Today many groups all over the world including Africa, regard themselves to be the Ten Tribes of Israel. In spite of the different identities linked to the Lemba, most Lemba view themselves as Israelites or children of Abraham, who for a long time dwelt in Yemen (Saba), before they came to Africa together with Arabian and other traders and eventually to southern Africa. The Lemba themselves, as well as the authors who have studied them rigorously over centuries, agree that the Lemba constitute a separate or distinct group amongst the Bantu groups who are their hosts. The Lemba are especially distinguished from others by many of their customs, traditional religious practices, features, skills and aloofness. The focus of the book is on the links between the Lemba and the ways of the Old Testament and consistently addresses the question of whether the Lemba are closely enough linked to ancient Israelite faith to justify calling the Lemba a ‘lost tribe of Israel’ or part of such a tribe.

If they originated from the ‘Jews’ in Yemen and before that from ancient Israel, this Yemenite community of Jews in Africa (the Lemba) is perhaps the only one that remained practically unaffected by intra-Jewish migration. When Islam emerged, the Jews of Yemen were cut off from the rest of the Jewish people. It is indeed the possibility of preserving that part of a very ancient religious group which makes the Lemba so valuable to the historian of religion, of comparative religion or missiology. My comparison of the social and religious practices and rituals of early Israel (1250-1000 BC) with those of the Lemba has delivered noteworthy results. This is a clear example of how many similarities can exist between cultures separated in time and space. The numerous concurrences are of value in more than one way, but one should also emphasise the significant differences as well.

The Lemba (as with many groups in Africa) have particular customs which resemble Semitic customs. Most scholars maintain that the Lemba have many customs with an Old Testament resonance. What renders this group unique in Southern Africa is their oral tradition; that they came to Africa as ‘strangers’. They would not have been able to exist in Africa, if they had not intermarried with the wasendzhi or local inhabitants. The result of this intermarriage is a ‘double identity’ which at the same time creates two
Conclusion

'poles' which, in this case, creates a useful basis of comparison: both with the tribes of Africa and with a possible tribe of Israel in Africa. The possibility should at least be left open here that we may merely be dealing with an African group who somewhere along the way made a religious shift to Judaism. In any case, the double identity of the Lemba creates a unique area of research, which opens new perspectives in two directions:

(i) If the Lemba are studied in their 'Israel context' (if one takes their claims seriously), their presence on the sub-continent of Africa could become a 'dramatisation' of particular aspects of early Israel's socio-cultural life. Anyone who may be studying them, may obtain insights into the Israel of antiquity, which may contribute to a better understanding of the Old Testament.

(ii) If the Lemba are studied within their African context, it seems that they share in more customs with a Semitic character than most other groups in Africa. This broadens the 'sounding board', so that when inhabitants of Africa are confronted with the Old Testament, there is an immediate 'resonance' regarding their own life-worlds. The same happens when students of Africa study the Old Testament. When someone therefore, studies the Old Testament from the viewpoint of these cultures he or she will immediately 'recognise' the similarities, which may lead to a better understanding of the reception of the Old Testament in an African context.

The multi-disciplinary research I undertook on the Lemba was well worth it. Various disciplines contributed to my gaining a more holistic picture of the Lemba: anthropology, archaeology, education, history, missiology, comparative religion, Old Testament Studies, genetics and many other fields. The results of archaeological, ethnological and genetic research, where they concur with each other and with the oral traditions of the Lemba, are significant. At the very least, light is cast on many other questions that would have been left unanswered. This multi-disciplinary research shows that there is at least a very strong indication of an earlier correlation between the culture of the Lemba and that of early Israel.

To further complicate their identity it seems that with the advent of the Christian mission the Lemba probably found a religious culture that largely expressed or reinforced what they had already believed. The 'success' that the Christians had in the conversion of most of the Lemba could be the result of their close relationship with the traditions, practices and lifestyle preached in the Bible. Although various religions have had an influence on their viewpoints and in spite of the fact that most Lemba belong to some Christian denomination, it appears as if their social and religious practices and viewpoints resembled a syncretising, pluralistic pre-Talmudic Judaism. ¹

My fieldwork indicated that the conversion of a small number of Lemba to Islam in the Gutu area is an exception and the conversion took place very recently. In general, the Lemba groups in South Africa as well as Zimbabwe dissociate themselves from an
The invention of traditions by colonialist Europeans for the Lemba and other African communities did in fact distort the past and the pre-colonial identity of such communities. One needs to discern to what extent invented traditions of various kinds accurately reflect the African past and then endeavour to improve on the accounts of this preliminary overview.

