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TRANSLATING ZEPHANIAH IN CONTEXT

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Summary

This dissertation explores a process of cross-cultural communication that spans centuries of time between two different cultures, that of the Hebrew speaking Israelites of the seventh century a.C. and the Susu people of Guinea West Africa today. The question is how, given that the two groups operate with completely different worldviews and historical backgrounds, might one translate a Hebrew religious hortatory discourse into Susu in such a way that it would be understood and appreciated as a relevant message to their culture.

The author attempts to do this beginning with an analysis of the Hebrew discourse, first from a rhetorical perspective (Chapter 2), and then from a textual perspective (Chapter 3). The presentation of the message employs a rhetoric dependant upon an understanding of the historical background of the audience. The author crafts the message not only with rhetorical nuances, but also with a textual artistry designed to enhance the overall impact of the presentation.

The author then procedes to use the same process on an analogous discourse from the Susu target culture. Since the Hebrew book of Zephaniah consists of religious hortatory, the same genre was utilized from the Susu culture, a Muslim Xutuba (Friday sermon). Again, the analysis covers the rhetorical component of the communication (Chapter 4) and then the textual structure component (Chapter 5).

Having completed an analysis of the rhetoric and the textual discourse structure of a discourse both in the source language and in the target language, the author delves into two possible approaches to the translation of the Hebrew discourse. The first, “a documentary translation,” focuses on the forms used in Hebrew to express the message in such a way to have a rhetorical and structural communicative impact (Chapter 6). The second, “an instrumental translation,” shifts the focus to forms used in the target language, with the express purpose of communicating the same message with rhetorical and structural devices that would have a communicative impact on the Susu people.

Ultimately, the preferred translation approach depends upon the *scopos* of the translator. If the objective is to present an ancient document to highlight the “foreign” forms used in the original communication, the documentary approach works well. However, if the objective is to present the message of said document in such a way as to transfer the relevancy of the message to the target culture, an instrumental approach is advantageous.
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1 – Introduction

1.1 Human cognition and communication

The science and art of translating ancient sacred texts for language groups scattered around the world today requires a journey through the crooks and crevices of human communication. Such a journey passes not only through the mysteries of language, but through the very halls of human cognition. Words seemingly produced from mechanical voice mechanisms and governed by rigid linguistic rules of morphology and syntax, actually originate in the complex and abstract world of values, social norms, self-reflection, and cultural beliefs. These words constitute complex messages, yet they have served the human race well over the centuries.

Part of human experience involves the transfer of wisdom and knowledge from one person or people to another. This process called communication allows the interchange of thoughts to enrich the human race with a vast array of perspectives and experiences. The human need to communicate pushes people to express their thoughts to others, and the human thirst for understanding motivates the audience to seek understanding despite the complexity of the message.

Though this process forms a cornerstone of the human experience, communication challenges all parties involved. The classic “transmission model” portrayed speaker and audience as a straightforward coder and decoder working with a set of fixed one-to-one correspondences (Larson 1984:1–6). Admittedly transmission “noise” could make the transfer less than clear at times, but typically communication was thought to be straightforward.

More modern approaches to communication recognize that the “code” involves more than lexical items and morphological rules. Human thought processes reach to the core of peoples’ worldviews and find expression through a whole series of cultural norms before taking the forms of words, sentences, and texts. The world of cognitive linguistics opens a whole new horizon to the communication process.

1.2 “Zephaniah” for the Susu

The present research originated as an attempt to share “Zephaniah” with the Susu people. The mode of expressing this task indicates something about the philosophical approach used in achieving it. Traditionally one would have talked about “translating the book of Zephaniah in the Susu language.” “Zephaniah” would be defined as a “book” to be translated into a specific language, rather than a message to be shared with a people. A fuller understanding of the role of cognitive linguistics in human communication requires a different philosophical approach, that ultimately must be described in a different manner.

According to the definitions of Widdowson, “Zephaniah” is more than a “text” or a sacred book; it is a “discourse.” He defines the latter in this way:

“[d]iscourse is not, as I have argued earlier, an encoded arrangement of language above, or below, the sentence but a different phenomenon altogether: the overt linguistic trace of a process of negotiating the passage of intended meaning, the pragmatic process of discourse realization, whereby the resources of the language code are used to engage with the context of beliefs, values, assumptions that constitute the user’s social and individual reality. In
In this sense, text is an epiphenomenon. It exists as a symptom of pragmatic intent.” (Widdowson 2004:14)

From this perspective “Zephaniah” constitutes the “linguistic trace” of the communication process between author and audience. The discourse uses Hebrew language conventions and rhetorical devices to realize the transmission of a hortatory message to the author’s contemporary audience. Message formulation follows cognitive paths that are shared by both parties, thus increasing the likelihood of shared understanding and hortatory impact.

In light of that communication process, “sharing” the discourse of Zephaniah with a people group distant not only in time and space, but also with regard to that “context of beliefs, values, assumptions that constitute the user’s social and individual reality,” demands that the translator proceed down a similar path as that of the author. In some way he/she must make the same text as compatible with the Susu reality as possible so that they will be more likely infer the intended meaning of the author.

In order to share a discourse cross-culturally three things must take place. First, the original discourse must be analyzed in all of its components to understand the intended meaning. Second, an analysis must be done in the target population to understand how their cognitive “context” would influence how they might be able to infer the intended meaning in question. Finally, the “discourse” must be formulated into a text in such a way as to enable the audience to infer the intended meaning. Analysis of the communicational components of both the source and the target populations drive the formulation of the translation strategy.

This research proposes to maneuver through the same three phases. First, the Hebrew “discourse” of Zephaniah will be analyzed in its cognitive context in an attempt to understand the intended meaning. Second, the “context” of the Susu people will be analyzed by studying an analogous “discourse” presented by Susu insiders. In both cases the specific cognitive contexts will be deduced from the analysis of the discourses presented. Once the Hebrew and Susu contexts have been analyzed, the Hebrew discourse of Zephaniah will be reformulated in Susu in such a way as to provide ample cognitive means for the Susu audience to receive the intended meaning.

Clearly stated, this research proposes to answer the question: Can a rhetorical analysis of analogous discourses, both in the source language and in the target language, assist in the development of a meaningful translation? Working through the actual process in a transparent fashion, the author hopes to demonstrate an affirmative response to this question.

1.3 A model to guide the process: Contextual frames of reference

In an attempt to accomplish this communicative task the present research will follow a model proposed by Ernst Wendland which leans heavily on the basic tenets of cognitive linguistics, especially those of Relevance Theory. Wendland describes his model in Contextual Frames of Reference in Translation (2008). Timothy Wilt discusses the same issues in his chapter “Translation and Communication,” in Bible Translation: Frames of Reference (Wilt 2003).

Wendland refers to his model as a “hermeneutical procedure,” (Wendland 2008:xvi) in which the various contextual frames are analyzed both separately and jointly to ascertain the meaning of the discourse. Once these frames of reference are understood, the task is “to reassemble it [a creative literary text] again in an entirely new communication setting.” (ibid.) The difficulty lies in the fact that the
“reassembling” can leave gaps of contextual understanding that distort the meaning in the target language. Wendland refers to this problem as he identifies the task of translation in these words:

The goal is to identify and compensate for those inevitable gaps and lapses that occur in our efforts to put the meaning back together again, that is, to re-present it more accurately and appropriately in its new linguistic, literary, and cultural milieu. (Wendland 2008:xvii)

Wendland’s contextual frames of reference are cognitive in nature and include four distinct orientations: socio-cultural, organizational, situational, and textual. (Wendland 2008:19) The sum total of these mental perspectives on life which profoundly influence communication compose what some may call “world-view” or “culture”. Proponents of Relevance Theory refer to it as the “cognitive environment”. (Gutt 1992:21–23 cited in Wendland 2008:19) Wendland describes it in this way:

This WV [world-view] encompasses all their beliefs, presuppositions, attitudes, ideas, norms, traditions, values – even dreams – on the one hand, while on the other, it serves to motivate as well as to validate all of their concrete social and cultural activities, speech acts, customs, social institutions, artifact construction – and most important, their current perception of reality, evaluation of experience, and future planning. WV is the ultimate ‘context,’ for it consists of the sum total of a society’s system of presuppositions about truth, reality, and human experience as lived in a particular cultural setting. (Wendland 2008:19)

Since communication stems from the core mental essence of man, one can only expect that all of human communication be profoundly influenced by people’s world view. Wendland encourages that focus throughout the analysis of the discourse.

1.4 Application of the “Contextual frame of reference” model

The author intends to analyze two discourses originating from completely different cognitive environments, with the hope that in the end an appropriate translation will enable the modern Susu to understand and appreciate Zephaniah’s message originally intended for a seventh century B.C. Hebrew audience. Wendland’s socio-cultural, organizational, and situational frames of reference will be analyzed together with regards to the discourse of Zephaniah in chapter 1, and with regards to a Muslim Susu Xutuba (i.e. sermon) in chapter 3. These frames of reference will serve as the backdrop for a propositional analysis of the two texts so that the propositions can be viewed in the cognitive environment in which they were authored.

Hopefully that attention to context will clarify the full cognitive intent of the propositions. The author would concur with Relevance Theory that meaning only rarely lies totally and independently within the proposition itself, but at the same time he would consider the propositions critical elements of the communication process. One must assume that coupled with the desired cognitive environment, the propositions did indeed communicate the intended meaning. Furthermore, the organization of the propositions enhanced the overall rhetoric effect of the discourse, making it optimally relevant to the original audience.

The textual frame of reference will be analyzed after the contextual frames of reference in both the book of Zephaniah and the Susu Muslim Xutuba respectively. This approach lays the foundation of the cognitive environment first, including socio-cultural, organizational, and situational information, before delving in the linguistic details of the text, which formulate the presented discourse. This concords with
Wendland’s “cline of referential generality” (2008:6–7). This analysis will highlight the way in which the cognitive environments of both authors, the prophet Zephaniah and the Susu Muslim Imam, provided them with communicative clues to achieve the intended communicative effects.

The analysis of these four frames of reference in both discourses will provide the foundation for the translation exercise in chapter 5. Understanding both the cognitive environment of the source and target language/culture enables the translator to explore communication strategies to help the Susu view Zephaniah’s discourse as relevant to their context. Harriett Hill’s (2006) suggestions will be particularly useful in this phase of the work.
2 – Contextual frames of reference in Zephaniah’s rhetoric

The discourse of Zephaniah stems from the cognitive environment of the seventh century B.C. Israelite world. The reported prophet and his audience shared the same world view, which enabled communication to flow unhampered. The modern receptor however, needs to understand that perspective to be able to capture Zephaniah’s intended communicative meaning. The meaning surpasses the sum total of the propositions made in the text; it must be seen “in context” if it is to be “truly seen.”

This chapter presents the propositions of Zephaniah in the context of the cognitive environment in which they had relevance. While the structure of the propositions is clearly delineated in a hierarchical fashion, this is not done in a vacuum, but rather with a focused analysis of how the propositions acquired relevance in the audience’s world. Because author and audience shared cognitive environments, the text did not need to explain many aspects of the environment that could be missed by the modern reader.

However one should not think that locutionary economy governed Zephaniah’s communication. Certainly there were utterances which could be “minimal” due to the shared cognitive environment of author and audience, but this research maintains that rhetorical effect also played a key role in Zephaniah’s communication strategy. Rhetoric could demand at times a minimal utterance, while at other times a much more expanded version. To fully understand the impact of the discourse, communication context and communication strategy both deserve careful analysis.

2.1 Contextual frames of reference in Zephaniah’s world

The socio-cultural frame of reference

The people of Israel lived with a theocratic heritage where the one, true, sovereign Yahweh created, ruled, and judged the world.¹ Loyalty to him in all things constituted the backbone of their ancient background. The first three commandments of their Decalogue pointed to this truth.

This belief hinged on historical incidents (i.e. liberation from slavery in Egypt) through which Yahweh selected Israel as “his people” and entered into an eternal covenant with them. This became their national identity and a key factor in understanding their world view, especially their perspective on other nations.

However, their geographic environment brought them into contact with the polytheism of the Ancient Near East. This influence lured the Israelites, probably in a search for more spiritual power to deal with the issues of everyday life, to worship Canaanite gods (e.g. Baal, Molech, Asherah). In this way a theological tension developed between Israel and her neighbors. On the one hand, the Israelites felt

¹ While the examples of Job 1:6-12, Psalm 8:5-6, 29:1, 82:1, 89:6-7, 95:3, 96:4, and Exodus 15:11 are sometimes presented as an underlying layer of polytheism, the Old Testament typically presents a monotheistic perspective (see Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 40, 41:21-29, 4:20, 25, 45:5, 44:8). Bill Arnold’s article (2017), “A singular Israel in a pluralistic world,” offers an interesting insight in this regards.
superior to their “pagan” neighbors in that “their god” Yahweh was the “one true God,” but at the same time the people were seduced to experiment with the potentially useful spiritual powers of those gods that their historical heritage deemed “false gods.”

The Israelite “prophets” expressed the voice of that heritage in condemning rulers and people alike for their theological compromise. They did this based on divine authority, which in one sense the people agreed with ideologically, while often clashing with it in their daily practice.

Another value critical to the socio-cultural frame of reference of the ancient Israelite world consisted in their high value on religious holiness. As a community, the sacrificial system ideally provided the people with an elaborate mode of requesting God’s blessings and favors. Daily, monthly, and annual sacrifices in the temple at Jerusalem enabled the priests to mediate between divinity and people in this manner. God was appeased by these sacrifices, and the people could consider themselves protected. Sometimes individuals would seek further blessings through individual sacrifices, of course not without the intervention of the priests.

The teaching initiated by Moses, one of their historical religious leaders, which was at one point formalized in the Torah, provided a detailed and rigorous system to maintain holiness/cleanliness in the context of everyday life. Contact with various things (e.g. corpse, menstrual woman, mold, certain foods) could make someone unclean and thus become a barrier between him/her and the deity. Because no one else wanted to be contaminated, this unclean state resulted in a separation from the rest of community as well. For these reasons the laws regarding holiness and cleanliness had a strong impact on Israel’s mindset.

In addition to these religious and abstract causes for separation between the people and their God, which resulted in separation between members of the community itself, other moral laws protected the social and inter-personal relationships in a more direct manner. These laws, which account for the last seven commandments in the Decalogue, address the need for people to live in such a way that the harmony of the community would not be disrupted. The Israelites feel a vital need to maintain shalom in the community, and these moral laws serve in that function. The commandment to “honor father and mother” provides stability for the immediate family, as does the commandment to “not commit adultery”. The prohibition of murder, theft, covetousness, and false accusation promotes the stability of the society in general.

The organizational frame of reference

While the Old Testament put Yahweh on the throne as the one and only King of the community, the social reality felt obliged to “incarnate” the monarchy with a human king. This does not mean that the king claimed any literal divine nature as in other ancient civilizations (e.g. Egypt), but the Israelites did see the king as a divinely chosen leader of their community.

Yahweh’s promise to David that he would sit on the throne (II Samuel 7:11–16), and his descendants after him, forever in an eternal kingdom, certainly gave some validity to the mindset that the King was a divine vicar. An enthronement psalm actually refers to the king as the “son of God,” a term also used to refer to the Canaanite king Keret in the Rās Shamrah tablets. (Bromiley 1986:vol 3:21 and Psalm
2) This concept lends understanding to the importance of the king of Israel in the hierarchy of the seventh century.

Because of the theocratic heritage of the ancient Israelites, their social structure often reflects an internal need to trace authority back to God. This becomes apparent in “four distinct roles” in the Hebrew organization of society, namely that of כהן “priest,” גוב "judge," מלך “king,” and נביא “prophet” (cf. Jeremiah 4:9). The priest serves as a mediator between God and his people as a mode to maintain religious equilibrium. The sacrifices must be made in the prescribed manner so that the divine power will not find cause to become angry with his community.

Judges also serve an important organizational role as they interpret and enforce the Torah, which provides the basic legal framework for the community. Their role touches the core of every day life as contracts must be negotiated and social violations must be evaluated. Their service was considered an extension of God’s rule among his people. (II Chronicles 19:4–11)

Divine rule also worked through the role of king for the ancient Israelites. The Davidic dynasty was chosen as an extension of God’s rule in the life of his people. This theocracy led to the use of familial terms in reference to the king himself, such as יוהוּד ‘son” or his “firstborn” (Psalm 2:7, II Samuel 7:14, Psalm 89:27).

While these three roles are somewhat stable in the social structure, the ancient Israelites, as other peoples in the Ancient Near East (I Kings 18:19), allow for a fourth organizational role that is somewhat unpredictable, namely that of a prophet. They accepted the concept of a person being sent by God to announce a particular message, such as condemnation, warning, or consolation. These “voices from God” could potentially become messages of huge social reform. While this prophetic voice worked partly outside of a predetermined organizational framework, it constituted a theologically “legitimate,” though potentially volatile counter-voice of the more stable elements of ancient Israelite society.

In addition to these set forms of leadership, the ancient Israelite world ascribed a lot of importance to the wealthy in society. Perhaps this was in part due to the Old Testament concept that God’s blessings often took the form of material wealth. A rich person would therefore be automatically considered someone whom God approved of in a special way. The problem arose when these people “blessed by God” were obviously conducting their lives in “ungodly ways.” This discredited their true social power in that their behavior disconnected them from any form of divine authority.

The situational frame of reference

Unlike the first two frames of reference, the situational frame of reference has a tighter focus on the situation in which the specific speech event in question was achieved. This research looks at a specific “discourse” found in the Hebrew Bible entitled “Zephaniah.” Internal evidence found in the first verse provides a good starting point for this contextual analysis.

Author of Zephaniah and rhetorical implications

The first verse of the book reports the author of this discourse to be Zephaniah. He is said to be the son of Cush, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah” (1:1c). The same name is found in biblical literature with reference to other people (e.g. a priest sent by king Zedekiah to take a message to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 37:3, 52:24; the father of Josiah and Hen in Zechariah 6:10, 14
during the exilic period; and a temple musician grandson of Korah in I Chronicles 6:21–36), but the Old Testament never refers elsewhere to the prophet Zephaniah mentioned in the passage in question.

Some believe that Zephaniah’s great-great grandfather Hezekiah was the eighth-century king of Judah (e.g. Abraham Ibn Ezra in Sweeney 2003:48). While there is no direct evidence for this assertion, such as the title “king” being added to Hezekiah’s name, the very fact that Zephaniah’s pedigree is traced back four generations gives some credibility to the idea. Robertson gives this perspective:

Very possibly Zephaniah’s genealogy intends to indicate his royal origins. Good King Hezekiah was the most recent of Judah’s monarchs to manifest the covenantal fidelity essential for the well-being of the nation. This relationship of the prophet with the monarchy in Israel could have provided him with ready access to the royal court, as well as offering some position by which he could lend additional weight to the radical reforms promoted by young King Josiah. (Robertson 1990:253).

