory of the authorisation of the Torah, namely Otto and Römer, the theory would remain a compelling one.

Persian royal ideology in the book of Deuteronomy

The discussion of the Persian royal ideology here will rely heavily on the work of Eckart Otto who has carried out extensive study on the book of Deuteronomy. The ideology is rooted in the claim that the compositional layers of the Torah are indisputably constituted by Deuteronomistic and priestly materials. Otto argues that:

... The Book of Deuteronomy was characterized by an anti-hegemonial attitude of subversive reception of ideas of the hegemonial powers ... What seems at a first glance to be an uneven text in Dtn 11:13-17 proves to be a hermeneutically most sophisticated aetiology of claims of the authors of the postexilic ‘Fortschreibung’ (rereading) of the Book of Deuteronomy defending not only their claim for authority of their interpretation of the Torah but also defending their religious identity against claims of the Achaemenid hegemonial power. (Otto 2013:122)

Interesting is the acceptance of the idea of hegemonic power and the allusion to the Persian imperial authorisation of the Torah. It is argued that, ‘Darius I called himself “king of the territories/people” (*xšayathiaya dahyunam*)’ (Otto 2013:119). This proves that in Persian royal ideology, a king was viewed as the owner of heaven and earth. However, some

Old Testament scholars, for instance Otto (2005:40), also note that a Persian god namely the so-called great God Ahura-Mazdā owned the land. The existence of the Persian satrapy, that is, the territory under the rule of hegemonic leaders, also validates the Persian view that the land belonged to the king. Regarding Otto's view of the Persian royal ideology and its subversive reception by Jewish scribes, mentioned above, the fact that Moses was never presented as the owner of heaven and earth indicates that the post-exilic Jewish scribes did not copy or adopt such an ideology. The motif of the heavens and the earth belonging to Yahweh that is employed by the Deuteronomistic post-exilic scribes supports this view.

The motif is also noticed in other post-exilic texts outside the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah. As in Deuteronomy 2:23 and 10:14, the motif is equally employed in Psalm 115:16, whilst in Isaiah 42:5 and 45:18, Yahweh is presented as the creator of heavens, without mentioning the earth. However, Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 use the term ארץ [the earth] along with the understanding that the heavens belong to Yahweh. Therefore, the post-exilic Jewish authors, including the Deuteronomistic scribes, subversively received the Persian hegemonic ideology which claimed that the king owned the heavens and the earth by emphasising that only Yahweh (a deity), not a human being such as Moses, owned the land. This subversion sought to protect the Jews from the absolute power of the Persian hegemonic state (Otto 2005:47, 2009:137). Thus, one would appreciate Otto's (2013:119, 120) view that the post-exilic authors of the rereading of the book of Deuteronomy insisted that, "Israel" did not get her legal order and her territory from the Persian king but from YHWH, the only God'.

Interestingly, a probable connection of the deity with a human being is noticeable in both the Persian royal hegemonic ideology and the book of Deuteronomy. Otto (2013:114–115, 120) argues that Moses, a human being, is identified with Yahweh, a deity in Deuteronomy 7:4, 11 and 11:13–15. The singular suffix that is used in the phrase אֲחֵרַי [from following me] (Dt 7:4) suggests that Yahweh is speaking. In the same verse, the phrase, אַרְיֵהוּ [anger of Yahweh] seems to be uttered by some other character who is not a deity. Additionally, in verses 5–10 Moses speaks, whilst verse 11 abruptly changes, without any indication, such as the use of the formula, 'thus says the Lord', to imply that Yahweh is now speaking. By implication, Yahweh issues the command, אֶת־הַמִּצְוָה [you shall keep my commandment]. The tendency to introduce abruptly a statement ascribed to Yahweh by changing the suffix from second person to first person is also noted in Deuteronomy 11:13–15. Thus, Otto (2013:115–116, 120) correctly points out the identification of Moses with Yahweh through a scribal change from Moses to Yahweh. In that fusion, Moses was elevated close to God.