Unfortunately, I also need to mention that the results of research on a community such as the Lemba are not always positive. For example, after recent genetic findings, Jewish groups (mainly American) have come to Southern Africa to try to establish education centres among the Lemba communities, but did not fully succeed. They want to teach the Lemba 'how to conduct the services of the Jewish yearly cycle, to teach Torah throughout the year, to begin Hebrew instruction and to act as a co-ordinator for the Lemba to Jews throughout the world, especially Israel' (Levi, 19th July 1999).\(^2\) This wish became a reality in 2002 when Rabbi Leo Abrami from the organisation Kulanu in New York travelled to the Northern Province in the Republic of South Africa to teach the Lemba during a special LCA conference. The organisation provided the Lemba with education materials and music.

This kind of involvement has its advantages, but also disadvantages. Much might be invested in these Lemba communities by these Jewish groups and at the same time upliftment in the communities might also take place where needed, as well as possible emigration\(^4\) where necessary. But as I have mentioned before, there are possible elements of a kind of religion from antiquity which have been preserved amongst the Lemba communities. These elements indicate close similarities with early Israel, not with contemporary Judaism. This could imply that the possible preservation of an ancient type of religion may forever be lost to research, if contemporary teaching centres are erected. Christianity, the Islamic faith, Judaism and other African religions have already had a great influence on the customs, practices and beliefs of certain Lemba communities. The possibility of more influences makes this book even more imperative.

On the one hand, this book searches for a better understanding of the relevance of the Old Testament in Africa, but more than this, the framework or model developed by Smart and used to compare especially the religious rituals and viewpoints of pre-industrial societies, provided new insights, in order to address the question of whether the Lemba are closely enough linked to ancient Israelite faith to justify calling the Lemba a 'lost tribe of Israel'. I found Smart’s model useful as a basis for the comparison of most religious and social aspects of the Lemba with those of early Israel. Thus a great deal of my research constituted a comparison which was induced by the theory of Smart. This led to various inferences.

Chapters Four to Nine were based mainly on the oral traditions and practices of the Lemba (as established by my field research) and a comparison of the latter with the oral
traditions and practices of ancient Israel, as inferred from the Old Testament. This was done by means of a comparative approach, but I realise the serious problem of the cultural distance between the modern Bible reader and ancient Israel. In general, it appears, for example, that in more than one respect the basic needs to belong to a group of common ancestry, to enjoy the protection of or the importance associated with a group and the security of an heir so that family land does not end up in the hands of strangers, underlie most social and religious customs of both the Lemba (and other African groups) and early Israel. Common to both groups is the belief that the worst that could ever happen to an Israelite or a Lemba (or African) is to be thrown out of the family line.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the Old Testament, scholars could learn from Africa as a living source about practices and customs such as polygamy, endogamy, circumcision, sacrifices, the cult of the ancestors, worshipping God as part of everyday life, a sense of community, the importance of genealogy, the importance of the meaning of names, the role of music, social structures, wisdom, oral cultures, the functioning of oral traditions and the implications for the historiography and hermeneutics of the Old Testament.

The current practices of the Lemba might not have much in common with modern Judaism, but remarkable commonalities between the Lemba and the communities of early Israel do emerge in this study. These similarities offer an indispensable tool for interpretation. To mention just a few examples: A person who has lived in an extended family will be better able to understand the extended family of Jacob and the other patriarchs. A person who has been brought up living in a clan as a way of life will be able to comprehend more fully the 'clan-life' of early Israel. One who has his or her marriage arranged by the family will have a better understanding of Abraham's sending his servant to solicit a wife for his son, Isaac. A person who is a despised wife or concubine in a polygamous marriage and who desires nothing more than to bear her husband a male child, will understand the situation of Leah and Rachel, or that of Sarah and Hagar. Someone who sacrifices his cattle in order to placate God will be better prepared to grasp the significance of the early Israelite's sacrifices and the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. One who is experience rather than theologially orientated in his/her religious life will be able to comprehend the way of life of the early Israelites. Cultures which are used to palavers, can understand more fully the procedure of Boaz in settling the matter concerning the obtaining of Ruth and her property.

The implication that there are numerous points of convergence between some cultures in Africa and the Old Testament is that the reception of the Old Testament in these parts of Africa would differ from that on other continents or in other countries. This implies, among other things, that teaching a subject such as Old Testament in Denmark or England would be totally different from teaching them in some parts of Africa. There are
many other studies linking the Old Testament to countries in Africa, but the research on
the Lemba has indicated that there is a further group whose customs and rituals concur
to a great extent with those of ancient Israel.