The significance of this possibility from the standpoint of rhetorical analysis lies in the fact that such an introduction would provide Zephaniah with a position of authority to announce his message. If his great grandfather was King Hezekiah, he would not only have royal blood, but his ancestry could be traced back to a king who had manifested a great loyalty to Yahweh. Allegedly Zephaniah was a “royal prophet” with a divine message. The rhetorical advantage of such a messenger is obvious.

Audience and occasion of Zephaniah and rhetorical implications

Reportedly Zephaniah’s message was delivered to the people of Judah during the rule of King Josiah, son of Amon. To understand this setting one must go back one hundred years to the rule of one of Judah’s great kings, Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.). The Assyrians had conquered northern Israel and were looking to include Judah in their massive empire. With great faith in Yahweh, Hezekiah resisted Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah (II Kings 18–19). However, during the last days of his reign he received a friendly delegation from Babylon to congratulate him on recovering from a near-fatal illness. The prophet Isaiah uses this incident to foretell the time when Babylon would conquer Judah (II Kings 20:12–21).

Hezekiah’s son Manasseh succeeded him as king of Judah (697–642 B.C.), but he did not follow his father’s spiritual ideals. He became known as one of the most evil kings in Judah’s history. The international political situation of the area probably had something to do with his religious choices. John Bright (1972:310–311) explains, “So far as we know from the book of Kings and the Assyrian records, Manasseh continued to be a loyal vassal of Assyria throughout his long reign…..As a vassal, Manasseh of course had to pay homage to the overlord’s gods, and this he did, erecting altars to Assyrian astral deities in the Temple itself.” With Assyria’s growing influence in Israel, Manasseh moved toward a less exclusive religious stance which had distinctive political advantages in that era.

Manasseh’s son Amon succeeded him as king (642–640 B.C.), but only ruled two years before he was assassinated by his officials. The assassins were in turn killed
by a group called “the people of the land”, who proceeded to establish Amon’s eight-year-old son Josiah as king of Judah (640–609 B.C). (see II Kings 21:19–29) Perhaps these political activists desired a more spiritual leader from the royal line, and hoped that they could mold the boy-king into that kind of a person.

During Josiah’s reign the Babylonians and the Medes were rebelling against Assyrian rule, which officially ended in 609 B.C. when the Babylonians took Haran and forced Asshur-Uballit to flee. In Bright’s (1972:315) words, “As Assyria lost her grip on her empire, Judah found herself once more, by default as it were, a free country”.

It is in this context that Josiah begins his great religious reforms. Moved by an inner loyalty toward Yahweh (II Chronicles 34:3), and/or a new-found political freedom on the international scene, Josiah leads his people in a restoration of Deuteronomic law. “Coincident with the achievement of independence, and partly as an aspect of it, there was launched by the young king Josiah the most sweeping reform of her history” (Bright 1972:315).

According to the account in Chronicles 34 and II Kings 22–23, Josiah’s reform happened in three phases. After ruling for eight years “he began to seek the God of his father David” (II Chronicles 34:3a). Four years later “he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles, carved idols and cast images” (II Chronicles 34:3a). He even pursued these reforms in the northern part of Israel (II Chronicles 34:3b–7). Finally, in the eighteenth year of his reign, concomitant with the discovery of the “Book of the Law” in the temple, he began “to purify the land and the temple” in Jerusalem (II Chronicles 34:8) and beyond (II Kings 23:4–16). This phase coincided with the description found in II Kings 22:3–25.

The biblical account describes Josiah’s reform under two main categories. The first category consisted of purging the land from all forms of idolatry. The Torah squarely supports this purge by advocating a monotheistic worship of Yahweh. In addition to this theological consideration however, since the idolatry present in Israel came from foreign sources and represented something of a cultural imperialism, the purge can also be seen as “a facet of resurgent nationalism” (Bright 1972:318). Josiah pushed the reform all the way to northern Israel, and thus “gave political expression to the ideal of a free Israel united once more under the scepter of David” (Bright 1972:319). Indeed Josiah had both religious and political motivations to eliminate all worship of “foreign gods”.

A second category of Josiah’s reform, according to the books of the Kings in the context of the Deuteronomistic history, consisted in re-establishing the worship prescribed by the Torah. He was responsible for extensive repairs on the Temple,

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2 Some postulate that these were people loyal “to the land” who disagreed with Manasseh’s opponents. Bright (1972:315) summarizes the plot in these words: “One suspects that the plot was engineered by anti-Assyrian elements who took this means of striking for a change in the national policy. But it appears that there were those who felt that the time was not yet ripe for this, for we read that the ‘people of the land’, apparently an assembly of the landed gentry, at once executed the assassins and placed the king’s son, the eight-year old Josiah, on the throne”.

3 Keil’s (1866:vol.10:119) description seems to be too tightly divided: “According to the more precise account given in the Chronicles, Josiah commenced the reformation of worship in the twelfth year of his reign, and in the eighteenth year he had the temple repaired”.
which were essential for proper worship (II Kings 22:3–10). He also ordered an elaborate celebration of the Passover. Both accounts in Kings and Chronicles indicate that this celebration was unique, either in the fact that it had not been done “since the days of the prophet Samuel”, or that it had not been done “like this” since the time of Samuel (II Chronicles 35:18, II Kings 23:22). Independent of which interpretation is chosen, Josiah definitely made a move back toward the monotheism.

The book of Zephaniah shines brightly on this backdrop of Josiah’s religious reforms. The prophet forcefully addresses the issue of foreign gods such as Baal and Molech, along with the Assyrian tradition of worshipping the starry host (1:4–5). He condemns officials “clad in foreign clothes” (1:8) who encouraged the people to follow foreign ways. He despises the temple leaders who allowed the sanctuary to be profaned and the Torah to be ignored (3:4). Zephaniah’s message proves to be extremely relevant to the socio-religious context addressed by king Josiah.

The question arises as to exactly where this prophetical work fits into the religious and political reform led by Josiah. Was Zephaniah responsible in some way to motivate Josiah to begin the reform? Were Zephaniah and Josiah partners in the conception and execution of the reform? Or did Zephaniah simply support Josiah’s reform from an independent platform?

It may be difficult to give precise answers to these questions, or related ones regarding the exact time of the composition of Zephaniah. According to the threefold division of Josiah’s reform provided in II Chronicles 34:3–8 (i.e. “he began to seek God” - eighth year of his reign; “he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem…” - twelfth year of his reign; “he sent Shaphan…to repair the temple” - eighteenth year of his reign), the prophet’s work could conceivably fit in any one of the three time periods.

Most scholars opt for one of the last two. The statement that God “will cut off from this place every remnant of Baal” (1:4b), leads many to assume that the purge of foreign gods had already begun, but was not yet completed. Sweeney (2003:67) concludes that “Zephaniah must have spoken after the reform had already been carried out”. While Keil and Delitzsch (1866:vol.10:126) did not state that the reform had already been carried out, they did believe that the reform had begun. They state that “…the emphasis [on the remnant] presupposes that the extermination has already begun, that the worship of Baal no longer exists in undiminished force and extent” (Keil 1866:vol.10:126).

Robertson (1990:254–255) offers another clue to the time of composition of Zephaniah’s message by demonstrating parallel phraseology between the law book of Deuteronomy and Zephaniah. The following table lists these parallel phrases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zephaniah</th>
<th>Deuteronomy</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:13</td>
<td>28:30</td>
<td>“build houses…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:13</td>
<td>28:39</td>
<td>“plant vineyards…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>28:53, 55, 57</td>
<td>“constraint and distress”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>4:11</td>
<td>“darkness, thick cloud”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:17</td>
<td>28:29</td>
<td>“as a blind man”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:18</td>
<td>32:21–22</td>
<td>“consuming jealousy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:5</td>
<td>32:4</td>
<td>“not do iniquity”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:17</td>
<td>28:63, 30:9</td>
<td>“rejoice over you”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19–20</td>
<td>26:19</td>
<td>“give them praise and a name”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Robertson (1990:254–255) concludes that Zephaniah made use of the material in the “Book of the Law” that was found in the temple during the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign, to support the religious reform that was under way.  

The link between Deuteronomy and the historical account of Josiah’s reform is also noteworthy. Josiah is depicted as one fulfilling the deuteronomic ideals. He was unique in that he “turned to the Lord as he did with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength” (II Kings 23:23 compare with Deuteronomy 6:5). His war against foreign gods, including the starry host (II Kings 23:4–16), finds a theological basis in the book of Deuteronomy (see Deuteronomy 5:7–18, 13:1–18, 16:21, 17:3). His return to the practice of the Passover (II Kings 23:23) also finds support in Deuteronomy (see 16:1–12).

One of the most notable parallels is how Josiah leads the people in a renewal of the covenant, much like Moses had done in the book of Deuteronomy. The parallel language suggests a theological link between the two spiritual leaders. The historical account in II Kings 23:3 states, “The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord – to follow the Lord and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant”. The deuteronomic phrase “with all your heart and with all your soul” (26:16) is applied here to Josiah during the covenant renewal. The threefold reference to God’s law reflects the deuteronomic reference to “decrees, commands, and laws” (Deuteronomy 26:17). Finally, Josiah leads his people, just like Moses did, to a public declaration of their loyalty to God and his law (Deuteronomy 26:17).

According to II Kings 23:4–16 the finding and reading of the Book of the Law motivated Josiah to continue his purge of foreign gods not only from the Jerusalem temple, but to the farthest reaches of northern Israel. The parallels between Zephaniah and Deuteronomy, along with the prophetic appeal to address “the remnant of Baal”, nicely fit the hypothesis that Zephaniah was composed sometime shortly after 622 B.C. (i.e. after the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign) to support Josiah’s efforts to purge Israel of foreign gods and re-establish the exclusive worship of Yahweh.

From a rhetorical perspective Zephaniah was involved in a socio-religious reform of seventh-century Israel. His message advocates the necessity of spiritual change, and predicts dire consequences if these reforms are not made and upheld.

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4 Some would argue that Zephaniah’s phraseology influenced the development of the book of Deuteronomy. Robertson deals with this alternative perspective which claims that a prophetic group, of which Zephaniah was part, wrote the book of Deuteronomy and proclaimed it to be authoritative by ascribing Mosaic authorship to it. Robertson points out, however, that Zephaniah using his own phraseology in such a literary creation would have been counter-productive to persuading the reader that Deuteronomy was composed by Moses. See “The Prophets after the Law or the Law after the Prophets?” (pp. 841-850) Konrad Schmid in The formation of the Pentateuch eds. Jan C. Gertz, Bernard M. Levinson, Dalid Rom-Shiloni, and Konrad Schmid (published by Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, Germany in 2016) in which Schmid recognizes that the prophets reworked portions of the Torah in their writings, but that Moses and the Torah preceded these later prophets.

5 Note the different formula used in Deuteronomy 6:5 in an occasion other than the renewal of the covenant.
While he does bear a message of condemnation for his audience (e.g. Zephaniah 1:14), the real intent is to lead them to a repentance that can turn their situation around (Zephaniah 2:3). Sweeney (2003:65) accurately portrays Zephaniah’s task in these words, “The rhetorical function of the text as exhortation must be noted, particularly since it may be formulated to persuade its audience to abide by YHWH’s expectations rather than only to announce punishment for those who have already engaged in apostasy”.

2.2 The relationship between rhetoric and contextual analysis

A common cognitive environment between author and audience optimizes the possibility of successful communication because the propositions stated from the perspective of a particular set of frames of reference are easily understood by someone operating from a similar framework. Common context makes communication possible.

Within this common framework, however, there are certain words, arguments, and structures that not only communicate the intended meaning, but do so in a heightened manner. Relevance Theory speaks of “contextual effects” as the result of successful communication. Understanding the intended meaning and recognizing the relevance that a specific message has on one’s own context produces a contextual effect. Certain communication strategies attempt to maximize that effect, reinforcing the impact on the audience.

Gutt recognizes that such strategies sometimes require “an increase in processing cost,” but he quickly adds that it is “outweighed by an increase in contextual effects.” (Gutt 1992:56) The strategy may be more difficult to process, and even impossible for someone of a different cognitive environment, but it is deemed worthwhile because it produces a more powerful contextual effect. Over the years scholars have referred to this dynamic as rhetoric.

Rhetoric is the often unseen backbone of communication. Just as someone can walk and jump without having had an anatomy class, so can people communicate effectively without any theoretical notions of classical or non-classical rhetoric. However someone without a backbone would never be able to walk or jump, much like people would never be able to communicate without using rhetoric. Rhetoric is fundamental in all communication whether or not people are conscious of the rhetorical devices they are using.

Scholars have given a variety of definitions to describe the art of rhetoric. Aristotle leads the way for those who connect rhetoric with persuasion when he defines it as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Brock 1972:18). Bernard Brock, Robert Scott, and James Chesebro (1972:14), in their textbook on Rhetoric, suggest that “Rhetoric may be defined as the human effort to induce cooperation through the use of symbols”. Clifton Black applies the definition with special application to biblical literature saying, “Rhetoric generally bears on those distinctive properties of human discourse, especially its artistry and argument, by which the authors of biblical literature have endeavored to convince others of the truth of their beliefs” (2001:2).

While the term “rhetoric” typically implies some link with hortatory speech, it probably should be allowed a greater freedom in the field of communication. It may be more productive to consider rhetoric as a repackaging of the presentation of the message content in order to enhance the effectiveness of the communication. Certainly narrative contains a large number of artistic devices used to burn the
elements of a story into the emotions of the audience. Even exposition and procedural discourse can use rhetorical devices to clarify and link various elements.

These communication strategies designed to enhance contextual effects are both language and genre specific. Each culture has their own repertoire of communicative devices that are applied according to established conventions. Any type of solid linguistic research seeks to discover the structure of a particular language based on data derived from actual language usage within the appropriate cognitive environment. It is important to avoid superimposing the communicative structure of another language as a model to describe the target language. The conventions of each language must be analyzed independently in their particular framework.

Rhetorical critics must avoid the temptation of superimposing classical Greco-Roman rhetorical notions on other languages. While it is possible that two languages or cultures would use some of the same rhetorical devices in their communication, this must not be assumed by the critic. The history and culture of a people group greatly influence their rhetoric. Each language group comes to the communication situation with different frames of reference and a different set of tools.

The same principle works with regard to the variety of communication situations. As different language groups use different conventions to communicate, so one language group will use different conventions to communicate in different communication situations. The rhetoric changes if an employer is explaining something to his/her employees, or to his/her clients. The rhetoric changes if an employer has the floor in a meeting, as opposed to an employee. The rhetoric changes if the discussion takes place around the board of directors’ table, or in an informal setting outside of the workplace. Rhetorical critics have always considered the role of communication setting (i.e. author, audience, and occasion) to be crucial to a discourse.

“Genre criticism” is an approach to rhetoric that greatly emphasizes the importance of setting. This approach looks for communicative strategies that are repeatedly used in similar situations. Karlyn Campbell and Kathleen Jamieson (1972:333) define these strategies as “substantive and stylistic forms chosen to respond to situational requirements”. For example, a speech given to a religious community by their recognized leader during a particular kind of meeting, might be labeled as a “sermon”. Each time the sermon is delivered, the leader may find himself/herself using a particular set of rhetorical conventions. Over time this practice develops a genre that is known as a “sermon”.

The complexity of life causes “genres” to further develop according to new situations and/or needs. One type of “sermon” may not be effective for all topics or audiences. This leads the able communicator to establish new sub-genres of the sermon genre that are more effective in the new situations. The complexity of this development matches the complexity of the society under study. The ever growing number of new communication situations allows for the development of new communication strategies, resulting in new genres and/or sub-genres.

Given this complexity, it is important to approach each discourse without trying to force it into a certain rhetorical mode. Campbell and Jamieson (1972:337–338) state this very clearly in their study on genre criticism:

The confusion of deductive and inductive approaches to genres can also create difficulties. In a number of cases, critics have assumed, a
priori, that a genre already exists and is known and defined – e.g. the sermon, the presidential inaugural, the apology, among others – and an inductive procedure, content analysis in some cases, is applied to parse its elements. Such studies are suspect because the a priori definition of a genre and identification of its members generates a circular argument: an essential and preliminary procedure defining the generic characteristics has been omitted.

It is for this reason that the present study has not tried to identify Zephaniah with a particular genre, but rather analyze it independently of typological concerns. This research seeks to understand how Zephaniah communicated in his particular setting, beginning with an analysis of the text, rather than super-imposing a presupposed “prophetic structure” on the analysis of the book. The challenge is to understand the rhetorical strategy behind Zephaniah’s message; not only what was communicated but how it was communicated. Hopefully this will not only provide insights into the book, but better enable others to “translate” the communicative strategy into other settings.6

2.3 A proposed methodology

This chapter deals with the text of Zephaniah from the perspective of three frames of reference: socio-cultural, organizational, and situational. Each pericope has an English translation of the Hebrew text, a text chart, and a discussion of the contextual issues and the rhetorical devices used in that section. The text chart in this chapter offers a semi-literal rendering of the text in English and a column indicating the function of each clause. Each strophe (i.e. poetic “strophe”) also begins with a line that notes the strophe type. Hopefully this clear presentation of the propositions in question will help elucidate the contextual links discussed in the commentary. The following chart is an example of how the whole book of Zephaniah will be laid out in this chapter.

Table 2: Text chart example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Intention-N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:2a</td>
<td>I will utterly end everything from the face of the earth (adamah).</td>
<td>Intention-N-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:2b</td>
<td>Oracle of Yahweh.</td>
<td>Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3a</td>
<td>I will end man and animals.</td>
<td>Intention-N-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to better understand the charts and the contextual analysis of the text, the labels used to note the clause functions (see Table 3) and strophe functions (see Table 4) need to be defined. The following tables provide legends that will facilitate the reading of these charts.