The elevation of Darius I to the level of a deity resembles the elevation of Moses which is noticed in the fusion of Yahweh with Moses. Thus, one could reasonably argue that, the Deuteronomistic authors probably borrowed the

idea of elevating a human being to the level of a deity from Persian ideology. If such an argument is compelling, it would invalidate the view that the Persian hegemonic power had no impact or level of authority on the Jews. Given the similar elevation of a human leader to the level of a deity both in the book of Deuteronomy and in the Persian empire, it would be difficult to disagree with the theory of Persian imperial authorisation of the Torah. The parallel between deity and humanity suggests that there were norms and tendencies that were approved and accepted by the Persian empire. Hence, the theory of Persia's imperial authorisation of the Torah makes sense as the Persian empire must have accepted some of the norms of the Jewish community in Yehud. The mandate to publish norms and laws in Ezra 7 points in this direction.

On the one hand, I would agree with Otto that the presence of Moses in the dispensation or the authorisation of the commands to the Jews shows that the Jews had some influence in the publication of the Torah. On the other hand, unlike Otto, one would argue that the fact that Yahweh is presented as the only owner of the land in the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah, that is, without acknowledging Moses' role, as in the narrative of Darius I, proves that the Jews rejected an element of the Persian royal ideology. However, Otto's claim of the subversive reception of the Persian hegemonic ideology by the Jewish scribes is appealing.

Hegemony in the government(s) of African states: Democracy altered in Zimbabwe?

The discourse of the influence of Persian hegemony on the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah could help illuminate the issue of imperialism in certain African states, for example Zimbabwe. This section seeks to unlock the reality of imperialism in African politics with insight from such a discourse.

Noteworthy, a careful transition from the world of production of both the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah to the modern day context of the reader of the Hebrew Bible adds a curious dimension to the South African biblical scholarship. As Lombaard (2001:51) excellently perceived, the imperialistic tendencies of the empire that were evident in both the biblical world and the world of Western hegemony are manifested in various new forms in our modern world (cf. Lombaard 2001:86; Twaddle 2005:74). Although Lombaard presents a thorough study of the literature on the imperialism of the Persian empire, little, if any, is said about new forms of imperialism in the present day world. Thus, it is critical that we draw insight from postcolonial biblical scholarship. Postcolonial biblical criticism focuses on the issues of expansion, domination and imperialism in the world: the world of antiquity; the world of the near East; the world of modernity; the world of Western hegemony and expansions; and the world of postcolonialism on the part of the Two-Thirds world (Segovia 2006:37;

Sugirtharajah 2006:17). On the issue of the 'late imperialism', Segovia observes that the end of formal colonialism came with the continued impact and power of imperial culture in the modern world with the USA, for instance, as its prime example (Segovia 2006:39). On this point, he is referring to the so-called neo-colonialism which Nkrumah describes in the following manner:

The neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage. In the past it was possible to convert a country upon which a neo-colonial regime had been imposed – Egypt in the nineteenth century is an example – into a colonial territory ... In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism. The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside ... neo-colonialist control is exercised through economic or monetary means. The neo-colonial State may be obliged to take the manufactured products of the imperialist power to the exclusion of competing products from elsewhere. Control over government policy in the neo-colonial State may be secured by payments towards the cost of running the State, by the provision of civil servants in positions where they can dictate policy, and by monetary control over foreign exchange through the imposition of a banking system controlled by the imperial power. (Nkrumah 1966:ix-x)

Based on Nkrumah's (1966) description of the neo-colonialism – a new form of imperialism – the European Union (EU) which is constituted by 28 member states that are located primarily in Europe, as well as the government of China may be viewed as the reinvented empires. In the case of Zimbabwe, both China and EU seem to have some form of control over government policy in a similar manner that the Persian empire had over the Jews in post-exilic Yehud. It is reported that 'the EU has offered a €234m (£174m) olive branch to Zimbabwe' (Smith 2015:1). According to Smith (2015):

the aid is intended for development projects decided jointly with the government and, if certain conditions are met in the next few years, could lead to a resumption of direct budget support. (p. 1)