The information above has implications for ‘missionary’ work in Africa. In some in-
stances the Christian missionaries’ (and very recently Jewish) efforts in Africa have
been adversely affected by two serious shortcomings: (i) an unconditional rejection of
the African religion and culture and (ii) an inadequate knowledge of the Old Testament,
which has striking similarities with some African traditional cultures.

Most perplexing is the fact that many Africans who grew up on mission stations and
were converted to Christianity abandoned the mainline churches once they had left the
mission school, either to form their own or join another African Independent Church
(AIC). My field research and other projects, for example amongst the so-called ‘Jewish’
groups in Africa and elsewhere, have shown that their ‘Judaism’ has often been chan-
nelled through Christianity. After missionaries acquainted some groups with only the
New Testament, these groups later, when they at last also received the Old Testament
translation, decided that this part of the Bible must be the more authoritative because of
its volume and also because it had similarities to their own traditional cultures. They
therefore decided to accept the Old Testament rather than the New Testament as a
guideline for their beliefs. As a result, it seems as though many missionaries’ rigid bias
against the Old Testament and the African traditional practices was entrenched and
that their communications with Africans were often impeded.

The Lemba tribal community, or so-called ‘Black Jews of Southern Africa’, claims to be
not only of Israelite or Hebrew origin, but also of Christian tradition and heritage. It was
surprising that during my field study, I found that most of the Lemba readily reconciled
their Old Testament related customs and traditions with the Christian faith. Another
interesting point is that the Lemba did not leave the so-called mainline churches after
their conversion as many other Christians did. As a matter of fact most of the Lemba in
the southern part of Zimbabwe are members of the (Dutch) Reformed and Lutheran
Churches.

The Lemba have their own special way of reaching out. It became apparent that the
Lemba frequently proselytise whomever they contact to adopt their own religious prac-
tices. For example, they recommend and institute the practice of circumcision in sur-
rounding tribes and peoples and have even influenced Europeans. They not only
introduced circumcision and its meaning to others, but also played a prominent role as
surgeons and medicine-men in the circumcision ceremonies of other peoples. In this
respect the African ‘Jews’ took more initiatives than the European Jews, who kept
circumcision to themselves. And, although the Lemba are endogamous, they have
extensive rituals to proselytise outsiders. These days it seems as though the Lemba are
more hesitant to proselytise than they were earlier.
Most of the Lemba do not in their own experience distinguish between their role as experts in circumcision and being witnesses of Christ. In theory they do, but not in practice. In many cases Christian practices are so interwoven with their Old Testament related practices that one and the same principle is being transferred. The majority of Lemba in Sekhukhuneland view circumcision mainly as a cultural practice, whilst the priest responsible for circumcision in Mberengwa clearly spells out the implications (for those being incorporated) for their relationship with the God of the Covenant. Circumcision is seen as a kind of incorporation into the covenant with God. In Sekhukhuneland circumcision and Christian baptism are being conducted in the same river by the same people.

The LCA also takes the initiative to hold an annual conference during which the Lemba oral traditions are conveyed to their younger generations, but not necessarily to other peoples. One may ask: When does a group take the initiative in gaining proselytes? And, if there is reluctance to reach out, what is the reason? Is it perhaps a matter of self-consciousness? What role is played by consciousness of identity in this process?

Obviously, the matter of proselytising is related to the identity consciousness of the Lemba. In this regard one has to refer to the developments of identity consciousness which took place in pre-monarchical Israel. The unique identity of ancient Israel as a distinct ethnic group, for example, is attracting much attention in the current discussion of the history of Israel. It is now widely accepted that the Deuteronomistic history, which describes the pre-monarchic and monarchic periods in the history of Israel from its establishment (approximately 1200 BC) up to and including the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, was formulated as a response to Israel's identity crisis after the exile, when their ethnic identity was diluted and even threatened by complete assimilation (cultural diffusion) and eradication.