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6 Scholars typically describe the “prophetic genre” as a tri-partite schema including judgment against Israel/Judah, other nations, and a promise of salvation or restoration for Israel/Judah. Various devices like prophetic announcement, prophecy of salvation, and woe oracles are used in this type of literature (Sweeney 2005:33-42). Zephaniah certainly qualifies as an example of this genre.
Table 3: Clause Function labels and definitions

- **Semantic functions**
  - Authority – claims authority, usually divine.
  - Setting – indicates setting (time, place).
  - Intention – indicates a divine intention, either negative (-N) or positive (-P).
    - gen. – indicates the “general” intention.
    - sp. – indicates “specific” intentions, usually as parts of the general intention.
    - amplification – explains in more detail some aspect of the intention.
  - Declaration – makes a “formal” declaration (overarching and general as opposed to a specific intention).
  - Description – focuses on a specific description of a state or event.
    - Historic Description – describes an historic event.
    - Moral (and/or existential) Description – describes a moral or existential state.
  - Exhortation – appeals for a change of behavior.
  - Reason – provides the rationale for a specified action. (Note: In some cases this is imbedded in another function as found in 1:3-6.)
  - Result – indicates the effect of a given cause.
  - Attention – usually an exclamation to call attention to the phrase at hand.
  - Means – indicates the means by which something will be implemented.

- **Formulaic functions**
  - Relative – qualifies an element from another clause (e.g. asher clause, apposition)
  - Direct Discourse – indicates a direct discourse is being uttered.
  - Pre-condition – indicates a pre-condition of a following action.
  - Oath formula – precedes an oath which indicates an intention.
  - Citation formula – precedes a direct discourse.
  - Rhetorical question – indicates a statement made in the form of a question.

Table 4: Strophe Function labels and definitions

- Authority – claims authority, usually divine.
- Setting – indicates setting time, place.
- Intention – indicates a divine intention, either negative (N) or positive (P). (Note: The number following the “N” or the “P” indicates the grouping of the intentions in each strophe. Multiple lines with the same number indicate that all the lines are referring to the same intended event.)
- Declaration – makes a “formal” declaration (overarching and general as opposed to a specific intention).
• Description – focuses on description of a state or event.
• Historic Description – describes an historic event.
• Moral (and/or existential) Description – describes a moral or existential state.
• Exhortation – appeals for a change of behavior.
• Reason – provides the rationale for a specified action.
• Result – indicates the effect of a given cause.

Table 5: Other conventions used in text charts
• Forward wedge (<) – indicates the clause is subordinate to the following clause.
• Backward wedge (>) – indicates the clause is subordinate to the preceding clause. (Note: When one clause is subordinate to another subordinate clause, two backward wedges (>>) will be used. When two contiguous lines start with a single backward wedge, this indicates that they are both equally subordinate to the preceding independent clause.
• Number – labels synonymous relationships.
• S: – indicates strophe label.
• ( ) – indicates something implied, e.g. a gloss that does not have an explicit correspondent in the original text, or an imbedded semantic function.

The following description does not attempt to provide a complete exegesis of every verse in Zephaniah, a task left to the commentaries. Rather the purpose is to present the text in light of the contextual frames of reference used by the reported author and shared by the reported audience. This description in context will enable the reader to also identify the communicative clues of the text that Zephaniah used to formulate his message in such a way as to increase the contextual effects on the audience. Exegetical details will be pursued where they contribute to this purpose. Besides the English translation of the text and the tables that provide the functions of each clause, various tables are provided which summarize and visualize the features being discussed.

2.4 A contextual analysis of the discourse of Zephaniah

Zephaniah 1:1 – Title and setting

1The word of Yahweh
that was (given)7 to Zephaniah,
the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah,
in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, the king of Judah.8

7 Alternative Translation: that happened to Zephaniah.
8 This translation attempts to present the Hebrew text in standard English with as little deviation as possible from the original Hebrew literary form to enable the reader to understand the message while viewing some of the original literary structure. Obviously the differences between the two languages do
The first verse of Zephaniah provides a clear socio-historical context in which the discourse can be analyzed. Scholars debate the historicity of this statement and offer various rationales for accepting or rejecting the reported author and his reported audience. These views range from the notion of a historical prophet Zephaniah who delivered a divinely received message during the reign of Josiah over Judah, to the alternate notion of a much later unknown author who addressed his personal message to an unidentified and undetermined audience.

Taking this later position would make a full analysis of the passage quite difficult. The model of contextual frames of reference thrives on the obvious connection between a given cognitive environment and the resulting communication strategy. If the research regarding a piece of literature or an oral message cannot have access to some cognitive context, all conclusions represent speculation at best.

With those thoughts in mind, various interpretations of the material of the superscription can be offered. Adele Berlin (1994:32) gives three possibilities: “(1) that he [Zephaniah] actually said the very words that are preserved, (2) that he prophesied the general contents of the book but a later editor rephrased his words, or (3) that he is a fictive author, a speaking voice, or what literary critics call an implied author.” Berlin elaborates E. Ben Zvi’s position which mixes the second and third interpretations. While allowing “for a pre-compositional level which may have originated from a real Josianic prophet,” he states that the book of Zephaniah was actually written/composed by a later author who cites Zephaniah as the original author so as to make his work more authoritative. (Berlin 1994:33) While this position could not allow the perfect accomplishment of this goal (thus the need ultimately for a more “dynamic” translation, which is the subject of this dissertation). Where it was necessary to add words to complete the meaning in English even though the words were not present in the Hebrew text, parentheses have been added. Verb tenses are dictated by common English usage, rather than a one-to-one correspondence between English and Hebrew forms. A more literal translation of the Hebrew text can be found in the table following the translation.
theoretically represent a tenable situation, the lack of evidence fails to make this a compelling interpretation.⁹

While “most exegetes” agree that the book of Zephaniah was written by a prophet named Zephaniah during the reign of king Josiah in Judah (Berlin 1994:34, 40), they differ on who wrote the superscription. “Most biblicists take them as the work of later editors giving accurate historical information about their prophetic source.” (Berlin 1994:38) The similarity between the superscriptions found in the prophetic books could point to an editor of a later period who deemed it important to provide such information in a semi-uniform manner. Another point of view held by Ben Zvi recognizes that the author himself could have written the superscription as a way to provide the setting for the literary work. (Ibid.) The use of the third person format can be interpreted as a clear distinction between “literary author” and the “speaker of the message,” or it could be taken as simply a common convention used by the Hebrew prophet himself to “introduce” his divine message.

As a working hypothesis, this research assumes that there was indeed a Josianic prophet named Zephaniah, who received a message from the Lord, and proceeded to announce the message to the seventh century audience of Judah. This message was at some point written down, and a superscript was added, either by the prophet himself or a later editor, to indicate for the reader the original author and audience.

### Zephaniah 1:2–6 – Divine punishment on the earth

2 I will utterly end everything from the face of the earth,
Oracle of Yahweh,
3 I will end man and animals,
I will end the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
and the incitements with the evil ones.

And I will cut man from the face of the earth,
Oracle of Yahweh,
4 and I will stretch out my hand against Judah
and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
and I will cut the remnant of Baal from this place,
and the name of the pagan priests with (God’s) priests,
5 and the worshippers on the roofs to the hosts of the heavens,
and the worshippers, the swearers to Yahweh,
and the swearers to Molech,
6 and the ones turning back from Yahweh
and those who do not seek Yahweh,
and (those who) do not inquire of him.

---

⁹ Ben Zvi’s position seems to be based on two main ideas. First that the message of the book is more meaningful to a post-monarchic audience, and second that as a part of the supposedly unified work called The Twelve, it is more likely to be post-exilic as the other prophets in that collection (Berlin 1994:35–36, 40–41).
The message of Zephaniah opens with a stanza of two symmetrically connected strophes describing God’s punitive intentions. The first strophe describes a cataclysmic end of the world and all living beings. The second strophe narrows the recipients of the divine punishment to those who have turned their back on Yahweh through religious syncretism, namely the worship of other gods.

The first strophe affirms that God will destroy mankind, along with all of the animals, the birds, and the fish. Perhaps Zephaniah intends to suggest an antithesis to the order of creation presented in the Torah (Robertson 1990:258). He uses a unique verb construction in Zephaniah 1:2 where two verbs from different roots (an infinitive absolute with a hiphil prefix conjugation) (Patterson 2003:269) emphasize God’s promise to “utterly end everything on the face of the earth”.

There are two possible interpretations of this statement. The first is that God is making an apocalyptic prediction regarding the end of the world, i.e. earth (adama), similar to one of the themes found in the New Testament book of Revelation. The second is that God’s statement is not to be taken literally, but rather as a rhetorical device to emphasize the seriousness of God’s position against Israel.

While it is impossible to rule out the apocalyptic interpretation, there is some evidence that this strophe is an example of hyperbole. The fact that 1:3d, a summary statement of 1:2a–3c, leads into specific punitive statements directed at Judah and the
inhabitants of Jerusalem, seems to indicate that the communicative goal of the stanza 1:2–6 is to discuss divine punishment against the Judeans rather than the world at large. If the world’s global punishment was at the core of this stanza, one would expect the inclusion of references to other nations rather than very specific references to the behavior of Judah.

The whole book seems to be a statement about the consequences of Judah’s sins rather than an eschatological treatise on the final judgment and destruction of the world. Zephaniah 3:8 does make another reference to the destruction of the earth and the judgment of the nations, but the focus is on Israel. The restoration of Israel motif in chapter 3:13–14 confirms this specific application, as opposed to a universal application.

Another rhetorical tool that Zephaniah uses here and elsewhere to emphasize the severity of the situation, is to categorize this statement as an “Oracle of Yahweh”. For the ancient Israelites whose heritage spoke of a universal God who powerfully intervened in human history, the fact that a statement comes from God undergirds the process of persuasion. If God says something, it is true. There is no discussion. Relativism or personal opinion is absent in a theocratic context.

Identifying the message as Yahweh’s message enhances the impact on an audience whose heritage considered this God to be universally superior to the local Canaanite deities. To better understand this rhetorical device, one can consider the impact of this rhetorical device on a humanistic audience. Because of their different world view, they would immediately discredit the author because of his/her attempt to equate their words with those of a supreme being. Stating that this is an “oracle of Yahweh” reflects not only a conservative theological view of inspiration, but a powerful rhetoric for a specific audience.

A final rhetorical device used in these two strophes takes the reader into the realm of explicit and implied information. Both strophes are labeled as “intention” strophes because they make explicit God’s negative intentions for Israel. However, under the surface Zephaniah is also giving the divine reason behind the promised action. In the description of the intention the reader finds the reason as well. Couched in a hortatory speech, it seems reasonable that this rhetoric implies to the audience that they could escape this plight if they repented. The communication strategy at this point in the discourse focuses on the negative, as opposed to the potential salvation.

Zephaniah 1:3c foreshadows the moral basis of the divine punishment. God will destroy the world along with incitements to evil and the evil doers themselves. Without stating it explicitly, Zephaniah is saying that the cause of the destruction is the evil nature of men. For an audience who remembered their ancient moral values based on the Torah, such a conclusion would be automatic.

Zephaniah 1:4b–5b proceeds along the same path and specifies that the worship of foreign gods is the primary “evil” in question. The Israelites knew that the worship of Baal (1:4b), Molech (1:5b), and stars (1:5a) were all anathema to Yahweh, thus they would automatically deduce that worshippers of these gods would be punished for their misplaced loyalty.

There are two lines that indicate that the Israelites in this case were not only guilty of worshipping false gods, but they were also guilty of following opposing religious systems, i.e. worshipping false gods and Yahweh at the same time. In 1:4c there are two separate terms used to refer to priests that presumably distinguish between נְגוֹלִים “the pagan priests” and לְוֵיִם “the Levitic priests” (Sweeney 2003:68). The fact that they are בָּנָי “with” each other constitutes the problem.
Zephaniah 1:5b provides another example of this dual religious allegiance in question. God promises to cut off וַיֵּשְׁכָּב יְהוָהִים “and the worshippers” who are presented as those who swear by Yahweh, waw “and” those who swear by Molech. The single direct object marker, along with the single antecedent “worshippers”, suggest that Zephaniah’s point is that God will cut off worshippers who swear by both Yahweh and Molech in violation of the monotheism reportedly advocated by the early Israelite religion presented in the Torah.

The implicit or background information that Yahweh abhorred the worship of other gods (Exodus 20:3–4, Deuteronomy 13), coupled with the explicit statements in Zephaniah that Yahweh would punish worshippers of Baal, Molech, and the stars, provides the audience with a clear moral rationale behind the announced punishment. God would punish Judah because she worshipped other gods.

Zephaniah 1:7–16 – The day of Yahweh and His “sacrifice”

7 Hush before the Lord Yahweh,
for the day of Yahweh is near,
for Yahweh has established a sacrifice,
he has consecrated his invited ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S:Declaration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:7a</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:7b</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:7c</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:7d</td>
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8 And it will come to pass in the day of Yahweh’s sacrifice,
and I will come against the princes,
and against the sons of the king,
and against all those wearing foreign dress.
9 I will come against all those leaping on the threshold,
in that day, (against) those filling their master’s house
(with) violence and deceit.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S:Intention-N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:8a</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:8b</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:8c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:8d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:9a</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:9b</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

10 Or “I will come against those ascending on the threshold in that day / (and against) those filling their master’s house with violence and deceit”.
And it will come to pass in that day, oracle of Yahweh, a cry will cry out from the Fish Gate, and a howling from the Second (Quarter), and a great crashing from the hills.

Wail inhabitants of the Market Area, for all the merchants will be silenced, (and) all those weighing silver will be cut off.

And it will come to pass in that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will come against the men thickening on their dregs, the ones saying in their hearts, “Yahweh does no good, and he does no bad”.

Their wealth will become plunder, and their houses will be destroyed. They will build houses, but they will not inhabit (them). They will plant vineyards, but they will not drink their wine.

The great day of Yahweh (is) near.
It (is) near,  
and it is hastening greatly.  
The noise of the day of Yahweh (will be) bitter.  
The warrior cries out there.  
\[15\] That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and anguish,  
a day of trouble and desolation,  
a day of darkness and obscurity,  
a day of cloud(s) and thick cloud(s),  
\[16\] a day of trumpet(s) and shout(s) against the fortified cities and the corner tours.

| S:Description | 1:14a | Near (is) the great day of Yahweh. | Description -1a |
| 1:14b | (It is) near, | Description -1b |
| 1:14c | and hastening greatly. | Description -1c |
| 1:14d | the noise of the day of Yahweh (will be) bitter | Result – 1a |
| 1:14e | Warrior cries out there. | Result – 1b |
| 1:15a | That day (will be) a day of wrath, | Description – 2 |
| 1:15b | day of distress and anguish, | Result – 2a |
| 1:15c | day of trouble and desolation, | Result – 2b |
| 1:15d | day of darkness and obscurity, | Result – 3a |
| 1:15e | day of cloud and thick cloud, | Result – 3b |
| 1:16a | day of trumpet(s), and shout(s) against the fortified cities, and against the corner towers. | Result – 4 |

The second stanza (1:7–16) begins with a declaration strophe announcing “the day of Yahweh” and his “sacrifice”. The interjection שָׁחַה “hush” marks a switch in the type of material being presented. The point is no longer what God intends to do, but rather a formal announcement or declaration of the situation. Robertson (1990:271) describes this passage in this way: “Zephaniah’s message from the Lord is not merely descriptive. It is declarative. For the prophet announces unequivocally that near is the Day of Yahweh. This announcement meant that the Day is both inevitable and imminent”.

The distinction between an intention strophe and a declaration strophe is subtle, but the shift to the imperative verb form marks a definite switch in the discourse. The intention of the imperative form in 1:7 is not really to elicit action from the audience, but to call their attention to a new and serious situation, namely that “the day of Yahweh” is near. The imperative is used as an “attention-getting device”.

In this opening phrase Zephaniah reiterates the divine authority in his message with his reference to יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה “Lord Yahweh”. Besides using the divine name three times consecutively in this strophe, he defines Yahweh as “the Lord”. All of this serves to enhance the impact of the overall message.

In Zephaniah 1:7c–d the author makes a statement that must have certainly surprised his audience. He said, “For Yahweh has established a sacrifice, he has consecrated his invited ones”. The Israelites were quite familiar with the practice of inviting people to participate in a given sacrifice. Someone would decide to make an offering to God, and they would invite (see I Samuel 9:13) others to participate by
eating together in the temple the meat and other foods that had been offered as a sacrifice.

However, the idea that God would initiate a sacrifice and invite people to attend was totally foreign to the ancient Israelites. The rhetorical impact of such a statement would be quite powerful. The device of “contra-expectation” not only heightens the attention of the audience, but forces them into a deeper cognitive level as they attempt to understand the statement. Reflection upon this contra-expectation would take them to even another contra-expectation, namely that the sacrificial meal would be the Judean nation and the consecrated invited ones would be the pagan nations (Keil 1866:vol 10:128). The concept of a sacrificial meal begins in their mind as a human gesture of good-will toward God, but ends up as a divine punishment against the chosen people who had broken the covenant.

This introductory strophe (1:7) is followed by four strophes that are connected in a variety of ways. The first three strophes have a distinct syntactical connection in that each begins with an almost identical temporal phrase "וַתִּהְיֶה הַיּוֹם הַגָּדוֹל וְהָאָרֶץ " “And it will come to pass in the/that day...”. The fourth strophe also begins with a temporal phrase highlighting the “great day of the Lord” (1:14), which connects to the introductory unit in 1:7. The four strophes display an ABAB order at two different levels, namely strophe type and strophe theme as can be seen in the following table.11

Table 6: Rhetorical symmetry of Zephaniah 1:8–16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strophe 1</th>
<th>Strophe 2</th>
<th>Strophe 3</th>
<th>Strophe 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1:8–9</td>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>“recipients”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1:10–11</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>“intensity”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1:12–13</td>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>“recipients”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1:14–16</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>“intensity”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The intention strophes in question have clear statements about what God will do (see 1:8b, 9a, 12b, 12c), while the description strophes prefer passive or verbless clauses that describe the state of “the day of Yahweh”. The ABAB structure keeps movement in the passage introducing a theme and then coming back to it later.

The first strophe (1:8a–9b) focuses on four different recipients: government officials, those wearing foreign dress, those ascending on the threshold, and workers of violence and deceit. The spiritual problems of Judah went to the very top rungs of the social ladder. Government officials, like יְרֵמֹים “the princes” and כַּנַּנְיָה “the sons of the king”, were seemingly involved in evil practices. On the other end of the spectrum, those working for их “their lords”, presumably poor people working for the rich, were also under God’s wrath.

Their evil practices involve acts of practicing dual religious systems contemporaneously. The use of foreign dress alludes to the habit of copying foreign practices. It is doubtful that foreign dress fashions are being targeted, but rather the idea of being fascinated and attracted by foreign practices that eventually would lead

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11 Another legitimate division of this section takes verses 7–13 as a parallel unit with verses 14–18. The phrase “the day of the Lord is near” in both verse 7 and verse 14 provide solid evidence for this approach (Wendland 2009:332–334).
people to the worship of false gods. This rationale had been given in the Torah as a reason to avoid inter-racial marriage (see Deuteronomy 7:3–4).