Interestingly, the latter aid is viewed as a 'reward for Zimbabwe's adoption of a progressive new constitution and an attempt to encourage further change' (Smith 2015:2). Furthermore, it is reported that the developmental projects on agriculture, health services and governance, will be:

implemented by agencies such as the UN Development Programme and World Bank. But if Zimbabwe meets conditions relating to good governance and the rule of law, it could eventually receive direct budget support. (Smith 2015:2)

No doubt, although Zimbabwe is an independent state, the policies of the Zimbabwean government are directed by the EU. The view that the aid is a reward for Zimbabwe's adoption of a progressive new constitution and is dependent on meeting the conditions relating to good governance and the rule of law, supports the preceding deduction. On this point, one is reminded of the way Ezra-Nehemiah deals

with an imperialistic situation where the leader of an empire stipulates the relations with one of his provinces (Judah). With regard to Zimbabwe, although the EU does not regard Zimbabwe as its province, there is, however, no doubt that the EU has, through the use of its financial aid, directed its relations with and policies of Zimbabwe.

As noted early, China too appears to be a reinvented empire. Thornycroft (2014) has reported that:

he [*Mugabe*] returned home without any cash or even soft loans, but signed a handful of expensive deals to support ongoing infrastructural repairs and power generation as well as a pledge for a new coal mine. (p. 1)

Noteworthy, an individual who asked not to be named, said, 'We will be paying double for all of this so-called investment as Chinese insurers rate Zimbabwe as high risk, in the "E" category, even worse than Sudan' (Thornycroft 2014:1). Nkrumah (1966:ix-x) would argue that China has been imperialistic in the manner in which it obliged Zimbabwe to take the Chinese manufactured products for infrastructural repairs, amongst other projects, to the exclusion of competing products from elsewhere. In the Zimbabwe-China relations pattern, the aid comes with imperialistic conditions. As such, in as much as the British empire parted with wealth from its imperialistic rule in the then Rhodesia, so will China.

Interestingly, Hancock (1989:185-194) has argued that international aid is not helpful in Africa. His reason is that aid 'has financed the creation of monstrous projects that, as vast expense, have devastated the environment and ruined lives', 'has supported and legitimised brutal tyrannies' and 'has allowed the dead grip of imposed officialdom to suppress popular choice and individual freedom' (Hancock 1989:189). It must, however, be noted that Hancock (1989:178) is not referring to the Zimbabwean situation, but to Mobutu Sese Seko's regime in Zaïre since 1965. However, a similar observation could be made in the case of the Zimbabwean. In 2006, China distributed development aid amounting to \$300 million which kept a despot like Mugabe in power (Moyo, in Whitney 2009; Zhang 2011:216). On this point, it becomes clear that China – a reinvented empire – has supported and legitimised the brutal tyranny or imperialism in Zimbabwe. However, one wonders whether in the case of the governance of Zimbabwe we are dealing with dictatorship or imperialism, or even both. On that point, Musewe offers an interesting remark:

I understand that the British Empire was founded upon the plunder of treasures through the use of arms against other weaker countries. Its expansion was based on the tacit approval by the British monarchy at that time, on the use of violence and subjugation of natives for profit, under the pretext of spreading Protestantism: Africans were deceived ... Just as the British used Protestantism to gain economic advantage over black Africans, so has liberation struggle politics been used by the black elite imperialist class, to gain economic advantage over the black African masses ... Our case here in Zimbabwe is a classical example of this. The imperialist is now the black African elite

class, made up mostly of those who participated in the liberation struggle backed by the military. The crude fact is that, they continue to claim their sole entitlement to political power in 'liberated' Africa. Because of that, we now find ourselves imprisoned by our 'liberators'... (Musewe 2013:1)

Based on this remark, rather than reading the Zimbabwean situation as being about dictatorship, Musewe proposes a different view, namely, that what we have in Zimbabwe is a reinvention of imperialism. In this case, the imperialist is a black person. Of the issue of imperialism, the postcolonial biblical scholarship sheds helpful light. Worthy of note is Dube's (2006:147) view that imperialism is a form of oppression which includes the use of military might, intimidation, exile, dispossession and cultural assimilation (cf. Jds 2:21–27; 2:28; 1:9; 3:1–8). In the light of the preceding view, it is curious to note that Rugwiji's (2013:206–207) view that Mugabe's administration is militant and is supported by the Army, the Air Force, the Police, and the Prison chiefs, suggests that governance in Zimbabwe includes the use of military might. On this point, Dube would not distance herself from the argument that what we have in Zimbabwe is a reinvention of imperialism.