The function of this historiography in the Deuteronomist may have been precisely to give identity to an oral community in danger of losing its specific character. This resulted, among others, in Israelites becoming more exclusivist (xenophobic) after the exile. Earlier, the community had probably been more relenting or open towards foreigners. Modern theories of ethnicity indicate that such a process of world and group creation is often more related to the needs of the group than to empirical historic reality. In this book, I have not dealt with such theories, nor have I denied or confirmed their validity. Instead, I have endeavoured to use empirical data to indicate that a nation or a tribe is exposed to many different influences while becoming established (a very important phase in the history of the people or tribe) and that these influences help to form an 'identity.' The purpose of the Israelite narrative is (among others) to illustrate that identity is difficult to define because history is such a dynamic, highly fluid process. However, the course of events is difficult to capture and the complexity of a historical situation often forces one to reduce historiography to what is available in the sources.
It is therefore virtually impossible to define the identity of the tribes/clans of Israel before the monarchy, or to give a clear account of the social processes giving rise to the quest for and creation of their identity.

Obviously, it is no simple matter to compare the history of the Lemba with that of Israel. It could in fact be deemed an impossible exercise. Nevertheless, studying the Lemba as a pre-industrial group of unique character might shed light on what we know about the oral culture and socio-cultural structures of the Israelite clans.

Most scholars agree that oral traditions are documents of the present because they are told in the present, but traditions must always be understood as reflecting both past and present in a single sweep – people reach back into the past in order to create both the present but also a future for themselves (Vansina 1985). The vast majority of the informants’ stories about their past concur. These transmitted narratives give them a feeling of ‘belonging’: they believe that they are unique and have special qualities and skills that their neighbours envy. The conception that they and their customs and practices are different, is probably the most significant factor to which the maintenance of their separate identity can be attributed.

The Lemba know where they come from. They were guided by Mwari to specific places and therefore they want to stay together and preserve their culture. They want to live separately from other people. They often emphasise that it is precisely due to cultural diffusion that most of them no longer observe their distinctive Lemba customs. This may be one of the main reasons why their leaders (e.g. Chief Mpaketsane and Prof Mathivha) are seriously advocating a place of their own in the Mara district. Hopefully their land claim case will be settled this year.

To a certain extent some of the Lemba cultural leaders (such as Mathivha) might see the Christian churches to be a threat, given the fact that some missionary groups used to regard Lemba traditional practices as ‘evil’. History repeated itself when the Jewish ‘missionary’ from America referred in more or less the same terms to the Christian beliefs and activities of the Lemba and anyone else. This may be the reason why so much emphasis is placed on their culture (cf e.g Mathivha). Mathivha states that it is not a matter of ancestor worship or religious practices, hence there is no threat to their ties with Christianity. It is merely a matter of culture! Perhaps Mathivha’s remark that ‘circumcision ranks higher than baptism’ should also be seen in this light.

From a Western world-view, culture and religion cannot be separated; each deals with the deepest values of a society or a group. Religion is always embedded in culture – as is also the case in the Old and New Testaments. Mathivha himself occasionally emphasises that the Lemba are (or are not) allowed to do certain things, ‘...because God commanded it... It is our religion ... it is part of the covenant of God’ (D:1:B:25,26).

The visit of the Rabbis from America could be an important crossroads for the Lemba. For some it might be a time to choose between their so-called Lemba culture (Old
Testament related practices) and Christianity. The Lemba perception of Christianity — and how it accommodates their ‘culture’ — will probably determine their future involvement in the outreach of their churches. Some Lemba Christians might in future be more intent on preserving their cultural customs than on spreading the Christian gospel or the other way round. The question is whether the two causes can still be served together, as in the past.

Are the Lemba then a lost tribe of Israel? In my opinion, the Lemba were not a regular Judaising group and no specific religious shift was made in their case. The possibility exists, rather, that the Lemba do have archaic remnants of an ancient type of religion. In more than one respect these remnants could differ from what is expected of ‘Judaism’ proper. It seems, however, that their self-identification as ‘children of Abraham’ both evidences and conceals a much older and very complicated religious identity. There are abundant echoes of ancient Judaism.

If one considers them as one of the Ten Tribes taken into captivity by the Assyrians, I don’t think one can claim that. But if one considers a lost tribe of Israel to be a group who had specific traditions of origin and have some unsuspected connections with other Jews, then it is a legitimate claim.

NOTES
1. The oral traditions surrounding the rules and narratives as set out particularly in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, which developed before the Talmud as it is known today, became known as pre-Talmudic Judaism (before 100 CE; Feinberg 1988:1162-1164). There are two written versions of the Talmud - the Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud (400 CE) and the Babylonian Talmud (550 CE).

