

ON NAMING THE SUBJECT

Postcolonial Reading of Daniel 1¹

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We live in an age that cannot name itself. For some, we are still in the age of modernity and the triumph of the bourgeois subject. For others, we are in a time of leveling of all traditions and await the return of the repressed traditional and communal subject. For yet others, we are in a postmodern moment where the death of the subject is now upon us as the last receding wave of the death of God.

On Naming the Present, David Tracy

Introduction

Postcolonial criticism, a new comer,² came to be recognized as a distinct category in new literary criticism only in the 1990s. From the publication of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952, English, 1968), who identified a devastating pathology at the heart of Western culture, a denial of

¹ This essay is dedicated, in memory of the Hong Kong, named as a British Subject for more than a hundred years, and shall be renamed as a "special administration region" when returns to China's sovereignty; and to those Chinese nationals who hold BNO passports, a subject with hybrid identity.

² Not even mentioned in Jeremy Hawthorn, *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* (2nd edition, 1994), nor David Lodge, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (1988, 8th impression 1993), but found in Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), and Keith Green & Jill Lebihan, *Critical Theory & Practice: A Coursebook* (London: Routledge, 1996). It was also in the 1996 AAR/SBL Annual Meeting's program, e.g., the theme on "Postcolonialism and Biblical Studies" was discussed in the Ideological Criticism Group.

difference, to the recent title of Gail Low's *White Skins Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism* (1996), who examined the representational dynamics of colonizer versus colonized in the African and Indian writings of Haggard and Kipling, much of colonial discourse has emerged and elapsed.³ Some viewed it as a replacement or substitute for Third World Theology or Postmodernism, but I take it differently because of the difference in their agenda and interest. My interest in postcolonial discourse and biblical studies, however, evolved not because it is in fashion as a new toy of literary approach for some critics, nor is it because of the need for a replacement for the term 'Third World Theology' or 'Asian Theology'. Rather, it is a matter of life experience as a biblical interpreter in contexts that warrant such an interest. By life experience, I refer, firstly, to my birth and in a postcolonial country⁴ and secondly, reading the Bible from a place which is about to enter into a postcolonial era.⁵ It is with this self interest and life experience that I proceed to provide a postcolonial reading of Daniel 1.

³ Some of the representative literatures are Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990) and *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature* (London: Routledge, 1989), ed. Ashcroft and *et al.*, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-colonial Critic*, ed. Sarah Harasym (London: Routledge, 1990). Over to this side of the Pacific, publications in Chinese include those of Liao Ping-hui, *Modernity in Re-vision: Reading Postmodern/Postcolonial Theories* (廖炳惠：《回顧現代：後現代與後殖民論文集》) (Taipei: Rye Field Publishing Company, 1994); Zhang Jingyuan, ed., *Postcolonial Criticism and Cultural Identity* (張京媛編：《後殖民理論與文化認同》) (Taipei: Rye Field Publishing Company, 1995), and Zhu Yau-wei, *Post-orientalism: A Strategy for Chinese and Western Cultural Critical Discourse* (朱耀偉：《後東方主義》) (Taipei: Camel, 1994).

⁴ I was born in the year my country gained independence from the Great British Empire. My entire primary and secondary education was done at a time when the country was going through a process of national decolonization and assuming a postcolonial era, only to be haunted by neocolonialism.

⁵ Hong Kong Island was offered to become the British Crown of Colony according to the "Treaty of Nanjing" signed in 1842. Kowloon peninsula (South of Boundary Street including Stone Cutter Island) was offered to the United Kingdom according to the "Treaty of Beijing" in 1860. In 1898, the "Extension of Hong Kong Boundary" agreement was signed, which concluded the leasing of the land from south of Shenzhen River to the north of Boundary Street including Lantau Island and some other 235 outlying islands to the Great British Empire in terms of 99 years, due on June 30, 1997. The Chinese Government, however, declared the treaties were unfair and would not be accepted. Hence, the "Sino-British Joint Declaration" was announced after negotiations from both sides in 1984, and declared that Hong Kong will become a Special Administration Region upon the handover of the sovereignty back to China. Thus, Hong Kong, an island community of six and a half million people will be ushered, by fate, into a postcolonial era, precisely on July 1st, 1997 at 00hr.

Dan 1:1-2 Who is More Powerful, The Colonizer or The Colonized?

Dan 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came (נבוכדנצר) to Jerusalem and besieged (צור) it. 2 And Adonai (my Lord) gave (נתן) Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought (בא) them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed (בא) the vessels in the treasury of his god.