The next line (1:9a) refers to an example of the worship of false gods, namely the practice of “stepping over the threshold”. The story found in 1 Samuel 5 identifies this action with Dagon worshippers. It is possible that the worship of other false gods maintained the same practice. If this interpretation is correct there is a thematic symmetry in this strophe as the following table demonstrates:

Table 7: Thematic symmetry in Zephaniah 1:8a–1:9b

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:8a</td>
<td>Introduction to the strophe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1:8b recipients identified by title (“princes”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1:8c recipients identified by title (“sons of the king”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1:8d recipients identified by action (“wearing foreign dress”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1:9a recipients identified by action (“stepping over threshold”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1:9b recipients identified by action (“violence and deceit”)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is noteworthy that 1:9b contains a reference to a double action, i.e. violence and deceit. In this way, even though there is not a formal symmetry (i.e. AABBCC), there is a thematic symmetry containing three pairs of foci.

People using acts of “violence and deceit” to benefit the rich members of society (i.e. “their lords”) conclude this list of recipients of divine wrath. This reference begins to paint a backdrop of rich profiteers in Judah that will be addressed in the following strophes (see 1:11, 13, 18).

The second strophe of Zephaniah 1:8–16 describes the intensity of the day of Yahweh with particular reference to the rich of Judean society. The author uses various types of sounds to describe an intense catastrophe. Verbs of “crying out” (1:10c), “howling” (1:10d), “crashing” (1:10e), and “wailing” (1:11a) point to a scene of terror. These terrible sounds are then juxtaposed to the resulting “silence” (1:11b) of the merchants that will be “cut off” (1:11c). The author uses semantically similar words that invoke emotion as a powerful rhetorical device to create intensity.

At the same time he employs a parallel set of geographic locations which seem to complement the sound motif. The terrible noise comes from the “fish gate” (1:10c), the “new quarter” (1:10d), the “hills” (1:10e), and “the market area” (1:11a). The picture presents a noisy terror coming from all corners of Jerusalem.

The “fish gate” was located to the northwest of the city along with the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred (Nehemiah 12:39, see also Nehemiah 3:3, II Chronicles 33:14) (Aharoni 1968:map 169).

The Hebrew numeral “two” is also related to this form. This explains the common translations

12 Sweeney (2003:86–87) links “those who step over the threshold” to the Levitic priests who cross over the threshold of the temple, making this a reference to recipients identified by title rather than by action. (See also Motyer 1998:917–918) Keil and Delitzsch (1986:vol 10:131–132) suggest that 1:9a and 1:9b work together to indicate “people who cross over the threshold [of others] in order to deceive and do violence in the house of their masters.
which render the word “the new quarter” or “the second quarter”. This area was
located west of the temple mound (Aharoni 1968:map 261).

The location indicated with the term הֵרַסֶת “the hills” may refer to a specific
area (e.g. “the hill of Gareb” in Jeremiah 31:39 see Keil 1866:vol.10:132), or it could
indicate the hills in general surrounding and including Jerusalem. This may even have
a theological connotation since idol worship was often performed on “the hills” (see I

The final location is indicated with the word הֶגֶת “the maktesh”. Brown,
Drivers, and Briggs (1952:409) define this word as a “mortar” or a “place of
pounding” (see Judges 15:19). Sweeney (2003:90) says that “most archeologists
identify it as the low-lying area of the Tyropoean Valley between the Temple Mount
and City of David to the east and the Mishneh/Western Hill or the newer quarter of
Jerusalem to the west”. The exact intentions of the author remain uncertain at this
point. Some would contend that this low-lying area, thus “mortar”, was a market area,
which would concur with the reference to commerce in the next two lines. Robertson
(1990:279) takes it as a generic reference to Jerusalem. “Possibly the term refers to
the whole of the city rather than to one particular district. Encircled by higher hills,
Jerusalem itself may be compared to a mortar, a pounding place. God in his judgment
shall grind the whole of the city as though it were encased in a mortar”.

If indeed “the Maktesh” is an area in southwest Jerusalem, the geographical
effect of this strophe points to a “great cacophonous calamity” (Robertson 1990:279)
occurring to the north, west, and south of the Jerusalem Temple. God’s wrath will be
intense and it will invade all corners of Jerusalem.

A final rhetorical device used in this strophe revolves around the double sense
of the phrase פֶּנֶיהֶם פֶּנֶיהֶם "all people of Canaan”. Besides being used as a proper name
of peoples living in a certain area, “Canaan” can also be used, perhaps by extension,
as a term referring to merchants (see Ezekiel 17:4, Hosea 12:8, Proverbs 31:24 for
unambiguous examples). Based on line 1:11c, exegesises safely assume that 1:11b uses
the word “Canaan” to refer to merchants. The question of why Zephaniah chose to use
this term rather than another term for merchant (e.g. מַעֲרָב יָד “traders”), indicates a
rhetorical choice by the author. This word choice demonstrates the prophet’s negative
evaluation of the merchants by and large during this period of time in Judah. Their
identity as “Cananites”, which recalls the historical pagan enemies of Israel, becomes
a moral slander designed to shame Zephaniah’s wicked audience.

Sweeney (2003:92) expresses this concept with the following words: “Overall,
the passage employs the term ‘Canaanites’ to convey a combination of ethnic,
religious, and economic associations, in an effort to prompt the audience to dissociate
itself with everything that the term ‘Canaanite’ entails and to identify more closely
with Judean interests as articulated by Zephaniah and Josiah’s reform”.

The third strophe of Zephaniah 1:8–16 returns to the description of the
recipients of this day of wrath. God is portrayed as one searching in the “spiritual
darkness” of Jerusalem with lamps in order to find those who deserve his punishment.
These people are identified in 1:12c with the metaphor of “those thickening on their
dregs”, a reference to the process of making wine. Sweeney (2003:94) interprets this
as a sort of spiritual drunkenness, which is of course a common way to describe
apostates in prophetic literature that receive divine punishment.
It may be useful however to study the word דרגים “dregs” or “lees” as it is used in the Hebrew Bible to glean a better understanding of this metaphor.\textsuperscript{13} Jeremiah 48:11–12 refers to Moab’s unchanged state as a wine that had been left on its dregs rather than being poured off of the acidic residue. Psalms 75:9 intensifies the effect of the wicked drinking God’s mixed wine or punishment, by adding that they will drink it down to the very dregs, i.e. in its entirety. These passages point to the common practice of draining the wine off of the dregs several times during the fermentation process to obtain a wine that is pure and clear, untainted by the acidic residue of the grape skins.\textsuperscript{14}

Like wine which is not taken off of its dregs, the recipients of God’s wrath in Zephaniah 1:12c are those who refuse to alter their behavior or purify their spiritual state. They believe that Yahweh will not intervene in their lives, either for good or for bad (see 1:12e–f). They are content to remain in their spiritual status quo.

Zephaniah 1:13 describes the result of their spiritual decision. These rich apostates will loose their wealth and property. Their efforts will be in vain in so much as they will not inhabit the houses they build, nor drink the wine of the vineyards they plant. God’s day of wrath will be directed toward the spiritually complacent people of Judah.

The final strophe of Zephaniah 1:8–16 reconnects to the beginning of the first strophe in 1:7b with the statement that “the day of Yahweh is near”. A series of semantic couplets follow this introductory statement to underline the imminent and intense nature of the occasion.

The first couplet reiterates the fact that the day is “near”. The first line repeats the same adjective found in 1:14a, and the second employs the word רָדָם “hastening” to describe the temporal aspect of God’s judgment.

The second couplet reconnects to the second strophe in the section that used sound as a governing motif. The author employs the same word לֹעֶק “noise” in 1:14d that he used in 1:10c. The next line goes on to paint a picture of a warrior crying out loud.

The next line (1:15a) returns to the central idea of divine punishment by stating that this “day of Yahweh” being described is a day of wrath. This statement of the obvious lies nicely at the center of these four semantic couplets.

The third couplet describes the resulting emotions among those whom God will punish. They will experience distress, anguish, trouble, and desolation.

The fourth couplet gives a visual picture of the day. Ideas related to “darkness” underline the negative emotions expressed in the third couplet (compare Isaiah 8:22, Joel 2:2), as well as evoking the presence of the wrathful “punisher” (see Psalm 97:2, Nahum 1:3). “The language and imagery of darkness in the present text of Zephaniah appear frequently in theophanic reports that attempt to depict the presence of YHWH” (Sweeney 2003:100) (see I Kings 8:12, Deuteronomy 4:11, 5:22).

\textsuperscript{13} In Isaiah 25:6 the word is used to refer to wine rather than dregs.

\textsuperscript{14} Sweeney (2003:94) refers to a different process that does not seem to be documented in the Scriptures. He says, “It refers to the ancient method of making wine by letting grapes sit and ferment in water until they form a thick, sticky, and unmoving conglomeration that must be mixed with water before it can be drunk”.

35
The last line could be considered as a return to the sound motif, but more than likely the author intends to use it as a conclusion. The war imagery effectively summarizes and emphasizes the central affirmation that this is a day of divine wrath. God will punish his people severely for their sin.

The following table summarizes the thematic structure of this fourth strophe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: Thematic structure of Zephaniah 1:14–16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:14a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:14b–c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:14d–e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15b–c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15d–e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:16a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Zephaniah 1:17–18 – A summary of the divine punishment**

17 I will distress man, <br>and they will walk as blind ones, <br>for they sin against Yahweh. <br>Their blood will be poured out like dust, <br>and their bowels like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them <br>in the day of Yahweh’s anger. <br>In the fire of his passion all the land will be consumed, for certainly he will make a terrifying destruction of all the inhabitants of the land.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S:Intent·ion-N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:17a And I will distress man,</td>
<td>Intention-N-Gen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:17b and they will walk as blind ones,</td>
<td>Intention-N-Sp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:17c for they sin against Yahweh,</td>
<td>Reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:17d Their blood will be poured out like dust,</td>
<td>Intention-N-Sp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:17e and their bowels like dung.</td>
<td>Intention-N-Sp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:18a Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them in the day of Yahweh’s anger.</td>
<td>Intention-N-Sp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:18b And in the fire of his passion all the land (eretz) will be consumed,</td>
<td>Intention-N-Gen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:18c &gt;for destruction, certainly terrifying he will make with all the inhabitants of the land (eretz).</td>
<td>Intention-N-amplification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third stanza in the book of Zephaniah provides a dramatic summary of the divine punishment described thus far. There are numerous connections to the previous material, which is fitting for a summary.

The first of these connections refers to the “distress” (compare 1:15b with 1:17a) that God will bring upon Judah. The Israelites are described as walking around like “blind men” to indicate their serious plight (1:17b).

The author states clearly that the reason behind this divine punishment was that the people הָיוּ "had sinned" against Yahweh (1:17c). Judah’s worship of false
gods (1:4b–5b), their refusal to seek Yahweh’s will (1:6), their religious syncretism (1:8d–9a), their social violence and deceit (1:9b), and their general spiritual complacency (1:12c–f) constitute their “sin”.

Because of Judah’s spiritual paucity, God promises via Zephaniah the most terrible of punishment. The prophet uses graphic language (“blood poured out like dust, bowels poured out like dung”) (1:17d–e) to describe the destruction of Judah. Zephaniah refers to the general wealthy nature of his audience by reminding them that “neither their silver nor their gold” would be able to change God’s decision. Yahweh’s anger (note 1:15a) would be vicious, destroying all תֵּאֶרֶץ "the land" as well as the “inhabitants” therein. Furthermore, the destruction would be “quick”, which evokes the earlier emphasis on the imminent nature of “the day of Yahweh” (see 1:7, 14).

The final lines of this first chapter return to the cataclysmic character of the first stanza. The destruction of animals are not mentioned, but the earth and her inhabitants are promised total destruction. This link between the opening lines and the final ones serves the summary role quite well. An interesting difference between the two stanzas, however, points perhaps to an important theological implication. The first refers to the destruction of היהלְם "the earth”, while the summary of the third stanza speaks of the destruction of תֵּאֶרֶץ "the land”. Both Hebrew terms have a broad semantic range and a careful analysis of the context becomes essential in the translation.

The first term, היהלְם "the earth”, can be used to indicate dirt, cultivated land in general, and land as someone’s property or dwelling place. However Plöger (1974:vol.1:93) adds this limitation to the semantic range: “Although ‘adhamah is connected more intimately with a people or with several tribes by genitival combinations, pronominal suffixes, or relative clauses, it never has a political meaning, because the territories of a state can include portions of the wilderness and of the ‘adhamah, but ‘adhamah means only the productive cultivated land of a state. Often, ‘adhamah probably comes close to the emotion-filled idea of a ‘home’”. There are a few exceptions to this general rule and “‘adhamah of Israel” can be used in a theological sense to indicate this unique religious community (e.g. Ezekiel 37:14, Zechariah 2:16/12).

The second term תֵּאֶרֶץ "the land” also covers a wide semantic range and can be used in many ways. One of its major theological usages, however, is in reference to God’s promise to give the descendants of Abraham a special land that would be their divine inheritance (Genesis 15:7, Jeremiah 2:7) (Ottosson 1974:vol.1:401). It is possible that Zephaniah chose this second term over the first term in an attempt to narrow the focus of God’s day of wrath to the Israelites. He begins the chapter with reference to God’s destruction of היהלְם “the earth”, a cataclysmic hyperbole designed to intensify the impact of the divine oracle, and he concludes with the promised destruction of תֵּאֶרֶץ "the land”, a theological term dear to his audience. The two terms are similar enough to provide the audience with a connection between the beginning and the end of the message, yet they are distinct enough to cause the audience to shift their focus from a “generic” cataclysmic event, to a more “specific” national punishment with theological implications.15

15 There are ten passages where eretz or adama are used in the book of Zephaniah. Given their broad semantic range, as well as their semantic overlap with one another, thematic context must be used to
In summary, the first chapter of Zephaniah contains three stanzas that introduce the divine punishment that will be the subject of most of the prophetic message. The first stanza prepares the audience for the gravity of the divine oracle. The second makes the declaration of the “the day of Yahweh” and the unusual “sacrifice” that will take place. This event is described in four thematically symmetrical strophes. The final stanza summarizes the divine punishment previously discussed. The following table displays this structure.

Table 9: The rhetorical structure of Zephaniah 1:2–18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanza 1 – “Divine punishment on the earth”</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strophe: Intention-N (1:2–3c)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe: Intention-N (1:3d–6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanza 2 – “The day Yahweh and his sacrifice”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strophe: Declaration (1:7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe: Intention – recipients (1:8–9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe: Description – intensity (1:10–11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe: Intention – recipients (1:12–13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe: Description – intensity (1:14–16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanza 3 – “A summary of the divine punishment”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strophe: Intention-N (1:17–18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Zephaniah 2:1–3 – Divine appeal to repentance**

1Gather yourselves,
2gather oh undesired nation,
3before the appointed time arrives
4and the day passes like chaff,
5so that the great anger of Yahweh will not come upon you,
6so that the day of Yahweh’s anger will not come upon you.

7Seek Yahweh,
8all the humble of the land

decide how to translate them. The strategy used in Zephaniah 1 has been described here. In 2:3 “land” is the most appropriate translation because of the focus on those in Judah. Also in 2:9, 11, the translation “land” is used since the context refers to specific foreign nations. In 3:8, 19-20, the context refers to multiple peoples, thus the translation “earth” seems contextually justified.
who obey his judgments.
Seek righteousness.
Seek humility.
Perhaps you will be hidden on the day of Yahweh’s anger.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S:Exhortation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:1a</td>
<td>Gather yourselves,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:1b</td>
<td>and gather yourselves undesired nation,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:2a</td>
<td>&gt;before the appointed time arrives,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:2b</td>
<td>&gt;&gt;as chaff the day passes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:2c</td>
<td>&gt;before Yahweh’s burning of anger not come upon you,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:2d</td>
<td>&gt;before the day of Yahweh’s anger not come upon you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:3a</td>
<td>Seek Yahweh, all humble/poor of the land,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:3b</td>
<td>&gt;who obey his judgments,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:3c</td>
<td>seek righteousness,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:3d</td>
<td>seek humility/poverty,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:3e</td>
<td>&gt;perhaps you(pl) will be hid in day of anger of Yahweh.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the backdrop of the pending doom described in chapter 1, God launches his appeal for repentance in 2:1–3. He uses two strophes that are clearly connected, though the nature of their parallelism is somewhat difficult to follow. The first begins with two imperatives of the same root גָּחַה “gather”. The addressee is identified with a phrase that can be interpreted in two different ways, either as a “shameless nation” or as an “undesired nation”. The author then uses three phrases that begin with the adverbial construction מִדְרָצָנָה “before”. The general idea of the strophe is that the nation in question must “gather themselves” in an attempt to avoid the pending doom of God’s wrath.\(^{16}\)

The second strophe also begins with multiple imperatives from the same root חָפָה “seek”. The addressee of these verbs is identified with “all the humble of the land”\(^{17}\), which is characterized by a relative phrase as “those who obey God’s judgments”. Again the general idea is that this group of people should seek God so that they might avoid God’s punishment.

The question of how these strophes are connected lies in the interpretation of the addressee of the first imperative in 2:1. If the addressee is “the shameless nation”

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\(^{16}\) Sweeney argues that the verb “to gather”, which usually refers to the gathering of straw or sticks, is a rhetorical tool to emphasize that this group of people will be the tinder for the fire of the sacrifice mentioned in 1:7. The hithpoel form is used atypically to refer to the people “gathering themselves together”, while the poel form is used to metaphorically indicate that they are gathering the firewood, i.e. themselves, for the sacrifice mentioned in 1:7 (2003:114).

\(^{17}\) The reference in the second strophe to “all the humble of the land” might be connected with the “people of the land” referred to in II Chronicles 33:24–25 as those who supported King Josiah. See also Amos 8:4, Isaiah 11:4, Psalm 76:9.
of Judah, who has continued to sin without feeling a sense of guilt, then the first strophe is addressed to those who are disobedient, while the second is clearly addressed to those who are obedient to God. The problem with this commonly held interpretation is that the verb שָׂכָה is never used in the MT to indicate the concept of “shame”. But rather the idea of “desire”. The idea that the word indicates a “paleness”, which is then figuratively used to indicate “shame”, comes from “later forms of Hebrew” (Sweeney 2003:115).