Nabarro’s dedicated research since the early 50’s, specifically done on the music of the Lemba and how it corresponds to that of ancient Israel, came up with interesting results. Although we often met at the Lemba Conferences at Sweet Waters and briefly exchanged notes on our specific interests in the Lemba, I did not realise that we actually came to the same conclusion on the Lemba, namely that their customs are closely related to that of pre-Talmudic Judaism (Nabarro [s a], personal notes). She undertook important research, which needs to be investigated further. Her untimely death in 1997 was is a great loss for research on the Lemba.

2. Internet communication from Yaacov Y Levi: yaacov@juno-com.

3. This is a Jewish organisation which supports and serves all scattered Jews all over the world, trying to get them back into the Jewish mainstream.

4. No formal inquiry has been conducted, but my impression is that the Lemba are not that interested in ‘returning’ to their ‘country of origin’. Some individuals are interested, but local families and duties would prohibit this. Most Lemba are currently reasonably well-established in their own businesses and professions or trades.
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Azania</td>
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<tr>
<td>AERJ</td>
<td>American Educational Research Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEQ</td>
<td>Anthropology and Education Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>AJS Review</td>
<td>Association for Jewish Studies Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>AmJHumGenet</td>
<td>American Journal of Human Genetics</td>
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<tr>
<td>AnnHumGenet</td>
<td>Annals of Human Genetics</td>
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<td>AnnS AfrMus</td>
<td>Annals of the South African Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ant</td>
<td>Anthropos</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>African Studies</td>
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<td>ASR</td>
<td>African Social Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Bantu/Bantoe</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAR</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeologist Reader</td>
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<tr>
<td>BHH</td>
<td>Biblisch-Historisches Handwörterbuch</td>
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<tr>
<td>BK</td>
<td>Bibel und Kirche</td>
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<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td>Bible Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td>Bantu Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMM</td>
<td>Cape Monthly Magazine</td>
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<td>DB</td>
<td>Die Brücke</td>
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<td>DI</td>
<td>Dine Israel</td>
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<td>EB</td>
<td>Encyclopaedia Britannica</td>
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<td>FL</td>
<td>Folk-lore</td>
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<td>HA</td>
<td>History in Africa</td>
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<td>HAR</td>
<td>Hebrew Annual Review</td>
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<td>HBAK</td>
<td>Hamburger Beiträge zur Afrika Kunde</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>HER</td>
<td>Harvard Educational Review</td>
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<td>HSM</td>
<td>Harvard Semitic Monographs</td>
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<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
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<tr>
<td>IsrMedSci</td>
<td>Israelite Journal of Medical Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDB</td>
<td>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Nashville: Abingdon</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEJ</td>
<td>Israel Exploration Journal</td>
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<td>IN</td>
<td>Iscor News</td>
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<td>IO</td>
<td>Institut für Orientforchung</td>
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<td>IRM</td>
<td>International Review of Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAF</td>
<td>Journal of American Folklore</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAI</td>
<td>Journal of the Anthropological Institute</td>
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<td>JIS</td>
<td>Journal for Islamic Studies</td>
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<td>Journal of Jewish Studies</td>
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<td>JNSL</td>
<td>Journal of Northwest Semitic languages</td>
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<td>JOAS</td>
<td>Journal for Oriental and African Studies</td>
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<td>JRA</td>
<td>Journal of Religion in Africa</td>
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<td>JRGS</td>
<td>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society</td>
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<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal of the Study of the Old Testament</td>
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<td>JSS</td>
<td>Jewish Social Studies</td>
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<td>JTSA</td>
<td>Journal of Theology for Southern Africa</td>
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<td>MQ</td>
<td>Mankind Quarterly</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Nature</td>
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<td>NADA</td>
<td>Native Affairs Department Annual</td>
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<td>NASB</td>
<td>New American Standard Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBD</td>
<td>New Bible Dictionary</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEAEHL</td>
<td>The New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGTT</td>
<td>Nederduits Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif</td>
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<td>NTJ</td>
<td>Native Teacher's Journal</td>
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<td>NZA</td>
<td>Niews uit Zuid-Afrika</td>
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<td>OTE</td>
<td>Old Testament Essays</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>Patterns of Prejudice</td>
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<td>QSE</td>
<td>Qualitative Studies in Education</td>
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<td>RH</td>
<td>Rhodesian History</td>
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<td>R&amp;T</td>
<td>Religie en Teologie/Religion and Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAAB</td>
<td>South African Archaeological Bulletin</td>
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<td>SAASGS</td>
<td>South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series</td>
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<td>SAJS</td>
<td>South African Journal of Science</td>
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<td>SATE</td>
<td>Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Etnologie</td>
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<tr>
<td>SJOT</td>
<td>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ThZ</td>
<td>Theologische Zeitschrift</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTE</td>
<td>Teaching and Teacher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>TWK</td>
<td>Tydskrif vir Wetenskap en Kuns</td>
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VT  Vetus Testamentum
ZAW  Zeitschrift für die Altertumswissenschaft
ZfE  Zeitschrift für Ethnologie


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**Transcripts of interviews conducted during field study and video tapes:**

D:1:A  August 1994. Prof Mathivha (President of the LCA, ret.rea Professor, University of the North) Venda.