At the beginning of Daniel 1,⁶ the narrator introduces the presence of four different powers -- two human and two divine -- king of Judah, king of Babylon, God of Jerusalem and god of the land of Shinar. According to Nebuchadnezzar's point of view, human conflict reflects a divine conflict, the king of Babylon's victory over the king of Judah reflects a victory of the god of Babylon over the god of Judah, as suggested by the action of Nebuchadnezzar to transfer temple vessels from Jerusalem to the treasure-house of his god in Shinar.⁷ Though this may be a common understanding in the ancient world, it does not seem to be the issue at hand according to the narrator's point of view. As pointed out by Fewell,⁸ "the issue is not between Nebuchadnezzar and his god, on the one hand, and Jehoiakim and his god, on the other. Two of these four parties, namely Jehoiakim and Nebuchadnezzar's god, quickly fade into the background and, essentially, die to the story. Nebuchadnezzar and the narrator's God emerge as the only two characters to survive the exposition. Their relationship is curiously conflicted." Fewell is right in recognizing the fade-in and fade-out of characters,

⁶ Similar experience may be drawn from Daniel 1:1-2 for the people of Hong Kong, in the sense of a meta-narrative. HK1:1 In the Twenty-second year of the reign of Hsün-tsung, the Emperor of China, Queen Victoria of the British Empire sent an army to China and besieged it. 2 The emperor of China was invited to sign the Treaties, and Hong Kong was graciously offered as a sign of peace and gift to her Majesty for a ninety-nine years lease, and along with the offer were some of the vessels of the house of the Emperor, which were brought back to the land of Britain and placed in the British Museum.

⁷ On the issue of placing foreign vessels in the house of the treasure in Shinar, Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Daniel," in *The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume VII* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 38-39, comments that "the Babylonians were highly aware of the propaganda value of placing captured religious symbols "under" the Babylonian gods in the Babylonian imperial shrines, thus symbolizing the captivity of conquered gods as well as people. Since the Jews did not have an image of their God, the Babylonian used their temple vessels instead. Note that these materials were not merely melted down, but kept intact so as to serve as symbols of the Jews' subordinate position in relation to Babylonian imperial and religious power."

⁸ Danna Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty: Plotting Politics in the Book of Daniel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 13-15.

but she missed the irony by over emphasizing the conflicting elements of the story.⁹ In fact, it was the irony at play here, rather than the birth of a conflicting relationship between Nebuchadnezzar and the narrator's god. The irony is twofold and not difficult to recognize. Firstly, although according to Nebuchadnezzar, he and Adonai were enemies, they are in fact allies; both sought after the defeat of Jerusalem, except that Nebuchadnezzar did not know it. According to the narrator, it was Adonai who gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand (v.2a). Secondly, just as Nebuchadnezzar thought that he had defeated the god of Jerusalem by transferring the temple vessels to the land of Shinar (v.2b), the narrator is not slow to point out that it was Adonai who gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to him "along with some of the vessels of the house of God." (v.2a)

What is the purpose of the narrator in presenting such irony in the story? According to Fewell, the purpose of the narrator is fourfold. First, it is to offer a theological explanation for the defeat of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Second, it is to present a world in which Adonai is the sovereign Lord who is able to manipulate foreign rulers, even unbelievers, and is in control of events. Third, it is to reflect the anger of Adonai upon the people who have gone against Adonai's will. Fourth, by participating in the destruction of Jerusalem, Adonai brings an end to the 'older story', which 'foreshadows' a 'new story' about to be unfolded with the possibility of hope.¹⁰ Though the scheme is attractive, I would argue, on the contrary, that the presence of the irony reflects a kind of postcolonial ideology within the narrator's literary articulation. This introductory story serves to represent the narrator's reclaiming of the 'true' past. It sets the stage with an overtone of postcolonial sentiment by which the narrator develops the characters in the story that is to follow. I shall also demonstrate in the following, through the character of Daniel who mirrors the narrator's postcolonial ideology, the narrator is able to articulate a sentiment of resistance to

⁹ Focusing on their potential conflicting relationship, Fewell argued that "On the one hand, Adonai and Nebuchadnezzar are allies. They have both sought the same thing -- the defeat of Jerusalem. On the other hand, Nebuchadnezzar does not recognize Adonai as the source of his victory. He does not know this god and he offers this god no credit. Thus the potential conflict is born," 14-15. I think it is absurd that if Nebuchadnezzar who is conscious of the king of Judah as his enemy should ever want to recognize Adonai as his source of victory or offer this god any credit for his victory.

¹⁰ She argued that "[B]y pairing Adonai's will with Nebuchadnezzar's activity, the narrator braces the story with a certain theological worldview," 15.

the dominating power of the colonizer (Nebuchadnezzar), which is not uncommon in the exilic period.

In the first irony, Nebuchadnezzar was depicted by the narrator as an arrogant fool, who thought that it was by his own military might that the victory was won, without realizing that it was Adonai, the God of the narrator, who gave the enemy into his hand, as told from the narrator's point of view. The narrator, the colonized, as a subjugated subject under the imperial force of the Babylonian army, though he cannot help but to accept the fact that they were defeated, nonetheless, resists to admit the history as told from Nebuchadnezzar's point of view. Rather, the colonized narrator preferred to offer another story with regards to the happenings in the past; "it was 'my Lord' who gave the king of Judah into your hand."

Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* argued that in order for the colonized people to find a voice and identity, they must, first, reclaim their own past. Secondly, they must begin to erode the colonizer's ideology by which their past had been devalued. In order to reclaim their 'true' past, the narrator of Daniel 1, resolves to offer a 'history' that devalued the colonizer (Nebuchadnezzar as an arrogant fool), rather than being devalued. By pronouncing the passiveness of Nebuchadnezzar in his imperial act, the narrator is able to demote the colonizer from a taker to a receiver. As the table is being turned around, identity of the colonized is being up-graded, from the passive manipulated to the active manipulator, and from the powerless loser to the powerful giver.