Kwakye (2011:122) asserts that authoritarian governments trample on people's freedom, which, if attained could 'expand the range of human opportunities to foster economic prosperity'. In relation to the Zimbabwean context, Rugwiji would consider Kwakye's view instructive, as he decisively condemns the situation of unequal access to food, in which the Zanu-PF political élites and members mainly benefit, whilst the poor in Zimbabwe continue in poverty (Rugwiji 2013:182). Interestingly, in addition to his argument that the Jews were not completely free in the post-exilic Persian-controlled Yehud, Rugwiji (2013:31) observes that Zimbabwe has rekindled a new wave of enslavement and oppression which has seen the exacerbation of poverty amongst the majority of ordinary people (cf. Zimudzi 2012:508).

However, unlike Mbeki (2009:16) who argues that African political élites, including the Zanu-PF élites, reinvented a socio-economic system of exploitation that was devised by the colonist, Rugwiji does not trace poverty in Zimbabwe to the colonial past. In the colonial era, the colonists extracted raw materials and minerals such as asbestos, gold, ferro-alloys and tobacco from Zimbabwe's productive land to enrich themselves. Today, the Zanu-PF political élites are no exception, as they (politicians and government officials alike) unfairly enrich themselves (Mbeki 2009:10, 106; cf. Hill 2003:126). In such a case, unequal benefit from the resources of the country does not help to alleviate poverty. Thus, Rugwiji and Mbeki's claim that postcolonial Zimbabwe is characterised by different forms of oppression is reasonable. However, the differing views of Rugwiji and Mbeki are as a result of the perception of the Zimbabwean situation. That Rugwiji sees a situation of dictatorship, whilst Mbeki observes a reinvention of colonialism, leads one to view Zimbabwe as a neo-colonial state. On this point, I concur

with Mbeki. Based on the view that the imperialism of the British colonists in Zimbabwe came with the capitalist expansion which is manifested in the way the British empire sorted to 'seek control of raw material supplies, to find markets, and to find profitable fields of investment' as Rodney (2009:162) correctly argues, it is difficult not to agree with Mbeki. Therefore, a capitalist tendency of the Zanu-PF political élites which is not different from the tendency of the British empire supports the argument that the Zanu-PF élites are the reinvented empires who have perpetuated the oppression of the poor in Zimbabwe. The evidence of oppression in neo-colonial Zimbabwe reminds one of the post-exilic situation in which the Jews were not completely free.

Furthermore, Rugwiji (2013:151) notes that 'Gono's reappointment as governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe ... was highly contested by the [Movement for Democratic Change] MDC'. Both the Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono and Johannes Tomana, the Attorney-General, were strategically appointed by President Mugabe to sustain the Zanu-PF élites in power, despite protests from the opposition (Rugwiji 2013:151; cf. Sibanda 2008). The claim that the current president appoints his supporters to positions of power despite opposition bears resemblance to the strategic appointments of officials under Persian hegemonic rule as inferred from the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah. Such appointments in the Zimbabwean context and the biblical text show the tendency by an imperialist figure to appoint only persons who are deemed loyal to them. Of significance here is the point that the appointment of persons deemed loyal to the empire is not new phenomenon in the history of Africa. Rodney (2009:172) has noted that Europeans often recruited Africans to serve in the armies that conquered African states during the period of imperialism. Therefore, it becomes clear that the strategy used by the ruling élites in Zimbabwe is similar to that employed by the British empire. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that the present Zimbabwean situation may be viewed as similar to imperialism.