D2  October 1995. Peet Uys, farmer, Waterpoort, Northern Province.

D:R October 1997. Prof Mathivha, Shayandima, Northern Province.


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Venda (Northern Province): Mr Filemon Khadeli.

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ADDENDUM I

The interview guide appeared as follows after our visit, in 1996, to Sekhukhuneland:

1 FIRST REVISED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1.1 PERSONAL PARTICULARS

Name: Male/Female: 
Tribe: Nationality: 
District: Qualifications: 
Mother tongue: 

1.2 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Church: 
Years of attendance: 
Do you have a Bible? Do you read the Bible? 
Which passage(s) do you read most often? 
Why? 

1.3 ORAL TRADITIONS OR STORIES

What stories about the past did your parents or tribesmen tell you? 
What are your roots? 
What is most important in the stories of the past? 
Do you have any stories in songs or in recitations (traditional poems)? 
Proverbs? 
What do these mean to you? 

More directive or obtrusive questions

Do you know any stories about the ark of the covenant, a sacred drum (ngoma lungundu), a lost book, about being white before? 
If you’re Jews why are you in Africa? 
Some say it is only for political reasons that you want to be Jews ....

1.4 RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS, FESTIVALS, ET CETERA

Name any customs, ceremonies or rituals that are unique to the Lemba people. 
Which ones do you keep? 
What is the meaning behind this (or that) ritual? 

More directive questions

Do you or did your parents keep the following customs and
festivals?
Circumcision
Fasting
*Kosher* eating habits
Moon related rituals (New Moon feast, head shaving)
Ritual washing (e.g., before meals)
Sabbath
Slaughter rituals
First Fruit Festival
Burial customs
Marriage laws
Medicine secrets
Traditional clothes
Any special arts and crafts
Do you have any totems?
Do you know the stories behind the rituals?

1.5 **CONCEPTS ABOUT GOD**

How do you picture or envisage God?
What names do you use for God?
Are you a Christian?
Who is Jesus Christ? What do you know about Jesus Christ?
Why did he die?

*More directive questions*

How do you understand the concept of the Trinity (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit)?
How do you understand the Christian way of salvation (*Roeponeso* in Shona)?
Everlasting life or life hereafter?
Do you pray? What? To whom? When?
What is the relationship between Jesus and the ancestors? Where does Jesus fit into your spiritual world?
Do you have any prophets in your communities? Where does he get his knowledge from?
What do you do when someone is seriously ill? How does healing take place? What is the cause of sicknesses?
Do you have any sacred places or objects?
Do you have a personal relationship with God? Describe your relationship?
**ADDENDUM II**

1.1 SECOND REVISED GUIDE

1.1.1 **Personal particulars**

Name:  
Tribe/clan:  
Nationality:  
Qualifications:  
Gender:  
District:  
Mother tongue:

1.1.2 **Communal particulars**

1.1.2.1 **On the chief**

(1) Chief’s name? (2) Chief’s family name? (3) Where was he born? (4) What is or was his father’s name? (5) What is his mother’s name (tribe or family)? (6) Where did or does he live? (7) What do his praises (*izibongo, directo, zwirendo*) say about his deeds? Explain these. (8) What remarkable things happened whilst he was chief (was there great rain, flood, drought, split of tribe, first appearance of something new? Anything else?) (9) Was he independent of or was he subject to other chiefs? (10) Did or does he possess any remarkable powers? (Van Warmelo [s a]: 1)

1.1.2.2 **On tribal background**

(1) Make a complete list of families or family groups in the tribe/clan or in your area, and say the following about each: (2) Their totem (*ba bina’ng? isithakazelo*) (3) Did this always form part of this tribe or was it joined later? (4) What is known about its history? (5) Are their any praises (*directo, izibongo*) to praise the family name? (6) Are there any specialities or skills (such as metal working, wood carving, medicine, bone throwing, medicine-men of chief, rain-making?) (7) Which skills rank highest in the tribe, which rank lowest? (8) Are any people considered strangers? (Van Warmelo [s a]: 1)

1.2 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS

Church affiliation?  
Years of attendance?  
Do you have or do you read the Bible?  
Which passage/s do you read most often and why?