To erode the ideology of the colonizer, the narrator presents a different picture by contrasting Adonai's action with Nebuchadnezzar's activity. Adonai actively gives (וַיִּתֵּן אֲדֹנָי) so that Nebuchadnezzar could come (בָּא), take (בָּא) and place (בָּא) vessels from the temple of Jerusalem in the land of Shinar. Words are carefully chosen to express the disapproval of the colonizer's view of history. The action of Nebuchadnezzar was characterized by the use of בָּא three times. Though the word may be one of the most frequently used verb in the Old Testament,¹¹ one of its frequent usages is to refer to temple worshipper who comes to the sanctuary together with the community of faith to

¹¹ D. J. A. Clines counted 2565 occurrences in *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, Volume II, ב-ו* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); while Elmer Martens counted 2570 times in *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*.

pray and bring sacrifices (Deut.12:5; 31:11; 2Sam.7:18; 1Kg.8:41; Isa. 30:29; Jer. 7:2,1; Ps.5:7[H8]; 42:2[H3]). The coming of Nebuchadnezzar to Jerusalem is an event actively anticipated and realized by the will of Adonai, just as it is Adonai's will that people should come and worship in the temple. Upon Nebuchadnezzar's coming נב, Adonai gives ינן from the Jerusalem temple. The colonizer (Nebuchadnezzar) plays right into the hand of the colonized (the narrator) who is mirrored in Adonai's action and represented by the character of Adonai in the narrative. Such literary articulation is one of the common characteristics of postcolonial criticism.

In the second irony, just as Nebuchadnezzar thought that he had defeated the god of Jerusalem by transferring the temple vessels to the land of Shinar (v.2b), the narrator immediately points out that it was Adonai who gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to him "along with some of the vessels of the house of God"(v.2a). It is a common phenomenon for the colonizer to feature the god of the colonized as weak, heathen and incapable of defending its worshippers' interests. Postcolonial criticism calls to the awareness of false representation of the deity, religion and culture of the subaltern, marginalized and colonized.¹² Through the play of irony, not only is the narrator able to represent the colonizer as the weak and dependent receiver, rather than the strong and independent taker, s/he is also able to elevate his/her identity by mirroring Adonai as a representation of the colonized. Although it is not at all wrong to argue as Fewell did, that the purpose of the narrator is to offer a theological explanation for the conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, it might have down played the political, cultural and religious sentiment of the dissidents in exile.¹³

Fewell discussed this introductory story under the heading of 'Two Sovereigns', with a view of presenting the conflicting relationships between the sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar and that of the narrator's God. The story as presented to me, however, is more towards a struggle for power and superiority between the colonizer and the colonized.

¹² As pointed out by Peter Barry, "the first characteristic of postcolonial criticism is -- an awareness of representations of the non-European as exotic or immoral 'Other,'" *Beginning Theory*, 192-93.

¹³ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher rightly observes that "Most literary analysis of these stories, however, has tended to overlook their potent sociopolitical power as stories of resistance to cultural and spiritual assimilation of a minority by a dominant foreign power," *The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume VII*, 20.

Nebuchadnezzar, the colonizer, comes, besieges, takes and places, moves in and out of the promise land of the narrator as if it was no one's land. Such freedom of access to land, people and vessels,¹⁴ on the part of Nebuchadnezzar, which is understood as a kind of imperial force and colonizing power, is being re-presented as an event that is being authorized at a higher level than that of the colonizer, namely the God of the narrator; a divine power that is higher than that of Nebuchadnezzar's human power. By appealing to the divine power, the colonized is able to transcend, for the moment, the mere historical fact of being defeated and colonized, elevating oneself as superior to the imperial colonizer.

Thus, the stage is set, ready for the characters to play their roles. Voices of the colonized shall be heard, and the identity of the colonized as a superior subject, rather than a subjugated subject will be articulated in the following development of the Daniel story.¹⁵

Dan 1:3-7 The Process of Colonization & Neocolonization

3 Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, 4 youths without blemish, handsome and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to serve in the king's palace, and to teach them the letters and language of the Chaldeans. 5 The king assigned them a daily portion of the rich food which the king ate, and of the wine which he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. 6 Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Misha-el, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. 7 And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Misha-el he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.¹⁶

¹⁴ Such event can find resemblance in the modern history of China and Southeast Asia, which provided testimonies to western imperialism and colonizing power that left with them marks of brutality and cruelty, along with others, on the land and people of Asia.

¹⁵ D. W. Lee Humphreys, on the other hand, in "A Life-Style for Diaspora: A Study of the Tales of Esther and Daniel," *JBL* 92:2 (1973), 211-23, argues that "Daniel are tales of a particular type, which, along with their considerable entertainment value, develop a particular theological emphasis addressed to the emerging Jewish communities of the Persian and hellenistic diaspora. They suggest and illustrate a certain style of life for the Jew in his foreign environment."