On the other hand, if the addressee in 2:1 is “the undesired nation” or “unwanted nation”, then this group can be identified as those in Judah who were obedient to God. For the majority of the people in Judah, they would be an object of scorn, and thus the title “the undesired nation”. It is interesting that the term נָּא “nation” is used to refer to this “minority” who is faithful to Yahweh. Perhaps this is an allusion to the fact that these people constitute the true spiritual “nation” that God chose for himself in contrast to those who were members of the political nation of Israel or Judah.

According to this interpretation the two exhortation strophes in 2:1–3 are both addressed to the same group. While the first chapter of Zephaniah announces the divine punishment for those who were disobedient in Judah, the second chapter begins by offering a ray of hope for those loyal to Yahweh, the true nation of God, suggesting that they might be able to avoid the horrible consequences of their compatriots’ behavior.

This interpretation allows one to postulate a hypothesis regarding the meaning of the unusual grammatical structure found in 2:2c–d, where the prepositional phrase usually translated “before” (בְּאֹתַּי), begins a proposition where the imperfect verb is negated. This creates the incongruent combination of the two semantic components of a “previous time period” and an “unachieved action”. Most versions resolve this problem by simply omitting the negation, probably considering it as a grammatical way of intensifying the action of the predicate. However, a more likely solution might be a translation which allows for a hypothetical component, such as “so that the anger of Yahweh might not come upon you”. Unfortunately there are no other instances in the MT of this structure to substantiate this subjunctive meaning.

If the two strophes are interpreted in this manner, they would be semantically and grammatically parallel. They both use multiple imperatives from the

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18 According to BDB the verb שָׂכָה literally means “to long for”. It is used in this way in Job 14:15, Psalm 17:12, Genesis 31:30, and Psalm 84:4. Regarding Zephaniah 2:1 BDB suggests the meaning “turning pale = not ashamed”, but admits that this is “very dubious”.

19 See Job 14:15, Psalm 17:12, Genesis 31:30, Psalm 84:4.

20 Berlin’s assumption (1994:96) that the nation is not desired “by God” conflicts with the fact that God does desire their salvation, and for that reason is calling them to action. Her suggestions that the meaning may be ‘O nation not desiring [God]’ is not congruent with the niphal structure of the verb.


22 Sweeney (2003:118–119) argues that the prophet is speaking to a mixed audience, and thus includes a strophe to the disobedient as well as a strophe to those loyal to God. He adds that the imperatives are vague since his purpose is to convince people to follow his program without emphasizing the exact nature of the details, namely monotheistic worship.
same root, coupled with a hypothetical structure at the end of the strophe, and they both address the righteous remnant of Judah, offering them the same possibility of salvation.

This offer of a “possible” salvation points to another rhetorical strategy of the author. Some readers would prefer a tighter contract between God and his people guaranteeing salvation in exchange for righteousness. Perhaps it is the gravity of the situation, or the extreme respect of Yahweh’s sovereignty that is beyond human comprehension which pushes the author to use the term הַלֵּךְ “perhaps” in 2:3. This common Hebrew adverb expresses uncertainty, but often in a context of hope (see Genesis 16:2, 18:24, Jeremiah 21:2). It is used quite often to refer to Israel’s hope for salvation in conjunction with her change in behavior (see Lamentations 3:29, Amos 5:15).

Sweeney (2003:112) is correct when he says, “Thus vv. 1–3 are clearly exhortative – or more properly parenetic – in character because they hold out the possibility of negative or positive consequences depending on the audience’s choice of action”. The doom of those unfaithful to God was forcefully spelled out in the first chapter, but the second chapter offers hope to the loyalists.

**Zephaniah 2:4–7 – Divine punishment for the Philistines**

4 For Gaza will be abandoned,
and Ashkelon will be a desolation.
They will drive out Ashdod in full daylight,
and Ekron will be uprooted.

5 Woe to the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of Kerethites.
The word of Yahweh is against you Canaan, land of Philistines,
and I will destroy all of your inhabitants,
6 and the sea coast will be pasture lands, and sheep pens,
7 and the coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah.
They will pasture on them.
They will lie down at night in the houses of Ashkelon,
for Yahweh their God will visit them,
and return their captives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S:Reason</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:4a</td>
<td>For Gaza will be abandoned,</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:4b</td>
<td>and Ashkelon (given) to desolation</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:4c</td>
<td>Ashdod, they will drive her out at noon,</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:4d</td>
<td>and Ekron will be uprooted.</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:5a</td>
<td>Woe to the inhabitants of the sea coast, nation of Kerethites.</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:5b</td>
<td>the word of Yahweh is against you Canaan, land of Philistines</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:5d</td>
<td>and I will destroy you from any inhabitant,</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:6</td>
<td>and the sea coast will be pasture lands and sheep pens.</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7a</td>
<td>and the coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah.</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7b</td>
<td>they will pasture on them,</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7c</td>
<td>in the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down in the evening,</td>
<td>Intention-N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7d</td>
<td>&gt;for Yahweh their God will “visit” them,</td>
<td>Reason 1a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The division of the text between 2:3 and 2:4 is a debated issue among scholars. Sweeney (2003:120–123) argues that 2:4 concludes 2:1–3, and that 2:5 begins a new section. The Masoretic tradition placed a setuma after 2:4 in accordance with this view. Berlin (1994:99) tends to agree from a literary perspective, but admits that “v. 4 may serve as a bridge between the two sections, belonging in some ways to both”. Robertson (1990:296) and Keil-Delitzsch (1866:139) maintain that there is a section break between 2:3 and 2:4.

From a thematic perspective the discussion of Philistia no doubt begins in 2:4. From a literary form perspective the presence of יוּ “for”, a subordinate conjunction, at the beginning of 2:4, suggests a link with 2:1–3, but Wendland in a personal communication maintains that it could actually be an introductory particle to the whole series of oracles against the nations and Jerusalem in 2:1–3:8. The presence of יוּ “woe”, an exclamation which typically begins a “woe oracle”, found in 2:5 supports the hypothesis that 2:4 and 2:5 work together to begin a new section.

Berlin’s (1994:99) argument that verse 4 serves as a bridge seems to be the most plausible. The ki indicates that the stanza 2:4–7 describes a reason why the audience should heed the appeal made in 2:1–3. The thematic shift to the plight of Philistia, along with the use of hoy, obviously sets the whole stanza apart as a separate woe oracle, or perhaps even the whole series of woe oracles that follow. The use of ki in this initial position demonstrates how this conjunction can be used as a connective on a discourse level, as well as on a sentence level. In fact Sweeney (2003:121) recognizes this role of ki: “In the present instance, there is no indication that the initial יוּ of v. 4 indicates syntactical subordination, but its conjunctive force is clear in that the causative nature of יוּ points to a further reason to accept the prophet’s call to seek to YHWH in vv. 1–3”.

Sweeney (2003:121) recognizes the rhetorical link between the appeal in 2:1–3 and the discussion on Philistia. He argues that “since it [2:5–7] does not identify the reasons that YHWH is bringing punishment against the Philistines but only articulates the punishment itself and the resulting benefits that will accrue to the remnant of Judah, its purpose apparently lies in an attempt to communicate something to the Jerusalemite/Judean audience” (Sweeney 2003:126).

One key message of the prophet that rhetorically serves his purpose of persuading the “people of the land” to persevere, and perhaps persuading the others to change their behavior, is that God is Almighty and powerful, a severe judge to be reckoned with. He demands obedience and punishes the unrighteous very harshly. Zephaniah’s description of “the impending destruction of the Philistines points to YHWH’s capacity for punishment on the day of YHWH” (Sweeney 2003:121).

In addition to this “divine capacity” for punishment, Zephaniah goes on to point out that once God destroys the Philistines, their territory will be given to the remnant of the house of Judah (2:7). This provides a second reason to the audience for accepting the appeal made in 2:1–3. The destiny of the Philistines in this text has rhetorical importance in that it provides a motivation for the people of the land to stay

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23 Another possibility is consider this an “assertive ki” meaning “surely/indeed.”
loyal to their covenant with God. He is not only to be feared for the punishment he can inflict, but he should be obeyed for the blessings he can give.

The nature of the Philistine plight is described with poetic assonance and word play. The four cities Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron represent the Philistine people. The qualities of these cities are described with assonant words which can also indicate negative qualities of unfortunate women. The following table clarifies these connections:

Table 10: Assonance and word play of Zephaniah 2:4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philistine city name</th>
<th>Related word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>References related to women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>חֵוֹצָע - Gaza</td>
<td>פָּרִסָּה</td>
<td>forsaken, abandoned</td>
<td>Isaiah 54:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>פוֹצֵק - Ashkelon</td>
<td>פָּרִסָּה</td>
<td>desolate</td>
<td>Isaiah 54:1, 62:4, II Samuel 13:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>פוֹצֵק - Ashdod</td>
<td>לָכַיִת</td>
<td>driven out, divorced</td>
<td>Leviticus 21:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>פוֹצֵק - Ekron</td>
<td>לָכַיִת</td>
<td>uprooted, barren</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 7:14, Exodus 23:26, Genesis 11:30, 25:21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sweeney (2003:123) argues that this description of Philistia as a forsaken, desolate, divorced, and barren woman is in contrast with the Daughter of Zion in 3:17. He goes so far as to say, “The marriage metaphor becomes the basis by which to portray Jerusalem’s restoration at the end of the book and to contrast her fate to that of the Philistines” (Sweeney 2003:123). While there is no doubt some degree of assonance and word play in this passage, Sweeney may have tried to push the argument too far. The descriptive words can be used at times with reference to women in a marriage relationship, the more common usage of these words has a much broader semantic range. Furthermore there is nothing in 3:14–20 that specifically refers to the metaphor of marriage.

The impact of this stanza no doubt encouraged the remnant of Judah that despite their difficult circumstances, there was hope in a future salvation. Instead of loosing their land, they would gain even the land of their enemies. They would inhabit Philistine houses, and use Philistine territory to graze their flocks. Instead of becoming like an “unfortunate woman”, they would become a joyous “daughter of Zion” (3:14). “Their God” would intervene; he would return them from exile and restore their good fortune (2:7b).

Zephaniah’s rhetorical strategy uses multiple nominal references to the Philistines, partially to describe them in a negative light as Judah’s enemies. The four key capitals where the Philistine rulers lived (Joshua 13:3) represent the entire people

24 See also Zalcman (1986:365–370).
25 Some argue that the use of the term “remnant” in 2:7, 9 indicates a secondary addition to the text. Sweeney’s (2003:140) response seems well stated: “The basis for such a claim is that such ‘remnant’ terminology must presuppose the postexilic period when only a remnant of the people of Israel remained in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile. One must recall, however, that Judah saw itself as the ‘remnant of Israel’ following the Assyrian destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel and that Josiah’s program was designed to restore all Israel following the collapse of the Assyrian Empire”.

43
Robertson (1990:299) suggests that they are referred to as “inhabitants of the coast of the sea” to establish their position among the peoples of the world.

The term נְתֵן קְרָתִים “nation of Kerethites NIV) is somewhat ambiguous. Some argue that this is a reference to the origin of the Philistines who supposedly came from the island of Crete originally. Ben Zvi (1991:153) considers the term gentilic, but says that it is “an intentional play on words…as a negative attribute.” Sweeney (2003:127) suggests that the use of the term could be a wordplay with הַכְּרִית “to cut” referring to the fact that the Philistines would be “cut off” by God. He derives this from the translation used in the Targum of Jonathan, as well as the Vulgate. Keil uses the same etymological argument to suggest that Zephaniah underlines the destructive nature of the Philistines, “a people devoted to extermination” (Keil 1866:140).

The final name that Zephaniah uses also proves to have a strong connotation from a rhetorical perspective. He calls them נֵס מִלְטָשַׁשׁ “Canaan the land of Philistines”. Keil (1866:141) suggests that the name “is used in the more limited sense of Philistia”, but the term is rarely if ever used in this way. In Isaiah 23:11 it seems to refer to the northern coastal area around the city of Sidon, but typically it refers to the peoples and the land to the west of the Jordan that were subdued by the Hebrews.

The divine decision to conquer Canaan, and to give the land to the descendants of Abraham, revolved around the evil nature of these people that caused them to be under divine condemnation (see Deuteronomy 7:1–5, 9:5). Upon that backdrop one can understand the negative moral connotation that Zephaniah’s rhetoric invoked by calling the Philistines “Canaan”. The Hebrew prophetic literature usually does not make reference to Canaan, but Zephaniah’s exception was no doubt related to his rhetorical strategy of comparing the Philistines to an evil ethnic group that would be overcome by divine intervention as in times past.

Sweeney (2003:127) suggests a different rhetorical use of this term, namely that of “merchants” with a connection to 1:11. While this is a possibility, the idea that the land of Israel’s enemies becomes a dwelling place for them and their flocks, seems to carry a more forceful rhetorical impact. In 2:4 God’s punishment is expressed as a destruction of the Philistines, but the prophet then describes the positive consequences of this punishment for the people of Judah in three different ways. Philistine territory will become a place for Judah’s shepherds and sheep pens (2:6b), and it will “belong” to the house of Judah and be her pasture (2:7a). Even the “houses of Ashkelon” will be used by members of the remnant as their new dwelling places (2:7b). The guiding concept behind these three expressions is that “the Lord their God will care for them; he will return their captives” (2:7c). The restoration of Judah’s covenant relationship is the dominant theme of this strophe, rather than the destruction of Philistia. The later is simply a rhetorical way to encourage the “humble of the land” (2:3) to continue to seek the Lord, who will “return their captives” (2:7c) in good time.

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26 Elsewhere Gath is included in this list (Joshua 13:3, I Samuel 6:17). Scholars argue that perhaps it was already under Judean control at this time (Berlin 1994:99).

27 Amos 9:7 mentions that the Philistines came from Caphtor, which some conclude to be synonymous with Crete. The LXX translates the word “Cretans” (See also Deuteronomy 2:23, Jeremiah 47:4).
Zephaniah 2:8–11 – Divine punishment for the Moabites

8I heard the taunt of Moab, and the reviling words of the sons of Amon, who taunted my people, and rose up against their border. 9Therefore I swear, oracle of Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, Moab will become like Sodom, and Amon’s sons will become like Gomorrah, a possession of grass, and a pit of salt, and a desolation forever. The remnant of my people will pillage them, and the rest of my nation will possess them. 10This will be the reward for their haughtiness, for they insulted, and they rose up against the people of Yahweh of hosts.

11Awe inspiring is Yahweh to them, for he wastes away all gods of the earth, and all islands of the nations, each man in his place, will bow down to him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>S:Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:8a</td>
<td>I heard the taunt of Moab and the reviling words of the sons of Amon,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:8b</td>
<td>&gt;that they taunted my people,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:8c</td>
<td>&gt;and they rose up against their boundary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9a</td>
<td>Therefore I living, (i.e. Therefore, I swear,)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9b</td>
<td>oracle of Yahweh of hosts God of Israel,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9c</td>
<td>that Moab will be as Sodom,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9d</td>
<td>and the sons of Amon will be as Gomorrah,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9e</td>
<td>&gt;a possession of grass,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9f</td>
<td>&gt;and a pit of salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9g</td>
<td>&gt;and desolation forever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9h</td>
<td>The remnant of my people will pillage them,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9i</td>
<td>and the rest of my nation will possess them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10a</td>
<td>This will be to them the reward for their haughtiness,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10b</td>
<td>for they taunted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10c</td>
<td>and they rose up against the people of Yahweh of Hosts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:11a</td>
<td>Awe inspiring is Yahweh to them,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:11b</td>
<td>&gt;for he wasted away all gods of the earth,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:11c</td>
<td>&gt;all islands of the nations, each man in his place, will bow down to him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The prophet describes the plight of Moab and Ammon in much the same way that he does with the Philistines. The parallels between the two stanzas can be seen in the following table:

Table 11: Parallels between Zephaniah 2:4–7 and 2:8–11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2:4 Affirmation of divine punishment</th>
<th>2:8 Cause of divine punishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:5a–b Formulaic introduction (“Woe, the Word of Yahweh is against you”).</td>
<td>2:9a–b Formulaic introduction (“Therefore, as surely as I live, oracle of Yahweh, God of Israel”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:5c Negative destruction of Philistines</td>
<td>2:9c–g Negative destruction of Moab and Ammon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:6–7c Positive benefits for Judah</td>
<td>2:9h–i Positive benefits for Judah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7d–e Reasons: -Yahweh will visit them -Yahweh will return exiles</td>
<td>2:10–11 Reasons: -reward for their behavior -God’s supremacy over all gods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reason for God’s punishing the Philistines seems to be veiled in the appellative “Kerethites” in 2:6 with a possible reference to their negative behavior. In 2:8 Zephaniah makes the cause of the destruction of Moab and Ammon explicit with a reference to their insults and threats against the people of Israel.28 It is on the basis of this behavior that God affirms that he will therefore destroy Moab and Ammon.29

In 2:5 the prophet uses the powerful יָניָה “woe” formula to introduce divine punishment to the Philistines, and in the next line he adds the strong statement that the “Word of Yahweh is against you Canaan, land of the Philistines”. In 2:9a Zephaniah intensifies the affirmation of punishment to the Moabites and Ammonites with an oath formula, an “oracle”, and an expanded form of the divine name. The emphasis on the powerful divine nature appears to be a rhetorical strategy of Zephaniah to incur the fear of God upon his audience, and thus motivate them to submit to the Lord’s will. He appeals to the authority of Yahweh as a mode of persuasion, a most reasonable strategy for a theocratic people.

The oath formula יָניָה “alive I” is quite common in the Hebrew Bible. It is used by God and men alike, and can refer to the speaker or the addressee’s life. Sweeney (2003:139) argues that the notion behind the oath is a self curse saying that

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28 Numbers 22–25 – Balak the king of Moab attempts to curse Israel; Judges 3:14 – Eglon, king of Moab, subjects the Israelites to his rule for 18 years; II Samuel 8 – David warred against Moab; II Kings 3 – Moab revolts against Israel; Jeremiah 48:26–27 – Moab is left to be an object of ridicule because she had ridiculed Israel; Isaiah 16:6, 25:11 – References to Moab’s pride; I Samuel 11:1–5 – Ammonites attempt to bring disgrace upon all of Israel; II Samuel 10–12 – David warred against the Ammonites because they had disgraced his soldiers; Amos 1:13 – Ammon is said to have committed atrocities such as ripping open pregnant women.