1.3 ORAL TRADITIONS OR STORIES

1.3.1 **General**

What stories did your parents or tribesmen tell you on your past?  
What are your roots, where do you come from?  
What is very most important in the stories from the past?
Do you have songs or recitations (traditional poems) which contain stories?
Tell me about your proverbs and riddles (they are of no use unless the respondent explain carefully what they mean and how they are used)?
What do these mean to you?

1.3.2 Country
(1) Make a list of the names of mountains, hills, rivers, streams, pools, fountains, forests, areas and sub(smaller)-districts in your neighbourhood.
(2) Tell about each one: did anything remarkable ever happen there?
(3) Did anybody of note ever live there?
(4) Is there anything people have to do, or not do there?
(5) Is there any legend or saying or praise (serecto, izibongo) about that place?
(6) Are there old paintings, drawings or marks there made by people?
(7) Does any place have several names?
(8) Who is the headman and where does he live? (Ván Warmelo [s a]:2).

1.3.3 Folklore
1.3.3.1 Nursery tales
Write these down exactly word for word, (including the songs and strange words that occur in them) just as they are told by someone who really knows them well. Not everybody who knows a nursery tale can also tell that tale.

1.3.3.2 Praises
(1) Izibongo, directo for various things, even though they may just be a few words.
(2) Are there praises of wild animals, antelopes, birds, insects, trees, plants?
(3) Cultivated plants?
(4) Rivers, mountains, hills, places?
(5) Cattle?
(6) Utensils, and weapons?
(7) Praises for some modern things, like the train and motorcar?
(8) Praises for persons are only of use, if they refer to historical events and are carefully explained (Ván Warmelo [s a]:61).

1.3.4 Traditions and history
(1) What role does oral traditions play in the preservation of history?
(2) Did or do you learn any Lemba history at your schools?

More directive or obtrusive questions or remarks
Do you know any stories about the ark of the covenant, ngoma lungundu (‘sacred’ drums), a lost book or that you were White people before?
What is or was the function of the ngoma lungundu?
Secret words or language: Could you reveal or disclose some of these words?
If you should, it could help to strengthen your identity.
If you are Jews why are you in Africa?  
Why do you say you are Jews?  
Is it important to you to be seen as Jews?  
What is typically Jewish as far as your communities are concerned?  
To which tribe of Israel do you belong?  
Some say it is only for political reasons that you want to be Jews ....  
In political terms, do you think it might mean something to your  
people in future (or did in the past) that you are Jewish and not just  
an ordinary Black group?  
Is cultural diffusion a problem to you? Why?  
Is your culture important to you?  
Do you feel in any way threatened by other groups?  
What role did the missionaries play in the creation of your identity?  
Do you think the Lemba’s traditions were channellled through the  
Islam? If so, why did they or you choose the Bible instead of the  
Koran?  
Do you know of any Lemba people that are still Muslim?  
Do the Lemba latch onto a particular ancient myth in order to protect  
themselves from cultural onslauhts of today?  
What makes them think the way they do?  
To what extent are their oral traditions a search for or a creation of  
their identity?  
When did oral traditions become important to the Lemba?  
What is the purpose of folklore, traditions and customs within a  
society?  
How does folklore mix religion with culture?  
What social processes create such a unique identity for the Lemba?  
Which social-anthropological model could be used to ‘compare’ the  
Lemba and Israelite communities to one another?  

1.4 RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS, FESTIVALS, ET CETERA  

1.4.1 General  
List any customs, ceremonies or rituals that are unique to the Lemba  
people.  
Which of these do you keep?  
What is the meaning behind this or that ritual?  
Are there any special arts and crafts?  
Do you have any totems?  

More directive questions  
Do you or did your parents keep the following customs and  
festivals?  
Circumcision  
Fasting
Kosher eating habits
Ritual concerning the moon (New Moon Feast or head shaving)
Ritual washing (e.g. before meals)
Sabbath

1.4.2 Slaughter rituals
Under what circumstances are cattle to be slaughtered? Just to have meat? Only when they are sick? For festive occasions? When the animal does something of bad omen? When one prays to ancestors? How is a beast slaughtered? (Van Warmelo [s a]:8).