¹⁶ HK1:3 Then the Queen commanded her governors, The Right Honourables Sir Henry Pottinger (1843-1844), Sir John Francis Davis (1844-1848), Sir Samuel George Bonham (1848-1854), Sir John Bowring (1854-1859), Lord Rosmead (1859-1865), Sir Richard Graves MacDonnell (1866-1872), Sir Authur Edward Kennedy (1872-1877), Sir John Pope Hennessy (1877-1882), Sir George Ferguson Bowen (1883-1885), Sir George William Des Voeux (1887-1891), Sir William

The story continues with a picture of the royal palace where Nebuchadnezzar administers his colonial affairs. The narrator presents a picture that unveils the colonizing strategy of the colonizer (Nebuchadnezzar) on the colonized (Israelites). Nebuchadnezzar commands his chief eunuch Ashpenaz to bring some of the people of Israel with the following qualifications: (a) of royal family and of nobility, (b) youth without any blemish (כִּנְיָו), (c) handsome in appearance, (d) showing aptitude for all kinds of learning, (e) well informed and quick to understand. These pre-requisites would reflect their knowledge of Jewish language, tradition and culture. The purpose is clearly for "maximizing the efficiency of Babylonian rule," as suggested by Smith-Christopher.¹⁷ The selection brings before Nebuchadnezzar the best minds of the Israelites, the elite. By such act, Nebuchadnezzar segregated the best of the best from the rest of the Israelites, so he can rule them in a 'downward filtration' manner.

There are at least four different elements that are of interest to postcolonial criticism, according to Nebuchadnezzar's colonial policy: (1) Segregation (vv.1-4a), (2) Language (v.4b), (3) Education (v.5b), (4) Naming (vv.6-7).

Segregation is a common practice of the colonizer's political strategy, to divide and rule. Even before the Babylonians, Assyrian imperial policy practiced the dispersal of captives and dissemination of colonial knowledge for the purpose of control and domination. The selection of the best of the best Israelites, even including the 'royal seed', is in fact a form of neocolonialism, in that colonized elite are being transformed or re-educated in order to serve the purpose of the colonizer. Fewell recognized the danger in such an act of selecting the 'royal seeds', but

Robinson (1891-1898), and Sir Henry Arthur Blake (1898-1903), to enlist the people of Hong Kong, both of the rich family and nobility, 4 youths without blemish, handsome and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to serve the Queen of the British Empire, and to teach them the letters and language of the Anglo-Saxons. 5 The Queen constituted them to learn the eating and drinking habits, as well as dinning manners of the high society and of royal and noble life style. They were to be educated for three years and at the end of that time they were to serve the Royal Service for her Majesty, the Queen of the Great British Empire. 6 Among these were Cheung Ah-san, Kwang Ah-see, Chong Ah-hwa, and Sia Phng-yng of the southern province of China. 7 And the headmaster gave them new names because they are difficult to pronounce, Cheung Ah-san he called James Cheung, Kwang Ah-see he called Andrew Kwang, Chong Ah-Hwa he called Thomas Chong, and Sia Phng-yng he called Philip Sia. Leaving all their Chinese given names in void and position their names in reverse order.

¹⁷ *The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume VII*, 39.

Nebuchadnezzar, a well seasoned colonizer, has strategy to turn the potential danger around for his own advantages, to rule his subjugates with the colonized elite. Neocolonialism has proven to be an effective strategy in many of the Commonwealth countries.

This group of selected colonial elite will need to go through a series of educational processes. They are to "learn the letters and language of the Chaldeans" (v.4b). As remarked by Ashcroft, "[L]anguage is a fundamental site of struggle for postcolonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in language."¹⁸ The learning of the language of the Chaldean also implies the instruction in Chaldean culture. As observed by Fewell, the term Chaldean could either designate "a class of professional sages (cf. 2:2-10; 3:8-12; 4:7; 5:7)," which therefore refers to a field of professional knowledge, or used as an ethnic label (cf. 5:30; 9:1). The "choice of the term 'Chaldean' rather than 'sage' or 'magician' suggests that the training involves national (and thus political) as well as professional indoctrination."¹⁹ Some have suggested that "three years of study is mentioned in Persian sources as the time required for training in knowledge of religious matters."²⁰ Nebuchadnezzar's strategy to re-educate the elite of Israelites is to indoctrinate and infiltrate the colonized minds, a form of neocolonialism. Philip G. Altbach observes well, "Colonial educational policies were generally elitist. In India, British educational elitism assumed the title of 'downward filtration' -- a system by which a small group of Indians with a British style education supposedly spread enlightenment to the masses.... 'French assimilationist' policies also worked in this direction. Indigenous cultures, in many cases highly developed, were virtually ignored by colonial educational policy."²¹ Braj B. Kachru painfully recalls that "[T]he English language is a tool of power, domination and elitist identity, and of communication across continents."²² Ashcroft also observes that the process of colonization necessarily involves "the suppression of a vast wealth of indigenous cultures beneath the weight of imperial control."

¹⁸ Ashcroft, *et al.*, ed., *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 283.