The dominance of the Zanu-PF political élites, and the tendency to influence and use the constitution for their gain in Zimbabwe can be compared to the imperial authorisation of the Torah under the Persian hegemonic rule noted above. In a situation of hegemony, the dominance of the empire or imperial network is manifested in the area of policy making and governance as the elements of Persian hegemony in the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah, and Zanu-PF élites imperialism indicate. Rugwiji criticises the Zimbabwean constitution which was influenced by the élites in the following words:

The current Zimbabwe Constitution was adopted from the Lancaster Constitution, which was revised in 1987 when Robert Mugabe gave himself the title of 'President'. The Constitution of Zimbabwe provides the framework for the country's laws, which also states that the President can hold office for six years; it does not stipulate how many of these six-year terms can a President hold office. (Rugwiji 2013:158)

Based on this provision, the Zanu-PF political élites crafted and used the constitution to retain Robert Mugabe in power from 1980 to date. Furthermore, the strategically appointed Johannes Tomana, the Attorney-General, which is provided for in section 84 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Madhuku 2006:346), shows that the formation of the policy serves the empire, that is, the Zanu-PF political élites. Furthermore, it should be noted that, in a manner similar to that of the reinvented empires, namely, the EU and China, the Zanu-PF political élites control and use both the political and economic policies to advance their imperialistic endeavours. Thus, it makes sense to consider the present day Zimbabwean ruling élites to be the reinvented empire, as opposed to just being dictators.

In terms of Persian royal ideology, the land belonged to the king, as shown above. This fact shows that human beings, namely kings, were often elevated to a level of a deity. Against this view, the post-exilic Jewish authors and Deuteronomistic scribes presented the land as belonging to only YHWH. Put differently, only YHWH could claim ownership of the land of Yehud. However, like the Persian view that the king owns the land, a similar tenor underlying Mugabe's (2002) statement, 'Blair, keep your England and I will keep my Zimbabwe' can be detected. The pronoun is set in a possessive form 'my', which suggests that Mugabe believes that he owns Zimbabwe, like the Persian kings who regarded themselves as owners of the land. Also, that the British empire named the now Zimbabwe, Rhodesia (after Cecil Rhodes), shows an element of entitlement on the part of the empire, suggests that the British imperialists perceived Zimbabwe as belonging to them. Therefore, it may be said that Mugabe's view that he owns Zimbabwe is not different from that of the British empire, enabling us to regard Mugabe as equally imperialistic. Also, based on this point, the assumption that Mugabe may have elevated himself to the level of a deity – similar to that found in the Persian royal ideology – could be warranted.

The discussion of the power struggle in Zimbabwe, one of the African states which have shown traces of the reinvention of the empire, shows that the power play that was evident in colonial history is now apparent in the modern history of Africa. Such reinvention is also noticeable in the South African context, in the so-called KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) syndicate.

The so-called KZN syndicate is a factor to be considered in the discourse on South African politics (Segar 2013:20). Although Segar's makes a positive contribution to that discourse, he does not explore the nature and the extent of the supposed empire. Unlike Segar, Welz (2013b:21) asserts that, 'President Jacob Zuma has clearly found security in the deployment of friends with KwaZulu-Natal roots to position of power and influence at all levels of government'. Furthermore, he argues that people with KZN roots, who constitute Zuma's imperial network, rule South Africa (Welz 2013a:6, 2013b:21). The claim that Zuma deploys people with KZN roots into positions of

power bears similarity to the strategic appointments of officials under Persian hegemonic rule that is evident in the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah. Calland (2013:61) finds an increase of 13.19% in the number of Zulu Cabinet ministers appointed by President Zuma. That is, the number of Zulu officials increased from 14.58% during the Mbeki rule to 27.78% when Zuma became the president. Consequently, Zuma's KZN imperial network took up a position of dominance in the Cabinet in terms of number, making it easy to influence policy decisions. Thus, one may see activities of the so-called KZN syndicate as a reinvention of the hegemony which was evident in the colonial and apartheid South Africa as well as during the Mbeki rule.