29 Sweeney (2003:138) claims that this is a “characteristic feature of the prophetic judgment speeches that typically introduces the announcement of punishment in the prophetic judgment speech form”. In this case it seems to function more as a particle indicating a link of cause and effect.
the speaker “will cease to live if the action is not carried out”. In the case of God who obviously has a self awareness of his own eternal nature, the idea is that he would hypothetically cease to exist rather than the stated action remain uncompleted. However the same oath is spoken by men who refer to the life of another person, such as the case of Abner in I Samuel 17:55. Surely they can not have the same presumption about the life of their addressee as God has about his own life. This would suggest another possible interpretation of the oath, namely that of an appeal to the obvious reality that the person in question is alive. No one could argue that the person speaking or the person being spoken to is not alive. On the basis of this obvious truth, the speaker claims that his statement is true with the same degree of certainty. Following this line of reasoning, a suitable translation of the formula in Zephaniah would be, “As surely as I live...”.

The following term £u'Ãn “oracle” has a similar rhetorical role as the preceding oath. It is only used in divine speech, and serves to emphasize divine origin and authority of a given message (Harris 1980:vol.II:542). This appeal to God’s authority is crucial in Zephaniah’s attempt to rally support behind Josiah’s reforms. His words are not his own; they come from Yahweh.

While this term £u'Ãn “oracle” is typically followed by the divine name, Zephaniah expands the name to include יֲהֵם יְהוָה יְהוָה יָאָרָי לְגָד יִרְזְכָה, “Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel”. The “military overtones” (Harris 1980:vol.II:740) of the term יָאָרָי “hosts” are appropriate here as Zephaniah infers that God has the power to lead his people to “plunder” Moab and Ammon (2:9). The term is also fitting for Zephaniah’s affirmation that all the gods of all the nations are subject to Yahweh and will one day worship him (2:11). This universal God is indeed יְהוָה יְהוָה יָאָרָי “the God of Israel”. This language serves Zephaniah’s rhetorical purposes well, as he encourages the remnant of Judah to remain faithful to Yahweh with whom they have a special relationship, because he is the universal God over all nations and powers. His victory is certain.

In the comparison of this stanza on Moab and Ammon and the sanza on Philistia, the important land motif comes to the forefront. Zephaniah begins the second chapter with his appeal to כָּל הַגִּלְגֵל מֵאֲרִיא “all the humble of the land”. With this appellation Zephaniah seems to tap into the important Israelite tradition of the promised land. God had promised them the land of Canaan from the beginning of their history through their ancestor Abraham (Genesis 17:3–8). Over the years they had fought to maintain this inheritance, but with the rise of foreign powers they feared that they would lose their God-given inheritance (II Kings 19:14–19). Zephaniah’s rhetoric uses this deeply-rooted belief to appeal to the Israelites to change their behavior so that God might allow them to maintain כָּל הַגִּלְגֵל “the land”.

In 2:4–7 Yahweh promises to destroy the Philistines and give כָּל הַגִּלְגֵל “the land” (2:5b) to the “remnant of the house of Judah”. In 2:8 the cause of Moab and Ammon’s overthrow is that they insulted God’s people and rose up against their boundaries. While the phrase כָּל הַגִּלְגֵל יִרְזֵכְר “raise up against” is a common idiom in Hebrew to indicate boasting, “the addition of a reference to ‘their territory’ in the present verse is unique and potentially important because it suggests territorial expansion rather than mere boasting, catcalling, and hostile demonstrations upon the borders of Israel/Judah with Moab and Ammon” (Sweeney 2003:136). Zephaniah promises “the humble of the land” that Moabite and Ammonite lands will be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah, and that God’s people כָּל הַגִּילָנִים “will possess them”. The terminology used at this point is critical. “The verb nahal basically
signifies giving or receiving property which is part of a permanent possession...” (Harris 1980:vol.II:569), and was the original term used to refer to God giving the promised land to Abraham’s descendants. Zephaniah’s appeal for repentance and perseverance intersects with the deep Israelite longing to protect their inheritance of the land.\(^\text{30}\)

In relation to the land motif, Zephaniah 2:11 makes an interesting statement regarding the nations, namely that they will all worship God from their own place. While the land of Canaan was promised to the ancient Israelites from the time of Abraham, the Hebrew Bible does not give the details of similar promises made concerning other nations. However, both Malachi and Isaiah give an apocalyptic vision of universal worship offered to Yahweh (Malachi 1:11, see also Isaiah 19:19–23).

According to Sweeney (2003:14), Zephaniah closes the stanza with a “summary-appraisal” in 2:10. He describes this feature by saying,

The summary-appraisal is basically a didactic form that is designed to reflect on and analyze phenomena in the world or previously stated literary material in order to summarize and clarify its meaning. It is also designed to point to conclusions that may be drawn from such analysis of that phenomena or material. The genre is generally identified by an initial demonstrative pronoun, מ±ה “this”, that refers back to the phenomena or previously stated material and by a bi-colon literary structure that lays out the didactic content of the form. (Sweeney 2003:141)

Certainly Sweeney’s definition corresponds to the form and contents of 2:10. The conclusion is that Moab and Ammon’s arrogance lie at the root of God’s decision to punish them (see 2:8).

However, Zephaniah goes on to conclude the stanza with a strong theological statement about the power of Yahweh. All nations will eventually fear him and worship him. He will demonstrate his superiority by wasting away the gods of the earth”. Other passages make this same claim (e.g. Psalm 96:4, I Chronicles 16:25–26), but Zephaniah uses this concept as part of his rhetorical appeal to those in Judah. He suggests that they should maintain their loyalty to Yahweh, because ultimately the whole world will bow before his rule.

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Zephaniah 2:12 – Divine punishment for the Cushites

\(^{12}\)You Cushites also,

\(\text{they will be pierced by my sword.}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2:12a</th>
<th>Also you(pl) Cushites.</th>
<th>S:Intention-N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:12b</td>
<td>they (be) pierced ones of my sword.</td>
<td>Intention-N-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After having dealt with Israelite enemies to the east and west, Zephaniah turns his attention to nations in the south and north, namely Cush and Assyria. While this

\(^{30}\) See also Spreafico (1991:139).
“geographic symmetry” (Berlin 1994:112) is impressive, a solid rhetorical understanding of the book demands one to explain why Zephaniah chose to address the nations he did. Philistines, Moabites, and Ammonites were no doubt addressed because of the land issue. Their territory rightly belonged to the Israelites, and God was promising that inheritance to them. However, this does not explain why Cush and Assyria were addressed.

The first problem is the actual identity of הָעִידִ֑ים “the Cushites”. Berlin (1994:111–113) discusses this problem in detail and offers five options suggested by various scholars. The first interpretation is that Cush indicates Egypt. Berlin (1994:111) rejects this idea saying, “it should be noted, while Cush occurs together with Egypt, it never stands in place of Egypt”. The second interpretation is that Cush should be identified with Ethiopia or Nubia. This idea draws support from numerous references in the Hebrew Bible. The third option is that Cush refers to Midian, which is not typically presented as an enemy of Israel. The fourth option equates Cush with the Arabian tribes. This idea comes from the fact that Genesis 10:7 locates various sons of Cush in the Arabian peninsula. The fifth option is to understand Cush as Mesopotamia or Assyria. Berlin (1994:112–113) supports this interpretation based on Genesis 10:5–11 which portrays Cush as the father of Nimrod, the builder of Nineveh. “In the context of [Zephaniah 2] vv. 13–15, ‘Cushites,’ therefore, signifies not the military-political complex of Egypt, but the descendants of the forbearer of the Assyrian empire” (Berlin 1994:113).

If Berlin’s interpretation is correct, Zephaniah 2:12–15 would constitute a single stanza. “Cush” and “Assyria” would be synonymous references to the addressee. This would parallel Zephaniah’s usage of multiple terms in the Philistia stanza (2:5). One advantage of this interpretation is that it would also explain the brevity of the reference to Cush, which in some way disturbs the symmetry of the whole stanza. If Zephaniah is addressing four oracles to Israel’s enemy nations, why is the message to Cush so short? Berlin gives an explanation.

However, the more common view that Cush refers to Ethiopia, can also be presented as a valid interpretation. A key element in this presentation would be to relate the adverb אַף “even” in 2:13 as a semantic link to the הָעִידִ֑ים כּוֹלֶ֖ים “islands of the nations” in 2:11c. Zephaniah concludes the stanza on Moab and Ammon by referring to the universal submission and worship of Yahweh. Zephaniah’s mention of Cush may serve to reiterate this universal component by mentioning the southern most nation known to the Israelites. A more dynamic translation of these phrases would read, “And men will bow down to him, each in his own place, from all the islands of the nations, even as far as Cush” (2:11c–12a). This interpretation maintains the geographic symmetry of 2:4–15.

Zephaniah’s message is that God will be feared by all nations from every corner of the globe. All the enemies surrounding Judah will eventually be put into submission by Yahweh. They will either be destroyed by the sword as punishment for their sins, or they will become part of those who willingly submit to God and worship him. The rhetorical function of the reference to Cush is to underline the far-reaching nature of Yahweh’s reign.

Zephaniah 2:13–15 – Divine punishment for the Assyrians

13 He will stretch out his hand against the north,
and he will destroy Assyria,
and he will put Nineveh to destruction, dry as the desert.
14 And flocks and all animals of the nation will lie down in her midst,
even the pelican and the owl will pass the night on her capitals,
and a voice will sing on the window
  “destruction on the threshold”
for the cedar is laid bare.

15 This is the joyous city living in security,
who said in her heart,
  “Me and nothing else forever”.
How she will be given to destruction,
a resting place for the animals?
Everyone passing by her will hiss,
(they) will shake (their) hand.

From the brief mention of the punishment of Cush in the extreme south,
Zephaniah moves fluidly to Assyria in the extreme north.32 The Cushites will be
pierced by God’s sword, and then his hand will stretch out toward the north as well to

32 “It is true that this kingdom was not to the north, but to the north-east, of Judah; but inasmuch as the
Assyrian armies invaded Palestine from the north, it is regarded by the prophets as situated in the
north” (Keil 1866:vol.10:147).
destroy Assyria and Nineveh. (2:12–13) God’s sword in his out-stretched hand serves as a rhetorical image of the mighty power of the ruling Yahweh.

Zephaniah describes the destruction of the great city of Nineveh with contra-expected images. The city located along the Tigris river would be “dry as a desert”. The large human population of the Assyrian capital would be replaced with “all the animals of the nations”. The extent of this contra-expectation builds up to the rhetorical question posed in 2:15d–e: “How can she be so destroyed, to become the resting place of animals passing through?”

Commentators have focused on the difficult issue of the identification of the “desert owl” and the “screech owl”, but perhaps the use of this pair has more to do with their poetical assonance than their zoological nature. The scene is one of a deserted city, where flocks are allowed to quietly graze among the ruins, and birds sing undisturbed on toppled capitals and cedar window frames stripped of their gold plating. Zephaniah paints the picture of a destroyed and emptied Nineveh.

Sweeney makes an interesting point regarding the verb used of the animals singing. “Given the formal liturgical context or setting in which the verb is normally employed [see I Chronicles 6:18, 9:33, II Chronicles 29:28] and the portrayal of the once proud but now ruined imperial city that the text of Zephaniah presents, it would appear that the use of the verb in this context is deliberately intended to convey something of the irony of Nineveh’s situation in which only the owls or other wildlife are left to sing of the city’s splendor now that its human inhabitants are long gone” (Sweeney 2003:153). While Zephaniah’s intent was certainly ironical, it also served as a theological statement affirming the inevitable eternal praise of Yahweh. All 36 instances of the verb יָשָׁה “to sing” refer to musical praise of God, often with regard to his great salvific acts. Having the birds sing the praise of God in the deserted city of Israel’s arch-enemies of the time constitutes a poetical communication of a theological truth; namely that Yahweh is always victorious and merits his people’s praise.

One noteworthy feature of Zephaniah’s description of the animals regards the odd combination of the two terms יָמְלַה “animals of the nations” in 2:14a. Sweeney (2003:152) explains that “the second element of the construction generally appears as a noun that conveys some topographical feature associated with land”. Rather than emending the text (e.g. LXX > “land”) to conform with more typical structures, it may be in order to view this as rhetorical foreshadowing of Assyria’s invasion from enemy nations.

After describing the destruction of Assyria, Zephaniah concludes the stanza with what Sweeney (2003:150) considers another example of the “summary-appraisal form”. On the backdrop of a deserted city, the author ironically recalls Assyria’s previous attitude of pride and all-sufficiency. His reference to חָפְצָה יִפְּלִיו “the joyous city” is contrasted with the picture of destruction. Her חָזְבָה “security” is contrasted

33 An impure bird (Leviticus 11:15, Deuteronomy 14:17) found in desert areas (Psalm 102:7, Isaiah 34:11).

34 The porcupine according to BDB, but the UBS handbook Fauna and Flora of the Bible argues for “owl” because it is always found with other birds and because it is unlikely that a porcupine would be located on a column. Another option given and used in the Tanakh (JPS) is “jackdaw.” Found in pair with תַּנְא “screech owl” in Isaiah 34:11. See also Isaiah 14:23.
with the complete invasion of the city. Her statement that exemplified her attitude, "I and nothing else forever", is a powerful testimony to her vanity, which has been shown by God's intervention to be totally empty and void.

Zephaniah (2:15d-e) concludes these ironic references with a rhetorical question as to what could ever bring about such a transformation. He asks how it could be possible that such a mighty city be reduced to a similar state. The effect of this question seems to be intensified by the statement in 2:15d-e that everyone who passes by the scene will be amazed at what God had done.

Most explanations of 2:15d–e point out that "whistling, hissing, and making hand gestures over the ruined site is a typical portrayal of astonishment at destruction in the Hebrew Bible" (Sweeney 2003:155). The idea is that people passed by the destroyed city and whistled and made hand gestures to express their astonishment. Ten other prophetic passages using the phrase "those passing by" indicate the same type of derision over a disaster that God has caused as a result of sin.

It is possible to take ™y as an exclamative adverb "how!" instead of an interrogative adverb "how?", but the later seems to be more appropriate as a sequel to 2:15a-c, where the text describes a flourishing picture of the city, which is now radically different. The natural question of any observer would be, "How is this change possible?" Of course the intent of the author by raising this question is to point to the fact that divine intervention remains the only satisfactory answer. The rhetorical impact of the question is quite forceful.

This parallels with the endings of the previous stanzas, that all point to God’s activity as an explanation for the actions previously described. God promises the remnant of Judah that the Philistine destruction will benefit them, “for Yahweh their God will visit them and return their exiles” (2:7d-e). God promises that the desolation of Moabite and Ammonite territory will become an inheritance for his nation as all nations fear him “because he wastes the gods of the earth away” (2:11a-c). If 2:12 is taken as a separate oracle, it is not truly parallel with the others, though “God’s sword” (i.e. intervention) is mentioned. A fitting summary of 2:13–15 is that God promises total destruction of the proud self-sufficient Nineveh and that he can accomplish such a destruction in such a way that is apparent to “all who pass by her” (2:15f-g).

There is a reversal motif in each one of these stanzas. The Philistine destroyers will be destroyed (2:5d). Moab and Ammon who taunted Israel will be pillaged for their haughtiness (2:10a). The human inhabitants of the proud city of

35 The Hebrew could also be interpreted as an exclamation, but the rhetorical question has more oratorical impact and makes more sense coupled with 2:15f–g. Taking the statement as an exclamation would read as follows: “Oh how she will be destroyed and become a resting place for animals. He will whistle and he will wave his hand.”


37 “This interrogative pronoun is used in simple questions… But usually it is used in rhetorical questions to indicate reproach, despair, amazement, horror, or desire.” Wolf, H. (199). p. 75. ‘ay. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds), Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (Electronic ed.). Chicago: Moody Press.) Robertson (1990:311) says, “It expresses the idea of “How could it be!,” in terms of joy, surprise, or lament.”

52
Nineveh (2:14a–c) will be replaced by animals (2:14). The theological message behind this change of state in the surrounding nations is that the universal God Yahweh, in his might and his love for his people, can and will perform this reversal with his simple and definitive intervention.

Zephaniah 3:1–5 – Divine oracle against Judah

1Woe rebellious one and defiled one, the oppressing city.
She does not obey a voice,
2she does not take admonition,
she does not trust in Yahweh,
she does not draw near to her God.
3Her chiefs among her are roaring lions,
her judges are evening wolves,
not flaying in the morning.
4Her prophets are insolent men of treachery.
Her priests profane the sanctuary;
they violate the Torah.

5Yahweh is righteous in her midst,
he does no wickedness.
Each morning he gives his judgment,
each day he is not missed,
and the wicked know no shame.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verse</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:1a</td>
<td>Woe rebelling one and defiled one, the city (which is) oppressing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:1b</td>
<td>She does not listen in to a voice,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:2a</td>
<td>she does not take admonition,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:2b</td>
<td>in Yahweh she does not trust,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:2c</td>
<td>to her Elohim she does not draw near,</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:3a</td>
<td>Her chiefs in her midst, (are) roaring lions,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:3b</td>
<td>her judges, (are) wolves of evening (who) do not flay to the morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:4a</td>
<td>Her prophets are insolent, men of treacheries,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:4b</td>
<td>her priests profane the sanctuary,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:4c</td>
<td>they violate the Torah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:5a</td>
<td>Yahweh (is) righteous in her midst,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:5b</td>
<td>he does not do wickedness,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:5c</td>
<td>morning after morning he gives his judgment,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:5d</td>
<td>in the day(light) he is not missed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:5e</td>
<td>and a wicked one does not know shame.</td>
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</table>

The מרא “Woe” of 3:1 naturally connects this next stanza to the four preceding oracles found in chapter 2 against the nations of Philistia, Moab and Ammon, Cush, and Assyria. This oracle (3:1–5) is addressed to יָהָּה “the city”, which is semantically qualified with three participles, “rebellious”, “defiled”, and “oppressing”. The first two work are directly linked to the interjection מִשְׁפַּר “woe”, while the last one is in an
attributive position. Since the destruction of Judah’s enemy Assyria, with a specific focus on the well known city of Nineveh, had been the subject under discussion, Zephaniah’s audience no doubt expected this oracle to be a continuation of the previous one. The phrase “Woe to the city” automatically triggered in the audience’s mind, images of their arch-enemy Nineveh.

As Zephaniah begins to characterize the city with four negative affirmations, the city’s ambiguous identity is maintained. The city is said to not have obeyed “the voice”, but which voice is not specified. The city is said to not have accepted “the admonition”, but whose admonition is not made explicit. It is not until 3:2b that the author begins to make it clear that the addressee is the city of Yahweh, who has “not trusted” their God. This contra-expectation is a powerful rhetorical tool that Zephaniah uses to move his audience to critical self-evaluation, and impress upon them that their plight might be the same as that of the nation of Assyria discussed in chapter 2.