¹⁹ *Circle of Sovereignty*, 16.

²⁰ *The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume VII*, 39.

²¹ "Education and Neocolonialism," in Ashcroft, *et al.*, ed., *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 452.

²² "The Alchemy of English," in Ashcroft, *et al.*, ed., *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 291.

Nebuchadnezzar practices colonialism in his military operation to besiege Jerusalem (1:1-2), and promotes neocolonialism on the captives in Babylon (1:3-4). Such are the tactics of the colonizer in order to colonize their subjugate, with a view of consolidating and expanding their imperial kingdom. Through re-education, the culture, religion and knowledge of the colonized are transformed in order to serve the purpose of the colonizer. Colonialism takes place in Jerusalem and neocolonialism takes place in the Babylonian kingdom.

The next logical move for Nebuchadnezzar, the colonizer, is to name their subjugates. The Jewish names of the four Judean youths were carefully noted before changing them to Chaldean names, as articulated by the narrator. Daniel is renamed as Belteshazzar, Hananiah renamed as Shadrach, Misha-el as Meshach, and Azariah as Abednego. Although scholars do not agree on the precise meaning of their names, most would think that their new Chaldean names have to do with Babylonian religions and the names of Babylonian deities. The significance of the names, however, lies not so much in their meaning; rather, it lies in the fact that as subjugates/colonized, they are being named by their subjugator/colonizer; "it is done by a power that assumes the authority to make such a change," as Smith-Christopher remarks.

The naming of the subject, as in the creation story, carries with it a notion of domination and lordship over the subject. The naming or re-naming in biblical literature is also a sign of inferior, subordinate and dependent status; Eliakim was renamed by Pharaoh Neco as Jehoiakim (2 Kg. 23:34), and Mattaniah was changed to Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kg.24:17). Ashcroft, in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*,²³ has captured the essence of naming the subject in the act of colonization.

One of the most subtle demonstrations of the power of language is the means by which it provides, through the function of naming, a technique for knowing a colonised place or people. To name the world is to 'understand' it, to know it and to have control over it.... To name reality is therefore to exert power over it, simply because the dominant language becomes the way in which it is known. In colonial experience this power is by no means vague or abstract. A systematic education and indoctrination installed the language and thus the reality on which it was predicated as preeminent.

²³ Ashcroft, *et al.*, ed., *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 1.

The naming of Daniel and his friends in Chaldean language also means the change of their Jewish identity to one of a hybridity. The emphasis on identity as doubled, or hybrid, or unstable is one characteristic of the postcolonial approach to reading literature.²⁴ By the change of names, they have been transformed into Chaldeans with Jewish blood. Yet, they are supposedly to take it as a honor to serve the Babylonian empire with all honesty and loyalty, as any Babylonian would do. From this moment onward, Daniel and friends will have to live with a hybrid identity, mentally, socially and physically. Though this might be some kind of a torture, and not much can be done with regards to the change of their names by their colonizer, yet the narrator continues to use their Jewish name in the narrative and throughout the book as a means of resistance to colonial rule. Such resistance can appear in different forms and in other areas of their lives, as the narrator develops the story, increasing the reader's anticipation.

On the naming of Daniel's Chaldean name, Fewell suggests that they might be engineered by their colonizer to go through a classic model of a *rite of passage*, "a ritual designed to facilitate a person's passing from one phase of life into another."²⁵ With the three stages in the classic model of ritual process,²⁶ Fewell concludes that

[T]his match between Nebuchadnezzar's plan and a rite of passage strengthens our understanding of the training as not simply professional education. The young men are to learn the Babylonian profession, and confess Babylonian allegiance. Such a transformation benefits the king; the captives must be made to see that such a transformation benefits them as well. The narrator, however, leaves the reader two options for judging what is happening to the young Judeans. In one sense their rite of passage is a promotion from prisoners to professional. But in another sense, the passage is a demotion from 'royal seed' to servanthood.

There is a difference, however, in the cultural anthropological model of Victor Turner and that of Nebuchadnezzar's strategy in Daniel 1. Though there may be some resemblance in the two situations, there is a

²⁴ As pointed out by Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 195.

²⁵ *Circle of Sovereignty*, 17.

²⁶ The three stages are: first, they are separated from their community and put in seclusion (so Nebuchadnezzar's first command in v.3). Once secluded from normal society, they endure a temporary 'betwixt and between' or 'liminal' existence in which they are taught special knowledge that will enable them to function in their new roles.... These included experiences in the liminal stage are designed to bring about a change of being, a change of identity. Third, the process is reintegration into society. *Circle of Sovereignty*, 17.

spirit of resistance, politically and religiously, in Daniel's case, on the one hand, and they were forced to accept the transformation and brainwashing as prisoners of war, on the other. The model of a rite of passage is, after all, an observed phenomenon in primitive society in transition.