As Mandela argued, the dominance of such a network alters democracy and freedom. By implication, in his expression of an ideal democratic society, Mandela says that the domination of one by the other, either white or black, whom he fought for, is against democratic principles. Inequality in the appointment of Cabinet ministers, the dominance of Zuma's KZN imperial network, the view that Zuma is feared within the ruling party, all point to ways in which democracy and freedom are being altered. Furthermore, the discussion of whether or not the Jews were free in the post-exilic period prompts one to reconsider also the credibility of the democracy in the post-apartheid South Africa, and to be hesitant in categorising South Africa as a completely democratic and free nation. The domination of one by the other, that is, the dominance of Zuma's KZN imperial network is at stake.

Conclusion

This article has argued that development on the African continent is inhibited because of the dictatorial and imperialistic tendencies of many African leaders, as well as the imperialistic tendency of the EU and China. In the light of Mandela's view of democracy and freedom, such imperial disposition is a factor which alters democracy and freedom in Africa, for instance, in Zimbabwe. The evidence of Persian hegemonic influence in the books of Deuteronomy and Ezra-Nehemiah has been examined in order to unlock the reality of imperialism in African government(s), leading us to conclude that certain African states do not yet enjoy complete democratic freedom. As one is limited by the scope of this article, on the hermeneutic level a two-way interaction between the text and the context constitutes an area for future research. Also, the manner in which one may criticise imperialism in Africa as a whole in the light of the Persian royal hegemony in the Old Testament is an area for further research.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