There are four clearly identified components of this stanza. The first line addresses the audience with the “woe” formula (3:1a). The next four lines accuse the city in a generic fashion of her spiritual shortcomings (3:1b–2c). The following five lines make more specific accusations against the ruling class of Judah (3:3a–4c). And finally the last five lines contrast Judah’s negative behavior with God’s faithfulness and righteousness (3:5a–e).

The progression from generic to specific, with regard to the series of accusations in 3:1b–2c and those in 3:3a–4c, seems to be part of Zephaniah’s rhetorical strategy as he leads the people toward a more complete understanding of the situation. These accusations provide the reason for Yahweh’s decision to punish them. As such this stanza clarifies to the Israelites exactly what they needed to change in their behavior. In general terms, Israel needed a spiritual revival where people would draw near to God once again. This would apply to the entire the population.

In addition the political leaders ("her chiefs” and “her judges”) need to be less “aggressive” and more benevolent. It is interesting to note how these leaders are compared with “lions” and “wolves” that are actively involved in seeking their prey. This type of comparison between animals and people is a very forceful tactic in Zephaniah’s rhetorical repertoire.

The religious leaders ("her prophets” and “her priests”) should be loyal and pure, but they are treacherous and impure. The credibility of the prophets was in disrepute. Zephaniah calls them “wanton, reckless”, which is used elsewhere to refer to people willing to kill (Judges 9:4), willing to commit incest (Genesis 49:4), and who speak lies (Jeremiah 23:32). He calls them men of “treachery”. This word is used to denote various forms of unfaithfulness towards God and men. Even the priests had failed to remain loyal to Yahweh. During the time of Josiah they had allowed idolatry to be practiced in the temple, and they had failed to observe important rituals commanded by God such as the passover. These shortcomings are targeted by Zephaniah in 3:4b–c.

In contrast with this evil behavior so prevalent in Judah, the author presents a summary of Yahweh’s characteristic qualities. The statement that he is "faithful in her [Jerusalem] midst", contrasts with how the chiefs are “lions in her [Jerusalem] midst”. While the priests say "profane the sanctuary", God does no "wickedness". The violent behavior of the Jerusalem judges ("her judges”), who are compared to wolves who devour their prey “in the morning”, is diametrically opposed to Yahweh who faithful gives his
“judgments” “morning after morning”. It is noteworthy from a rhetorical perspective that Zephaniah underlines these contrasts with lexical links.

Even in his conclusion to the stanza (3:5d–e), the author uses assonance to link a contrastive couplet to underline the contrast between the nature of Yahweh and his “rebellious people”. God הָלַךְ יְהוָה “will not be missed”, but the wicked יָדִיעָה “will know no” shame.

Furthermore it is interesting to note that 3:5 provides the same type of theological conclusion to this oracle that Zephaniah used in the oracles to Philistia, Moab, Ammon, and Assyria. At the conclusion of each oracle a strong statement is made about the nature of Yahweh which adds theological depth to the whole series. In the conclusion of the oracle to the Philistines for example, God’s love for his people is presented in the fact that he will return their exiles (2:7d–e). God’s sovereignty over the nations’ gods is affirmed in the conclusion to the oracle to the Moabites and the Ammonites (2:11). The oracle to the Assyrians is concluded by a focus on the power of Almighty God who is able to destroy a world power by simply giving a signal (2:15). The final oracle in the series, which is addressed to Judah herself, concludes with a statement about the righteous character of Yahweh (3:5). The presence of these parallel climactic statements is an important aspect of Zephaniah’s rhetoric.

Zephaniah 3:6–7 – Divine oracle against “the nations”

6

I cut off nations,
their parapets were destroyed.
I devastated the people from their streets,
their cities were laid waste without men, without inhabitants.
7

I said,
“Surely you will fear me,
you will accept correction”,
and her dwelling place will not be cut off
by all that I brought upon her.
But they rose up early,
they perverted all their deeds.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:6a</td>
<td>I destroyed (lit. cut) nations, Past action 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:6b</td>
<td>their parapets were destroyed. Past action 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:6c</td>
<td>I devastated their streets from any pedestrian, Past action 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:6d</td>
<td>their cities were laid waste from any men, no inhabitant. Past action 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:7a</td>
<td>I said, Past action 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:7b</td>
<td>&gt;“Surely you will fear me, Conjecture 1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:7c</td>
<td>&gt;“you will accept correction” Conjecture 1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:7d</td>
<td>and her dwelling will not be destroyed (lit. cut) Conjecture 1c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:7e</td>
<td>by all that I “visited” upon her, Conjecture 1d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:7f</td>
<td>but (lit. surely) they rose early, Counter-conjecture 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:7g</td>
<td>they perverted all their deeds. Counter-conjecture 2</td>
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</table>

The third person section regarding God’s nature (3:5), sets the stage for this section which shifts to first person. In light of the evil nature of man and the
contrastive righteous nature of God, divine punishment is decreed and executed. The theological truth presented in 3:6–7 revolves around the reason why God punishes the nations. Zephaniah points out that his desire is to lead the nations to repentance so that they will not have to suffer destruction. This conforms with the description of God’s nature given in 3:5.

Scholars have struggled to link 3:6 to a particular historical context. The perfect verb tense without a waw suggests that these actions have already been performed. However, Zephaniah’s emphasis is probably not historic at this point. It seems more likely that the author is making the point that the Sovereign God of Israel has the ability to raise up and cast down the nations of the world. This is attested in history for all to observe. The reference to הָעַמים “nations” does not infer that Judah is not included. Indeed Zephaniah’s message to Judah is that her plight will be the same as the nations if she refuses to heed God’s appeal to repentance.38

In 3:7 the author gives the theological reason behind the rise and fall of the nations mentioned in 3:6. The words are formulated as a direct discourse (3:7a) of God spoken to a city, much like he did in 2:15 and 3:1. This explains the use of the second person feminine. The switch to third person in 3:7d–g indicates God’s return to his discourse to the prophet’s audience about the plight of the nations/cities.

The elaborate divine comment in 3:6–7 provides the reader with a powerful explanation of history from Yahweh’s perspective. The author mixes having God speak to the nations in second person and having God speak about the nations in third person to show God’s actions, the reason behind his actions, and the ultimate results of his actions. God has caused nations to suffer (i.e. God’s actions – see 3:6) as a means to persuade them to fear him (i.e. God’s reason A – see 3:7b) so that they might not be destroyed (i.e. God’s reason B – see 3:7d–e). Unfortunately the nations continued in their evil behavior (i.e. Ultimate results – see 3:7f–g), and thus the logical conclusion, which is left implicit, is that the nations would be destroyed.

Sweeney (2003:176) agrees that 3:7 is “a component of a persuasive discourse that is designed to convince a late-seventh-century Jerusalemite audience that YHWH will act to restore the city as a center of creation and the nations”. However, there is no reason to limit this verse to Jerusalem given the broader scope expressed in 3:6 with the usage of the word הָעַמים “nations”.39 Instead it should be seen as an attempt to convince any nation or city that God will help them to survive if they follow his will.40

Following this line of reasoning, the whole stanza can be seen as a theological summary of the oracles found in 2:4–3:5. God’s character that causes him to desire the salvation of the remnant of Judah, also pushes him to desire the salvation of the nations of all the world. This universal application becomes clearer in the following

38 Notice parallel language used with reference to Jerusalem in Jeremiah 2:15, 4:7, and 9:11.

39 Sweeney (2003:175–178) argues that Zephaniah presents the punishment of the nations as a divine attempt to lead Jerusalem to repentance. While this could be argued, a more universal application seems to better fit not only the context of Zephaniah 3, but the whole of Old Testament theology.

40 The statement that God destroyed the “nations” in 3:6 and that he is speaking directly to someone in 3:7 has to be reconciled. If God is speaking to Jerusalem about her historic episodes of near doom (Sweeney 2003:177), then the historic reference to God’s interventions among the nations in 3:6 does not make sense.
stanzas where God calls his worshippers from among the nations, yea even as far as Cush (3:9b–10).

**Zephaniah 3:8–13 – Divine oracle to save a remnant**

8 Therefore, wait for me,  

   oracle of Yahweh,  

   for the day of my rising to take plunder,  

   for my decision is to gather nations,  

   to assemble kingdoms,  

   to pour out on them my indignation, all my mighty anger.  

   For all the earth will be consumed by the fire of my passion,  

9 for then I will restore a faultless lip to the peoples,  

   (for) all of them to call in the name of Yahweh,  

   (and) to serve him next to each other.  

10 From across the rivers of Cush,  

   my worshippers, the daughter of my dispersed ones,  

   will bring my offering.  

11 In that day you will not be ashamed of all your deeds  

   by which you rebelled against me.  

   For then I will turn away from your midst  

   those exulting ones of your haughtiness,  

   and you will no longer continue to be haughty in my holy mountain.  

12 And I will leave a humble and meek people in your midst,  

   and they will take refuge in the name of Yahweh.  

13 The remnant of Israel will not do evil,  

   they will not speak a lie,  

   and a tongue of deceit will not be found in their mouth.  

   For they will graze,  

   and they will lie down,  

   and nothing will be terrifying (to them).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Annotation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:8a</td>
<td>Therefore, wait for me,</td>
<td>S:Exhortation-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8b</td>
<td>oracle of Yahweh,</td>
<td>Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8c</td>
<td>&gt;for the day of my standing for plunder,</td>
<td>(continuation of exhortation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8d</td>
<td>for my decision is to gather nations,</td>
<td>Intention-N 1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8e</td>
<td>&gt;to assemble kingdoms</td>
<td>Intention-N 1b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8f</td>
<td>&gt;to pour out on them my indignation, all the anger of my nose.</td>
<td>Intention-N 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8g</td>
<td>for by the fire of my passion all the earth will be consumed.</td>
<td>Intention-N 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:9a</td>
<td>For then I will change to the peoples a purified lip,</td>
<td>Intention-P 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:9b</td>
<td>&gt;(for) all of them to call in the name of Yahweh,</td>
<td>Intention-P 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:9c</td>
<td>&gt;to serve him in unity (lit. one shoulder).</td>
<td>Intention-P 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:10a</td>
<td>From across the rivers of Cush my worshippers,</td>
<td>Intention-P 4</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>the daughter of my dispersed ones, will bring my offering.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:11a</td>
<td>In that day you will not be ashamed from all your deeds</td>
<td>Intention-P 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:11b</td>
<td>&gt;(with) which you rebelled against me,</td>
<td>Relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse</td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Intention-P</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:11c</td>
<td>for then I will turn from your midst the exulting ones of your haughtiness.</td>
<td>6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:11d</td>
<td>and you will not continue still to be haughty in my holy mountain.</td>
<td>6b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:12a</td>
<td>And I will leave in your midst a humble and meek people, and they will refuge in the name of Yahweh.</td>
<td>7a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:12b</td>
<td>The remnant of Israel will do no evil and they will lie down, and none terrifying (them).</td>
<td>7b</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:13a</td>
<td>and they will not speak lie, for they will graze, and a tongue of deceit will not be found in their mouth,</td>
<td>8a</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:13b</td>
<td>and they will not speak lie,</td>
<td>8b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13c</td>
<td>and none terrifying (them).</td>
<td>8c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13d</td>
<td>And I will leave in your midst a humble and meek people, and they will refuge in the name of Yahweh.</td>
<td>7a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13e</td>
<td>The remnant of Israel will do no evil and they will lie down, and none terrifying (them).</td>
<td>7b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13f</td>
<td>and none terrifying (them).</td>
<td>7c</td>
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As 3:6–7 concludes the series of oracles to Judah and the nations, and gives a glimpse into the heart of Yahweh who wants to discipline peoples of the earth in order to bring them back to himself, Zephaniah is now ready to present another appeal, parallel to the one in 2:1–3. He uses the authoritative formula, לֹ֣עַ הֵֽלֵךְ “Oracle of Yahweh” to show the importance of the following appeal. The conjunction יִֽכְּלָ֣ב, “therefore”, which indicates that 3:6–7 constitutes the reason for obedience to the imperative in 3:8a, links the two stanzas from both a semantic and grammatical perspective.

Yahweh’s appeal in 3:8a is more allusive than that of 2:1–3; he simply states, יַֽלְאִ֖שׁ “Wait on me”. Barth (1980:vol.IV:362) discusses the 14 occurrences of this verb in the MT. The base meaning is that of “waiting” and is often used in narrative texts in a literal fashion (see II Kings 7:9, 9:3, Job 32:4). He goes on to explain that the use of the this verb is theologically significant primarily where the waiting and hoping is somehow concerned with the preservation or restoration of the historical solidarity between Yahweh and ‘Israel.’ It is in this sense that the devout wait ‘for Yahweh,’ i.e., for a demonstration of his help (Psalms 33:20; Isaiah 30:18b; 64:3[4]) or judgment (Zephaniah 3:8), for his counsel (Psalms 106:13) or the fulfillment of his word (Isaiah 8:17; Habakkuk 2:3; Daniel 12:12), or are called upon to wait (Habakkuk 2:3; Zephaniah 3:8) (Barth 1980:vol.IV:362).

It is noteworthy that Barth’s only example of this verb indicating a waiting for something negative is in Zephaniah 3:8. Sweeney (2003:180) recognizes that the verb in question is generally “employed to express the expectation of positive events rather than judgment.” To see this positive dimension one must look at the whole stanza of 3:8–13 and not just the first lines in 3:8c-g. The awaiting points toward יִֽלְיָ֖ה, “the day”, which obviously refers to the “day of Yahweh” so richly described in chapter 1. Zephaniah

41 “It [the oracular formula] thereby serves the persuasive function of the prophet’s presentation of YHWH’s speech by asserting the validity of the source of its claim” (Sweeney 2003:180).

42 Sweeney (2003:179) struggles with the nature of this connector. He says that it typically indicates “the consequential nature of the punishment”, but since he interprets 3:6–7 as referring to Jerusalem and 3:8 as referring to the nations, the connection does not follow.
describes in 3:8–13 five divine actions that will take place on that day. Each action is introduced to the audience with a ki clause, followed by infinitives, with the exception of the first case.

The first case is somewhat atypical due to the fact that it is in the same phrase as the imperative. The “oracle of Yahweh” divides the two phrases that would otherwise be read: לִפְנֵי יְהוָה יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרֵשׁ לָהוּ "Therefore wait for me, for the day of my standing for plunder". God’s first action on “the day” is to plunder, exercising his role as the one punishing the nations.43

Following this initial neutral action, Zephaniah states the first of two negative actions on the part of God.44 God says, יֵשֶׁב בְּלַעֲמֵי אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי מֹאמֵר "For my decision is to gather nations”. The infinitive used here is the same as that of 1:2a where a similar statement of divine judgment was issued. Again the reference to “nations” need not exclude Judah. The oracles have already pointed out that all people face the same plight if they insist on disobeying God. The purpose of this assembly is that Yahweh might יֹצֵא עָלָם לְעַל אָדָם וָאָמָה הַיַּהֲעַת "to pour out over them my indignation, all my hot anger”. This language reflects as well a connection with the divine judgment of previous chapters, where God “pours out” the blood of sinners (1:17d), and appeals to people to protect themselves from the “hot anger” (2:2c) of Yahweh. The second negative action is not distinct from the first, but rather it reiterates the former action using the same words found in 1:18b, בְּאַשְׁרֵי הָעָמָם בְּיַרְדָּן "For by the fire of my passion all the earth will be consumed”. The lexical connections in this stanza provide the author with a rhetorical tool to recall the audience’s attention to things formerly stated. This not only produces a cohesive discourse, but a very powerful one, in which various images are reiterated for emphasis.

The positive actions performed by Yahweh on “the day” are mentioned in 3:9a–10a and 3:10b–12b.45 The first is: יָדַע אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע מֹאמֵר "For I will change the peoples’ lips to be pure”. The grammatical structure of this passage is somewhat difficult (Spreafico 1991:172), but an examination of other parallel passages (e.g. Deuteronomy 23:6, I Samuel 9:10, Hosea 11:8), demonstrates that typically the benefactor of the main action is indicated by a prepositional phrase, in this case, לְאָדָם, “to peoples”. Parallel structures (Deuteronomy 23:6, I Samuel 9:10, 10:6, Nehemiah 13:2, Hosea

43 There is a textual problem in verse 8. The MT actually reads “to/for prey” or “to/for plunder”, which may as Sweeney (2003:181) suggests link to the punishment described in 3:8f. Most scholars emend the text to form the infinitive of the verb “to testify” or the noun “testimony”. HOTTP gives this MT form a “C” rating, which indicates that there is considerable doubt. Given the context of the section it is possible that this first action indicates a rather neutral “testifying” which will later prove to give both negative (3:8g) and positive (3:9a) outcomes. Other passages use this formula as well: Jeremiah 29:23, Micah 1:2, Malachi 3:5, Psalms 50:7.

44 In reality the “negative” connotation is quite relative. Condemnation for an oppressor is negative from his/her perspective, but positive from the perspective of the oppressed. This negative/positive juxtaposition is mentioned at this point because it provides a symmetrical formulation from the overall discourse perspective.

45 Some see the need for a discourse break at verse 9 (Motyer 1998:951), but I prefer to see the contrastive comparison between the “wrath” of God in verse 8 and the “redemption” of God in verse 9 working together as a rhetorical unit. The ki particle introducing these two divine interventions seems to unite them to the imperative of 3:8a.
11:8, Jeremiah 31:13, Amos 8:10) also demonstrate that the direct object of this verb, with or without the direct object marker, precedes the word indicating the result of the change. The word indicating the result of the change may or may not be preceded by a preposition.  

These considerations applied to Zephaniah 3:9 indicate that God will change the peoples’ lips (lit. lips to the people) to purity, or otherwise stated, that he will purify the peoples’ lips. Some scholars (e.g. Sweeney 2003:184, Berlin 1994:133) argue for a literal interpretation of the term “lip/language”, suggesting that God will reverse the action he took at the tower of Babel, or something else of this nature. Without excessive speculation, it seems much more in accord with Hebrew thought to take this term in a figurative sense indicating the speech and behavior of those concerned. Keil (1866:vol.10:156) says, “Lip does not stand for language, but is mentioned as the organ of speech, by which a man expresses the thoughts of his heart, so that purity of the lips involves or presupposes the purification of the heart”. This interpretation is certainly within the semantic range of the verb “to turn” (Harris 1980:512–513).