Identity and name are very personal belongings -- being and existence are rooted in them. The change of one's name without one's consent or by force, not only is an insult to one's integrity and dignity, but also a denial of the right to ancestry. As pointed out by Samuel Huntington, "[P]eople define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions."²⁷ For hundreds of years, the naming of Chinese people by the westerner has been a painful experience. For instance, the two names, Mao Ze-dong or Deng Xiao-ping are never required by western media to reverse the order in introducing their names, while it is a common practice to reverse the order of the names for all other Chinese names (almost one fourth of the entire world population). If one insisted on writing one's Chinese name according to the order of the Chinese characters, then it will almost certainly be mistaken by a westerner who will take the last character as the last name or surname. One's ancestral tradition is defined by one's surname. There is a saying in Chinese, 'Standing, I don't change my surname, Sitting, I don't change my name', which means one will stand by one's own words once uttered. This shows the importance of one's name in Chinese culture, like many others. Under the British rule, English education has forced many colonized people to change their names and identities. Often, names that reflect the western religion, i.e., Christianity, are taken with little knowledge of it, like that of Daniel and friends' Chaldean names.

That the narrator carefully articulated this element of name changing into the narrative of Daniel under Nebuchadnezzar, the colonizer, is by no means an accident. It is a voice for human integrity and dignity. The voice of dissident is being transmitted in the form of character play, through the action of Daniel who resisted the temptation of status at the risk of his life, as the story develops in the next section. With a

²⁷ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 21. He also points out that "For peoples seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential, and the potentially most dangerous enmities occur across the fault lines between the world's major civilizations," 20.

new socio-political status for Daniel and the youths, king Nebuchadnezzar can expect the best of their service for his kingdom. Although as Fewell observed, "[T]he reader might even be tempted to consider Nebuchadnezzar a generous, tolerant monarch with worthy aesthetic and intellectual values," the narrator seems to have another thought in mind -- to carry on his/her scheme of resistance to colonial rule, as the story develops further into Daniel's resistance to the eating culture of the palace.

Dan 1:8-16 The Resistance and Resolution²⁸

8 But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's rich food, or with the wine which he drank; therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. 9 And God gave Daniel favor and compassion (דָּוָן) in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs; 10 and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear lest my lord the king, who appointed your food and your drink, should see that you were in poorer condition than the youths who are of your own age. So you would endanger my head with the king." 11 Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Misha-el, and Azariah; 12 "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's rich food be observed by you, and according to what you see deal with your servants." 14 So he hearkened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's rich food. 16 So the steward took away their rich food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

In this section, the narrator continues to mirror his/her resistance to colonial power through the character of God and the act of Daniel. The colonial power, however, is represented not by Nebuchadnezzar himself in the first person this time, but by his representative, the chief eunuch Ashpenaz. There are two implications to this change in character representations. First, it provides a look into how successful is the neocolonization scheme of Nebuchadnezzar, as reflected through the service of the eunuch, who probably is enlisted to serve in the palace in the way Daniel and others did. Second, it allows the voices of those who are colonized under imperial rule against their will to be heard, through the act of Ashpenaz and Daniel. Some scholars might incline

²⁸ HK1:8 But Cheung Ah-san resolved that he would not defile his ancestors with the Queen's new name; therefore he asked the Headmaster to allow him not to defile his ancestors by retaining his Chinese name.

to think that the sympathy of Ashpenaz towards the youths is a sign of kindness to foreigners in the Babylonian court. But this is contrary to the narrator's purpose of the characterization of the eunuch in the story. The act of the eunuch is clearly to convey a postcolonial ideology. Although he is entrusted with a high position in the court of Babylon and physically he is beyond redemption, yet in all human dignity and in the spirit of resistance, he is willing even to risk his career and life (v.10) for the sake of colonial resistance. Smith-Christopher is right in commenting that "[T]he friendship between Daniel and Ashpenaz, therefore, is the solidarity of the oppressed, both of whom serve the imperial will under threat of death; and this solidarity crosses ethnic lines, as Ashpenaz obviously admires Daniel's courage. This is hardly a sign of positive attitudes toward Babylonians!"²⁹ The high official position of the Ashpenaz in Nebuchadnezzar's administration might suggest that he has been transformed with colonial knowledge and wisdom, whereby he is put in-charge of all other eunuchs. The courage of Daniel to resist, might once again awaken his soul and spirit. Ashpenaz decided to go along with Daniel's way even at the risk of his own life. The interactions between Ashpenaz and Daniel may well fit into another characteristic of postcolonial criticism, namely, the stress on 'cross-cultural' interactions. The narrator, furthermore, supports the act of resistance by Daniel and Ashpenaz to colonial power, through the characterization of God, "And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs" (v.9). With the יְהוָה of God who delivers and protects with power, the narrator presents, once again, the powerlessness of the colonizer in face of the power of the God of יְהוָה who has covenantal responsibility towards Daniel, the colonized (cf. 1:1-2).³⁰

The resistance is carried out through a simple act on the part of the colonized, Daniel and friends, the rejection of food. Like any resistance to colonial rule, life is always at risk, and so is Daniel's life. The decision to put the weight of resistance on the simple daily survival matter of food and drink, is by no means a coincidence. Food and drink,³¹ which are basic for survival, also reflect and represent one's

²⁹ *The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume VII*, 42.

³⁰ Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Heseḏ in the Hebrew Bible* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978).