1.4.3 Festival of the First Fruits
(1) Name all the plants cultivated in your neighbourhood now or in the past? (2) Say about each one: (3) Where they were obtained originally? How? When? (4) Are there proverbs or praises or songs which refer to it or to its origin? (5) What are its good and bad points? Does it resist drought? Not liked by birds? Nourishing? Does it cause constipation? Not pleasant? Useful for beer? Matures early or late? (6) Is there anything that must, or must not be done with reference to the plant, fruit or seed? (Van Warmelo [s a]:6).

1.4.4 Burial customs
Explain the procedures.
What is unique in your way of doing it?

1.4.5 Marriage laws
Do you have levirate marriages?
Do you practice polygamy? And monogamy?

1.4.6 Medicinal secrets
(1) How are medicines collected? (2) Are they dug for or gathered at any time or at certain times? (3) Is anything special done while preparing medicines, such as singing of songs, incantations, saying of formulae? (4) How are medicines, drugs and amulets applied? How placed or used to be effective? (5) Are they taken internally, smeared on, used to wash with, worn around the neck, left at home or hidden? (6) What medicines are used for which ailments or what rituals performed? (7) What medicines are used or what is done to achieve success in love affairs, in looking for work, in business or for other enterprises, to be prosperous in agriculture or with cattle? (Van Warmelo [s a]:60).

1.4.7 Traditional clothes
Did you wear special garments at special occasions? Which occasions? Describe.
1.5 CONCEPT ABOUT GOD AND RELIGION

1.5.1 About God/Mwari (Shona)/Modimo (Sotho)


1.5.2 About the Christian faith

(1) Are you a Christian? (2) Who is Jesus Christ? (3) What do you know about Jesus Christ, why did He die?

More directive questions/remarks

How do you understand the concept of the Trinity (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit)?
How do you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?
What does it mean to you?
What is a true sign that somebody is filled by the Holy Spirit?
How do you understand the Christian way of salvation (roeponeso in Shona)?
How do you understand everlasting life or the life hereafter?
Do you have any prophets in your communities? Where does he or she get his knowledge from?
Do you have any sacred places or objects?
Do you have a personal relationship with God?
Describe your relationship.

1.5.3 Outreach

To what extent are you involved in the outreach of your church?
Are you hesitant to be involved, why?
Are you more intent on your Lemba customs than your church, or do you serve both causes? And if so, to what extent?

1.6 THE CULT OF THE ANCESTORS

1.6.1 The cult and Christianity

Do you pray? What? To whom? When?
What is the relationship between Jesus and the ancestors?
Where does Jesus fit into your spiritual world?

1.6.2 Ancestor worship

1.6.2.1 Prayer to the ancestors

(1) Do the ancestors cause illness, send drought and misfortune? (2) How is it discovered that they are angered and what should be done? (3) How are they appeased? (4) Are regular prayers made to dead ancestors? How?
By whom? For what reason or purpose? How frequently? What times of day? Is there any particular place for the ceremony; how do you prepare for this? (5) Is any particular person the principal or the priest? (6) What does he or she say or do? (7) Which other person(s) take(s) part? Are certain people excluded? Does each person pray or sacrifice or is this left to certain persons and who are they? (8) Are ancestors invoked before war? During danger? During personal trouble? (9) Which ancestor(s) is/are invoked? Males only or females on the father’s side? (10) Is every event of importance reported to them? Such as births in the family, change of name, changes of dwelling, quarrels, deaths, losses? (11) Is the cult of the dead associated with their graves? (Van Warmelo [s a]:55,56).

1.6.2.2 Ancestors spirits and sickness

(1) What do you do when someone is seriously ill? How does healing take place? What is the cause of sicknesses? (2) Are persons entered by other spirits or attacked by them, their behaviour? (3) Do such spirits make them ill or mad or strange in behaviour? (4) Reasons for, and circumstances of such obsession? (5) How ascertained? What is the cause? Which spirit causes an illness? (6) What is the remedy? Who is the specialists for treatment? Methods of treatment? Do they drive them out or let them in? (7) Do possessed persons speak prophetically? Do they act as oracles? Do they see things hidden or secret or unknown to other people? (8) Do the healers learn the craft from others? Do they undergo training or initiation? (Van Warmelo [s a]:56).

NOTES

1. The structure and numbering below (ADDENDUM I & II) have now been added to facilitate current reading. During the operational phase of the field work these questions, remarks and prompters were used in a random fashion, as one should during proper qualitative interviewing.