References

- Albertz, R., 2011, 'The controversy about Judean versus Israelite identity and the Persian government: A new interpretation of the Bagoses story (Jewish Antiquities XI.297-301)', in O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers & M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid period: Negotiating identity in an international context*, pp. 483–504, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, IN.
- Balentine, S.E., 1996, 'The politics of religion in the Persian period', in J. Barton & D.J. Reimer (eds.), *After the exile: Essays in honour of Rex Mason*, pp. 129–146, Mercer University Press, Macon.
- Berquist, J.L., 1995, *Judaism in Persia's shadow: A social and historical approach*, Minneapolis Fortress, Minneapolis.
- Berquist, J.L., 2010, 'Identities and Empire: Historiographic questions for the Deuteronomistic history in the Persian period', in L.C. Jonker (ed.), *Historiography and identity (re)formulation in the Second Temple historiographical literature*, pp. 3–14, T&T Clark International, New York.
- Bolin, T.M., 2014, '1–2 Samuel and Jewish Paideia in the Persian and Hellenistic periods', in D.V. Edelman (ed.), *Deuteronomy-Kings as emerging authoritative books: A conversation*, pp. 133–158, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta.
- Bruiggemann, W. & Linafelt, T., 2012, *An introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian imagination*, 2nd edn., Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville.
- Calland, R., 2013, *The Zuma years: South Africa's challenging face of power*, Zebra Press, Cape Town.
- Davies, P.R., 2014, 'The authority of Deuteronomy', in D.V. Edelman (ed.), *Deuteronomy-Kings as emerging authoritative books: A conversation*, pp. 27–48, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta.
- Dube, M.W., 2006, 'Rahab says hello to Judith: A decolonizing feminist reading', in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The postcolonial biblical reader*, pp. 142–158, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9780470775080.ch9>
- Eshel, H., 2007, 'The governors of Samaria in the fifth and fourth Centuries B.C.E.', in O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers & R. Albertz (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the fourth Century B.C.E.*, pp. 223–234, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake.
- Frei, P., 2001, 'Persian imperial authorization: A summary', in J.W. Watts (ed.), *Persia and Torah: The theory of imperial authorization of the Pentateuch*, pp. 5–40, Scholars Press, Atlanta.
- Grätz, S., 2004, *Das Edikt des Artaxerxes: Eine Untersuchung zum religionspolitischen und historischen Umfeld von Esra 7, 12–26*, BZAW 337, de Gruyter, Berlin & New York.
- Hancock, G., 1989, *Lords of poverty: The power, prestige, and corruption of the international aid business*, The Atlantic Monthly Press, New York.
- Hill, G., 2003, *The battle for Zimbabwe: The final countdown*, Zebra Press, Cape Town.
- Jonker, L.C., 2010, 'Revisiting the Saul narrative in Chronicles: Interacting with the Persian imperial context?', *Old Testament Essays* 23(2), 283–305.
- Kidner, D., 1979, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, Inter-Varsity Press (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries), Leicester.
- Klein, R.W., 1999, 'The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah', in L.E. Keck (ed.), *The new interpreter's Bible*, vol. 3, pp. 661–852, Abingdon Press, Nashville.
- Kwakye, J.K., 2011, *Africa's long road to development: It is not just economics, but also history, geography, politics, and leadership*, Frontiers Printing and Publishing Ltd, Accra.
- Leuchter, M., 2010, 'Coming to terms with Ezra's many identities in Ezra-Nehemiah', in L.C. Jonker (ed.), *Historiography and identity (re)formulation in the second temple historiographical literature*, pp. 41–64, T&T Clark International, New York.
- Lipschits, O., 2006, 'Achaemenid imperial policy, settlement process in Palestine, and the status of Jerusalem in the middle of the fifth Century B.C.E.', in O. Lipschits & M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and Judeans in the Persian period*, pp. 19–52, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake.
- Lombaard, C., 2001, 'The Bible in the apartheid debate', in J.W. Hofmeyr, C. Lombaard & P.J. Maritz (eds.), *1948 + 50 years. Theology, apartheid and church: Past, present and future (Perspectives on the Church/Perspektiewe op die Kerk, Series 5: Vol. 1)*, pp. 69–87, Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.
- Madhuku, L., 2006, 'The appointment process of judges in Zimbabwe and its implications for the administration of justice', *South African Public Law* 21, 345–369.
- Mandela, N., 1964, *Nelson Mandela, defence statement during the Rivonia Trial, 1964*, viewed 2 January 2014, from http://www.africanhistory.about.com/od/mandelanelson/p/qts_mandela1.htm
- Mbeki, M., 2009, *Architects of poverty: Why African capitalism needs changing*, Picador Africa, Johannesburg.
- Mtshiselwa, N., 2014, 'A post-apartheid nation in chains? Relevance of Lucky Dube's Mickey Mouse Freedom in reconfiguring forms of oppression in South Africa', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 40(1), 57–76.
- Mugabe, R., 2002, 'Let me keep my Zimbabwe', viewed 24 September 2014, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1406028/Mugabe-Let-me-keep-my-Zimbabwe.html>
- Musewe, V., 2013, 'Fighting black imperialism', viewed 01 June 2015, from <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/opinions/opinions-and-analysis/68114/fighting-black-imperialism.html>