³¹ Smith-Christopher has an interesting analysis of "'Food and Power' in the Hebrew Bible,"

culture and religion, especially in the Jewish tradition. By granting food to Daniel, it represents the permission to live; and the food from the royal table means special status and quality of life granted by the king. The refusal to receive food from the royal table by Daniel, not only is a struggle to make known his voice of resistance to colonial power, but is also a challenge to the colonizer's claim of life controlling power, let alone the promise of quality life by the colonizer. Fewell³² and Philip Davies³³ have both observed that, "there are political dimensions to the king's food. The food and wine are, in other words, the symbols of political patronage; to consume them would be tantamount to declaring complete political allegiance." The consuming of the food, on the part of Daniel, not only would declare "complete political allegiance," but also proclaims a victory on the part of the king as the colonizer who has the power over life and death (as in western colonial history). If Daniel, the colonized, accepted the foods offers by the King, his acceptance would be an admission, on the part of the culture and religion he represents, of the colonizer's superiority. That itself is defiling for Daniel culturally and religiously.³⁴ Davies is right in observing the act of Daniel's resistance as "a denial of the king's implicit claim to be sole provider."³⁵ Goldingay³⁶ also perceptively comments that although meat and wine are foods of festivity as in Isa. 22:13, the attitude of the exiles ought to be mourning for the destruction of Jerusalem, as the psalmist of Ps.137 painfully mourned. Thus, whether for cultural, religious, or nationalistic reasons, Daniel's resistance to the food from the king's table lends a strong support to a postcolonial reading of his act as a resistance to colonial power.

To recapitulate the scene, the narrator's plot is simple; the refusal of Daniel and three friends to partake of the food created the tension and crisis which require a resolution. The suspense that comes with it anticipated the resolution through the act of God who is carefully

40-42.

³² *Circle of Sovereignty*, 19.

³³ *Daniel*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985), 90-91.

³⁴ Scholars generally agreed that the issue of defilement here is not on eating foods that have been offered to idols, because "Daniel does accept 'vegetables' from the royal supply, so the likelihood that he wanted to avoid any Babylonian food that had been dedicated to pagan deities seems not to be the issue here," as argued by Smith-Christopher, 40.

³⁵ *Daniel*, 91.

³⁶ *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 18-19.

articulated as a character in the hands of the narrator. In the first story in Dan.1:1-2, the narrator has represented the story that it was Adonai who gave the victory into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. In this story, no longer is it Nebuchadnezzar; instead, it is his chief eunuch, who is also in the control of the narrator's God who not only protected the four youths, but also preserves the life of the eunuch. In fact, it was the preservation of the colonized youths whereby the eunuch's life was redeemed. The strategy and power of neocolonialism is once again eliminated and turned around, instead, to demonstrate the providence of the God of the colonized narrator. The challenge to colonial power's universal claim on the right to physical life and death is thus brought to a close, declaring victory to the colonized Daniel and God of the narrator. Daniel lives and looks far better than those who are well fed by the king's rich food after ten days (v.15). The narrator has made his/her point on the resistance to colonial power and victory to the colonized. The next challenge, as plotted by the narrator, is a comparison of wisdom and knowledge of the colonizer and the colonized.

Dan 1:17-21 The Success of the Subjugated

17 As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all letters and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18 At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king spoke with them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Misha-el, and Azariah; therefore they stood before the king. 20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. 21 And Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

The story continues with the narrator's articulation of the providence of God who protects and provides the colonized with wisdom and knowledge, whereby the Babylonian kingdom is sustained.³⁷ Although no specific dramatic act is included in this section, it serves as a conclusion to Daniel 1, whereby Daniel stands as a winner in front of the king as a contrast to a captive's position at the beginning of the chapter. It also sets the position for Daniel's colonial career as unfolded by those stories

³⁷ It is not surprising to find resemblance in modern history of western colonization that the culture and economy of the colonizer is sustained by exploitation on the colonies' wealth of resources, human and natural.

that is to follow in the rest of the book; as Daniel continues to serve from Nebuchadnezzar to "the first year of King Cyrus." (v.21)

The narrator is quick to present the result of the challenge, that the wisdom and knowledge of Daniel and three friends are found "ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in the kingdom." It is not difficult to perceive the narrator's implicit reason for such comparison of knowledge and wisdom of Daniel and friends' with the rest of the kingdom's -- to demote the claims to superiority in knowledge by the colonizer. But the narrator is careful in articulating the postcolonial ethos. In v.17, the pride in the superiority of the narrator is presented as the act of God who gives the youths "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" (מִדָּעָה וְהַשְׂכֵּל בְּכָל-סֵפֶר וְחִכְמָה). But Daniel alone has another added value, he has "understanding in all visions and dreams" (הַבִּיִן בְּכָל-חֲזוֹן וְחֵלְמוֹת), which makes him superior to all the others and he continues to serve till the time of Cyrus. The test is conducted by no other than king Nebuchadnezzar himself (v.19), lest one should question the integrity and thoroughness of the test. Nebuchadnezzar comes into the scene again, at this last section of the chapter, forms the conclusion to the contest that sets forth from the beginning of the chapter on who is more powerful. The narrator carefully manipulated the contest in such a way that it was through the mouth of the king that the confirmation of superiority of the colonized over those of the Babylonian kingdom's intellectuals is pronounced. The confession of the superiority of Daniel by the words of Nebuchadnezzar is in sharp contrast to the conqueror image that the narrator presented at the beginning of the story. The long standing service of Daniel, according to the last verse of the chapter, testifies and satisfies the postcolonial mindset of the narrator, that Israelites are far more superior and powerful than the Babylonians. It is clear, by now, that throughout the chapter, the characterizations of Daniel, friends and God enabled the narrator to mirror a postcolonial ethos, and to claim a victory over the colonial power of Nebuchadnezzar. It is by the God of the narrator, through Daniel and friends, that the Babylonian kingdom stands and is being sustained.

Conclusion

This reader of Daniel 1, as one who has been colonized, identified with the narrator, Daniel and the God of the colonized. The search for

identity of the subject in a postmodern world is a common experience that many can testified to its agonizing rite of passage. This is also true of a postcolonial experience. One of the agonizing features in the search for identity of the colonized is the naming of oneself as the subject/object of/by the colonizer. The experience of Daniel is too much of a common experience of the colonized, say for those who experienced the British colonial rule, and subsequent neocolonial rule. This essay draws on the narrator's literary articulation of the colonial power versus the colonizer's God as a voice for those who have lived under the colonial rule.

The identity of the colonized is often in a hybrid situation. On the one hand, there is the identity by birth or native origin identity, and on the other, there is the identity imposed, at different layers, by the colonial reality. Although Daniel does not have any means of power or position that allows him to resist the colonizer's invitation to a new identity by naming him with a name in the colonizer's language, his courage to resist with his own stomach sets an unprecedented example for the many who struggled to live under colonial and neocolonial power, often without human dignity. The narrator's silent protest is reflected in the continuous use of the name Daniel throughout the story. Like any other resistance to domination, life is always at risk. Daniel jeopardized not only his own fate, but also the lives of the eunuch and his fellow countrymen by refusing to follow the food custom of his colonizer.

Eating habits and food custom are the most basic of all cultural differences. By changing one's food custom or eating habits, cultural identity is often being called into question. A visit to any food court will prove the case in point. Daniel's resistance thus immediately haul the story in suspense, a confrontation between the colonizer and the colonized, a cultural confrontation or a conflict of culture?³⁸ What lies behind is also the religious factors embedded within the different cultures. Without any military means of offending the colonizer, the narrator resorted to religious power in the narrative; as a matter of faith, he confronts the situation and emerges with a victory. As it has always been, from the beginning of the story to the end, the tension has been that of a conflict and confrontation between two religious powers. Such

³⁸ Samuel Huntington has a very convincing presentation on the coming conflict of civilizations, as a conflict of cultures, with an up-to-date analysis of international happenings in the last few years, in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

a religious confrontation is not uncommon in most, if not all, of the racial and cultural disputations in human history. Recently, even being argued by Samuel Huntington to be a new order of confrontation that threatens the existence of humankind in the next century, "clashes of civilizations are the greatest threat to world peace, and an international order based on civilizations is the surest safeguard against world war."³⁹

"Peoples and nations are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: Who are we?" so writes Huntington, and concludes that "We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against."⁴⁰

Abstract

This essay attempts to provide an alternative reading, the postcolonial reading, to Daniel 1 whereby representation, resistance, colonization and neocolonialism is at work. By studying the narrator's plot and characterization of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and others, this author argues that what lies behind the stories, is postcolonialism as an ideology of the narrator who articulated a representation of the colonized past and the voices of the exile. The narrator is depicted as one that reflects a colonized identity and postcolonial ideology which mirrored through the characters in the stories. To name a subject is an act that often associated with colonization. The renaming of Daniel and friends in Chaldean names is an act of colonization of Nebuchadnezzar, which was met with Daniel's resistance to the foods of the king as an act of rejecting the king's claim of colonial power to life and death.

撮要

本文試從另一角度——後殖民的角度解讀但以理書第一章，探討第一章中蘊藏的歷史重現、權力抗衡、殖民及新殖民主義。本文研究但以理書的布局，尼布甲尼撒王、但以理及其朋友的人物塑造後，認為但以理書的故事背後隱含了作者後殖民主義的意識形態，他清楚述說了被殖民者的歷史重現，以及被放逐者的吶喊。本文認為但以理書的作者在故事人物裡反映了被殖民者的身分和後殖民的

³⁹ On the current international scenario, Huntington observed that "Peoples and countries with similar cultures are coming together. Peoples and countries with different cultures are coming apart. Alignments defined by ideology and superpower relations are giving way to alignments defined by culture and civilization. Political boundaries are increasingly redrawn to coincide with cultural ones: ethnic, religious, and civilizational," 125, 321.

⁴⁰ *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 21.

意識形態。重新為主體命名這行動常與殖民意識相關連。尼布甲尼撒王賦予但以理和他三個朋友新的迦勒底名字，是殖民意識的行為，但遭到但以理以拒絕用王的御膳來表明他抗議這種凌駕其生死的殖民統治權。