- Nkrumah, K., 1966, *Neo-colonialism: The last stage of imperialism*, International Publishers, New York.
- Otto, E., 2002, 'Review of James W. Watts (ed.), *Persia and Torah*', *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 8, 411–414.
- Otto, E., 2005, 'The Pentateuch between synchronic and diachronic: Perspectives for the encounter between Africa and Europe', in E. Otto & J. Le Roux (eds.), *A critical study of the Pentateuch: An encounter between Europe and Africa*, pp. 22–49, Lit Verlag Münster, Münster.
- Otto, E., 2009, 'The Holiness Code in diachrony and synchrony in the legal hermeneutics of the Pentateuch', in S. Shectman & J.S. Baden (eds.), *The strata of the Priestly writings: Contemporary debate and future directions*, pp. 135–156, Theologischer Verlag Zürich, Zürich.
- Otto, E., 2013, 'The Book of Deuteronomy and its answer to the Persian state ideology: The legal implications', in O. Artud (ed.), *Loi et justice*, pp. 112–122, Beihefte zur ZAR 20, Wiesbaden.
- Rodney, W., 2009, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, Panaf Publishing, Abuja, Lagos, Pretoria.
- Römer, T., 2007, 'The so-called Deuteronomistic History: A sociological, historical and literary introduction', T&T Clark International, New York.
- Rugwiji, T., 2013, 'Appropriating Judean post-exilic literature in a postcolonial discourse: A case for Zimbabwe', unpublished PhD thesis, Dept. of Biblical and Ancient Studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria, viewed 20 March 2013, from http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/10549/thesis_rugwiji_t.pdf?sequence=
- Scheffler, E.H., 2001, *Politics in ancient Israel*, Biblia, Pretoria.
- Scheffler, E.H., 2005, 'Deuteronomy 15:1–18 and poverty in (South) Africa', in E. Otto & J. Le Roux (eds.), *A critical study of the Pentateuch: An encounter between Europe and Africa*, pp. 97–115, Lit Verlag Münster, Münster.
- Scheffler, E.H., 2007a, 'Criticising political power: The challenge of Deuteronomy 17:14–20', *Old Testament Essays* 20(3), 772–785.
- Scheffler, E.H., 2007b, 'Criticism of government: Deuteronomy 17:14–20 between (and beyond) synchrony and diachrony', in J. Le Roux & E. Otto (eds.), *South African perspectives on the Pentateuch between synchrony and diachrony*, pp. 124–137, T & T Clark International, New York.
- Schmid, K., 2007, 'The Persian imperial authorization as historical problem and a biblical construct: A plea for differentiations in current debate', in G.N. Knoppers & B.M. Levinson (eds.), *The Pentateuch as Torah: New models for understanding its promulgation and acceptance*, pp. 22–38, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake.
- Segar, S., 2013, 'The right stuff: Zweli Mkhize has the makings of a successor to Zuma, according to some in the ANC', *Nosweek* 171, 17–20.
- Segovia, F.F., 2006, 'Biblical criticism and postcolonial studies: Toward a postcolonial optic', in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The postcolonial biblical reader*, pp. 33–44, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9780470775080.ch2>
- Sibanda, T., 2008, *Zimbabwe: MDC decries appointment of Johannes Tomana as the Attorney-General*, viewed 24 September 2014, from <http://allafrica.com/stories/200812180879.html>
- Smith, D.L., 1989, *The Religion of the landless: The social context of the Babylonian exile*, Meyer Stone Books, Bloomington.
- Smith, D., 2015, *EU resumes aid to Zimbabwe as relations with Robert Mugabe thaw*, viewed 01 June 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/feb/18/eu-aid-zimbabwe-relations-robert-mugabe-thaw>
- Sugirtharajah, R.S., 2006, 'Charting the aftermath: A review of postcolonial criticism', in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *The postcolonial biblical reader*, pp. 7–32, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9780470775080.ch1>
- Thornycroft, P., 2014, *Robert Mugabe says he prefers Chinese aid because Beijing does not force him to accept homosexuality*, viewed 01 June 2015, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/zimbabwe/11066454/Robert-Mugabe-says-he-prefers-Chinese-aid-because-Beijing-does-not-force-him-to-accept-homosexuality.html>
- Twaddle, M., 2005, *Empire and after: Institute of commonwealth studies*, University of London, London.
- Usue, E.O., 2005, 'Theological perspectives on the concept of "Yahweh's people" in Ezra and Nehemiah during the early post exilic period (539-350 BC)', PhD thesis, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.
- Welz, M., 2013a, 'Editorial', *Nosweek* 171, 6.
- Welz, M., 2013b, 'Jacob Zuma's KZN Empire: Nosweek's latest organogram', *Nosweek* 171, 20–21.
- Whitney, J., 2009, *Jake Whitney: Dambisa Moyo and whether Western aid helps or hurts Africa*, viewed 01 June 2015, from https://www.guernicamag.com/daily/jake_whitney_dambisa_moyo_and/
- Wiesehöfer, J., 2009, 'The Achaemenid Empire', in I. Morris & W. Scheidel (eds.), *The dynamics of ancient Empires*, pp. 66–98, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Williamson, H.G.M., 2004, *Studies in the Persian period history and historiography*, Mohr Siebeck (Forschungen zum Alten Testament, 38), Tübingen.
- Zhang, X., 2011, 'China's aid to Africa: A challenge to the EU?', in J. Men & B. Barton (eds.), *China and the European Union in Africa: Partners or competitors?*, pp. 209–226, Ashgate, Farnham.
- Zimudzi, T.B., 2012, 'Book review, a predictable tragedy: Robert Mugabe and the collapse of Zimbabwe', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30(3), 508–511. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2012.701847>