From a rhetorical perspective, the most significant element of this verse lies in the term אמ "peoples”. Contrary to the expectations of the Israelite audience, the prophet’s message points to some type of conversion of those whom are typically considered objects of God’s divine wrath. Following the discussion of 3:6–8 which speaks of the punishment of יב ינ “nations”, this allusion to the purification of some among this number is “unthinkable and unexpected”.  

God’s intent is further amplified in 3:9b where those of pure lips (i.e. כלם “all of them”) are כלרא יביש "to call in the name of Yahweh". Spreafico (1991:173) points out that typically this expression indicates the action of “invoking” God. One of the passages where this expression is found is in I Kings 18:24. This passage helps highlight the conversion nature of Zephaniah 3:9. The prophet Elijah tells the prophets of Baal that they will call on the name of their אל “god”, but he will call on the name of יהוה “Yahweh”. The same juxtaposition is found in the book of Zephaniah, where the prophet claims that Yahweh will waste away כלוה יבוח "all the gods of the earth" (2:11b), and then "they all [i.e. peoples] invoke/call the name of Yahweh".

A further amplification of this theme is introduced in Zephaniah 3:9c. The same people are said כלרא יביש שמים פ tekst יבוח "to serve him [Yahweh] with one shoulder [i.e. in unity]". The reference here to unity provokes the audience to question the scope of this unity. Is the unity that between those of purified lips who have come from the nations invoking the name of Yahweh? If indeed these people are converted to God and have a common faith, such a reference would seem to be redundant. A more

46 Spreafico (1991:172) confirms this structure: “La costruzione sintatticamente più vicina è il sintagma הפק + oggetto + f seguito dalla persona: “dare, sostituire qualcosa a qualcuno”.

47 “The expression הפק תק apparently refers to a pure or special speech necessary so that the nations may all speak a common language, unlike the variety of languages that they speak in empirical reality or, from the view of tradition, in the aftermath of the tower of Babel incident....The range of meanings suggests a special speech, in contrast to the common languages spoken by the nations, that will enable them to speak together to YHWH” (Sweeney 2003:184).

probably explanation would be to see this reference as unity between those “of purified lips” from the nations and the “poor of the land” (Zephaniah 2:3) from Israel. This theological concept of spiritual unity beyond ethnic boundaries, no doubt shocked the Israelite audience of Josiah’s time.

The image of this universal scope of God’s positive intervention concludes with a reference to Cush in 3:10. Zephaniah’s reference to Cush has more to do with rhetoric than geographic precision. As has already been noted in the discussion on Zephaniah 2:12, Cush indicated the extreme borders of the known world, and was used much like “Timbuktu” would be used by Westerners today.

In this passage God affirms that נָבָא “my suppliants” and בת הַדָּעָה “the daughter of my dispersed ones” are in far away places all over the world. He points to a time when their worship will be exemplified by their bringing him מְנַהְגָּה “my offering”. Sweeney (2003:185) sees an intertextual relationship between this passage and Isaiah 18–19. The parallel relationship is clear, but it seems that Isaiah is making more specific geographic references than Zephaniah, who employs the use of Cush more from a rhetorical perspective than a historical/geographical one.

Scholars differ on the identity of these “suppliants” and “dispersed daughters”. Many interpret them as references to post-exilic Israelites coming back to Jerusalem. While this theme is common in prophetic literature, there is nothing in this passage that excludes a broader reference to God’s “universal people”. The term נְרֹּה “suppliant” indicates anyone who makes an entreaty. The phrase בת הַדָּעָה “the daughter of my dispersed ones” never occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, but neither term refers exclusively to the people of Israel. Enemies of God, as well as his people, have been “dispersed” (Ezekiel 34:5, Zechariah 13:7, I Samuel 11:1, Numbers 10:35, Psalms 68:2). “The daughter of” is a quite common reference to Jerusalem, but the appellative is also used with reference to other places, such as Babylon (Isaiah 47:1), Egypt (Isaiah 46:11), Tyre (Psalms 45:13), Tarshish (Isaiah 23:10), Sidon (Isaiah 23:12), Dibon (Jeremiah 48:18), and Edom (Lamentations 4:21–22).

The stanza 3:8–13 indicates four divine actions that Yahweh will accomplish on “the day”. The first two are negative, while the second two are positive. The preceding discussion on 3:9a–10a deals with the first of these two positive actions. The present discussion on 3:10b–12b indicates that God’s second positive action is to purge the arrogant from his universal people.

The phrase观音 לָהֶב “in that day” introduces this divine action. The action is made explicit a few lines later with the phrase观音 לָהֶב “for then” (3:11c), which introduced the preceding divine action as well in 3:9a. Most scholars think that God is addressing Judah in this passage, and assuring her that she will no longer need to be ashamed of her behavior because the arrogant will have been purged out from her midst. The position presented in this research has posited a wider audience, which includes the “nations” as well as “Judah”. Perhaps one could interpret the reference here to “Judah” theologically as the “spiritual remnant”.

The material in 2:1–3:5 points to arrogance as a key characteristic of those deserving the wrath of Yahweh. The haughtiness of Moab and Ammon is described with the term观音 לָהֶב “their pride” (2:10), which comes from the same root as观音 לָהֶב “your pride” used in 3:11c. Certainly the picture of Assyria in 2:15 and the leaders of Jerusalem in 3:4 denote haughtiness even though they do not use the same lexical item to describe it. Part of God’s universal conversion process will eliminate that trait from among those who gather观音 לָהֶב “in/on my holy mountain”.

61
In contrast with this arrogance, God’s people will be characterized as a “people humble and meek” (3:12a). In 3:12a God says that he will leave them “in your midst”. This second person feminine singular reference seems to distinguish the “people being left”, from the “people in whose midst” they are being left. One possible interpretation would link this to 3:9c, and see a reference to the unity of God’s followers serving him “shoulder to shoulder”. Interestingly enough, God also promises in 3:12b that these people will take refuge “in the name of Yahweh”. This statement also stands parallel to 3:9b where those of the nations choose to invoke the name of Yahweh.

Having identified a “humble and meek people” whose “lips have been purified” by Yahweh, and who have come to his “holy mountain” with an “offering” for the Lord from the distant area lands “across the rivers of Cush”, Zephaniah continues his description of the Israelite counterpart, “the rest of Israel”. They will conform to their God’s nature in that “they will not practice evil” (3:5, 15). Contrary to the Israelites in 1:9 who filled the houses with “deceit”, the remnant will not speak any “lie” or have a tongue of “fraud”. Instead of being like “lions” and “wolves” (3:3), they will be like well-fed sheep, laying down to rest, who terrorize no one (3:13d–f).

Zephaniah’s rhetorical strategy of contrastive imagery powerfully promotes a behavior that will benefit his audience with God’s blessings. The behavior of the Lord’s enemies, on the other hand, demonstratively results in destruction and annihilation. As the prophet juxtaposes these behaviors and their results, the overall discourse maintains cohesion and presents a strong case for following Yahweh.

**Zephaniah 3:14–20d – Divine promise of salvation**

14 Shout with joy, daughter of Zion,  
Shout out, Israel.  
Rejoice and be glad with all (your) heart, daughter of Jerusalem.  
15 Yahweh has turned away your judgment,  
he has turned away your enemy.  
The King of Israel, Yahweh, is in your midst.  
You will never fear evil.  
16 In that day it will be said to Jerusalem,  
“Do not fear, Zion,  
let your hands not drop”.

17 Yahweh your God is in your midst,  
a warrior who saves.  
He will rejoice over you with joy,  
his love,  
he will rejoice over you with a shout of joy.  
18 I will remove from you those grieving for the appointed time;  
they were a burden on her, a reproach.

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49 Translators differ on where to close this quotation for lack of any definitive evidence. One could easily make a case to close it at 3:17 because of the shift in verse 18 to direct speech in the first person by God.
Behold I will deal with all your oppressors at that time, and I will save the limping one, and I will gather the scattered one. I will make them a praise and an honor in all the earth where they have been put to shame.

In that time, I will bring you back, and in the time of my gathering of you, indeed I will make you an honor and a praise among all the peoples of the earth, in my returning your captives before you.
The imperatives all serve to intensify the festive announcement of Yahweh’s promised salvation and restoration. The main focus of imperatives like “shout joyfully”, “shout in song”, “rejoice”, and “be glad” is not to change behavior, but to introduce the reasons the people have to be happy.

These reasons are developed in the rest of the stanza (3:15–3:20d), and basically describe the faithfulness of Yahweh as he restores the good fortunes of the remnant of his people Israel. Zephaniah begins by using the same verb הֶרֶד to describe God’s turning away that he had used in 3:11c to describe God’s turning away of the arrogant. In 3:15a God “turns away” Israel’s judgment for her sins, and in 3:15b the prophet uses a synonym to indicate that God will also turn away Israel’s enemies. In reality this second phrase expounds upon the way Israel’s judgment would have been executed.

The second aspect of the reason Israel has to rejoice, revolves around the protective presence of Yahweh. Zephaniah presents the Lord as מֶלֶךְ “king”, פֶּה “warrior”, and יָהִי “your God”, three terms of strength. Because this powerful entity is בְּפֶרֶשֶׁת “in your [Israel] midst”, a phrase repeated in 3:15d and 3:17a, Israel has no reason to be afraid (3:15d–16c). Her Warrior God יְהֹוָה “saves” her (3:17b).

The third reason Israel has to be happy is due to God’s special love. In 3:17 three statements describe God’s love for his people. The first is: הָרָא מָצַאת הָרָא מָצַאת “He delights over you with joy”. This structure is common in the Hebrew Bible to describe the relationship between God and his people. Isaiah uses it as he compares God’s love to the love between a man and his wife (62:5).

The second statement is: יָרָא יָרָא יָרָא “he will be silent in his love”. Scholars have interpreted this verb in various ways. The tri-consonantal root הָרָא can mean either “to engrave, plow, devise” or “to be silent”. Sweeney (2003:202–203) insists on the first interpretation, and then proceeds to assign it a sexual inference in order to point to the phrase as a metaphor of God’s love. He points to Judges 14:18 as evidence of this figurative use, but this is far from conclusive in that sexual activity between Samson’s wife and Samson’s friends cannot be assumed. Wanting to accept this first form, it would be more logical to use the third meaning of “devise” or “plan” (Proverbs 3:29, 14:22). Other scholars derive הָרָא from the second form הָרָא “to be silent” and translate the verb as a hiphil, which gives the idea that God “silences” or “consoles” Israel with his love. This causative meaning of this root in the hiphil is not

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50 It is noteworthy that the flow of the book moves from a condemnation of Judah in chapters 1-2 and then passes to a promise of restoration that includes the rest of Israel as well as Judah.

51 While the salvation of Israel is in focus in this pericope (cf. four imperatives with specific reference to Israel, 3:20d refers to Israelis “returning” from the peoples of the earth), a theological interpretation would include the “spiritual remnant”.

52 Many translators have followed the LXX and emended the text (דְּמַר > הָרָא) to obtain the translation: “He renews [you] in his love”.

53 Harris (1980:vol.1:327–328) explains that the basic meaning of the verb is “to engrave”, and that by extension this was used in the agricultural context to indicate “plowing”. This usage then developed a figurative usage of “doing” or “working with”. This type of usage can be seen in Hosea 10:13, Job 4:8, and Judges 14:18.

54 BDB 1907:361.
well attested (only Job 3:11) in the MT. While this interpretation seems to be the most appropriate one given the immediate context, the author could possibly have intended to express a similar notion by saying that God was “silent” in his love, i.e. he no longer expressed his anger to them for their evil behavior. Still other scholars prefer to amend the text in accordance with the LXX to use the root שֵׁרֵד “to renew.”

The third statement expressing God’s loving relationship with Israel is: הִנְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים צוּר נָחַל “he rejoices over you with a shout of joy”. This statement is semantically and grammatically parallel with the one in 3:17c. Both express God’s joy vis-à-vis his people Israel.

The final reason for Israel’s rejoicing is that God has removed some people from her midst who were a burden and a shame (3:18). Using punitive language from 1:2, God says, in first person, that he will גָּלַל “gather” these people from Israel. The object of this verb is the niphal masculine plural participle גָּלַל “grieving ones”. This participle is in construct with the prepositional phrase מֵחָלַל “from the festival/appointed time”. Sweeney (2003:203–204) suggests that the reference of מֵחָלַל “festival/appointed time” here is not to the happy occasions of corporate worship, but rather to the much dreaded יום יָהָי “day of Yahweh” described in chapter one. Those who grieve on that day will be those who have deserved God’s just punishment, the syncretistic priests and prophets (1:4–5, 3:4), the unjust civil leaders (1:8–9, 3:3), the dishonest merchants (1:10–11), and the complacent rich (1:12–13). Those evil doers will be “gathered” and removed from among God’s people.

The object in 3:18a becomes the subject in 3:18b. Those evil doers, who will grieve due to their just reward, they are a מֵחָלַל “burden on her [Jerusalem] and reproach”. The purging of these elements from God’s people is an occasion of great joy from a religious and social perspective.

Israel’s reasons for rejoicing are summarized and concluded in 3:19–20d. This final strophe is marked with the classic demonstrative particle מִי “behold”, which calls the audience’s attention to these final climactic summary remarks. The particle is coupled with the first person pronominal suffix and is followed by the participle עָנָהוּ “doing”.

This divine action is indeed the focus of the passage. The generic participle introduces the action, that is then specified with the verb עָנָהוּ “and I will save”. Zephaniah presents the exact nature of God’s salvation with two sets of verbs in a parallel structure. The first set talks about God gathering his suffering people, while the second talks about him turning their shame into praise and honor. The final line, using an unconjugated verb as was done in the initial line, further specifies the focus of God’s intervention. The following table displays the parallel structure that Zephaniah uses as part of his rhetorical strategy.

55 The shift from third person to first person is noteworthy. Some would divide the text based on this shift, but I prefer to maintain the thematic unity with the preceding verses. It seems to be a rhetorical strategy to first state a concept in third person, then to reiterate it in first person (See Glanz 2012).

56 The switch to the third person feminine singular here is difficult to explain with certainty (Berlin 1964:145), but Floyd (2000:238) maintains that the second person is used to refer to the audience’s generation, i.e. “the daughter of Jerusalem” in 3:14, while the third person reference’s the previous generation, i.e. the mother of the daughter. De Regt (2001:223-224) agrees with this position in his article on person shift in the prophetical books.
Table 12: Semantic parallelism in Zephaniah 3:19–20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:19a</td>
<td>“I doing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19b</td>
<td>“I will save”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19c</td>
<td>“I will gather”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19d</td>
<td>“I will put shame to praise and honor”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20a-b</td>
<td>“I will bring”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20c</td>
<td>“I will give praise and honor”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20d</td>
<td>“I returning exiles”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lexical choices made in this summary strophe help the audience to recall previous themes discussed earlier in the book. This type of linkage enhances the cohesion of the entire text, and makes for a powerful conclusion that solidifies the points made throughout Zephaniah’s message. The use of the generic verb קרה “to do” in 3:19a parallels the use of the same verb in the summary statement for chapter 1 (see 1:18c). The verb חיה “and I will save” in 3:19b reflects the description of God as the חיה חיה “a warrior who saves” in 3:17b. God’s action of gathering his people together to restore their good fortunes in 3:19c and 3:20b juxtaposes the usage of the word in 3:8e where God is said “to gather (ןֵב piel) the nations”, for judgment. The references in 1:2a make the same juxtaposition using the synonym קרה “to gather together”. The final verb used in the book no doubt had a tremendous impact on an audience who recognized that going into exile was a real possibility. Yahweh’s restorative intervention, even after the worst case scenario of destruction and exile, finds expression in the phrase £ekyEt˚b¸H “my returning your captives” which parallels the same phrase found in 2:7e. These lexical links undergird Zephaniah’s rhetoric.

The recipients of this divine salvation are referred to in both the second and third person interchangeably. The author also switches from singular references to the recipients in 3:19a-37c, to plural references in 3:19d–20d. These structures represent normal discourse techniques of Hebrew prophetic literature to enhance artistry and cohesion, and do not necessarily point to a particular rhetorical scheme. Zephaniah does, however, refer to recipients in such a way as to sympathize with their difficult plight, and thus gain credibility. He uses such terms as: ™«y¬Fnav¸m “your oppressed”, hAvElOFcah “the limping one”, hAxfl–d«Fnah “the scattered one”, and £ôekyEt˚b¸H “your exiles”.

The temporal setting of this divine salvation also comes to focus in 3:19–20d as Zephaniah concludes the book with a final promise of restoration to those of Israel who will have been faithful to Yahweh. The threefold repetition of the phrase £הכ “in that time” (3:19a, 3:20a, 3:20b without the demonstrative pronoun) links

57 Harris 1990:vol.II:783.

58 It should be noted that both in 2:7 and 3:20 the Hebrew text has a ketiv/gere variant that allows for two distinct translations, either “captive” or “that which is returned”. The translation proposed follows the Masoretes’ stance that “read the expression as a reference to YHWH’s intention to restore the captivity of Judah” (Sweeney 2003:132). Ben zvi (1991:162) points to the forms in Numbers 42:10 and Jeremiah 29:14 as proof of the strong connection to the idea of captivity.

59 Compare 3:19a (“your oppressed”) to 3:19d (“their shame”).
to the “day of Yahweh” described in chapter one, and the exhortation in 2:1–3 to repent “before the appointed time comes”.

Another element of setting in this passage refers to the place where divine salvation will occur. God says in 3:19d and in 3:20c that Israel’s honor will be restored “in all the peoples of the earth”. This restoration of honor is juxtaposed to the destruction of the arrogant peoples of the earth. Three times in the book of Zephaniah the scope of God’s wrath is said to be on “all the earth” (1:18b, 18c, 3:8).

This final summary of Yahweh’s intervention on behalf of Israel contains the macro structure of the entire book of Zephaniah. Lexical links with the rest of the book abound as Zephaniah concisely mentions the setting, the principal action, and the main benefactors of the story of God’s restoration of Israel. The telling of this story no doubt had a strong rhetorical impact on a people tottering on the brink of destruction due to their disloyalty to “the King of Israel, Yahweh” (3:15c). Zephaniah’s climax is clear: “Though we be taken into exile, Yahweh will bring us back”.

**Zephaniah 3:20e - Conclusion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3:20e</th>
<th>said Yahweh.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The final phrase of the text of Zephaniah has a tremendously important role in Zephaniah’s rhetorical strategy. As a prophet Zephaniah was speaking for God rather than himself. His audience has to be reminded that this “sermon” comes from Yahweh, rather than a political servant of King Josiah. For this reason Zephaniah begins (1:1a) and closes (3:20e) his discourse with reference to this key theological truth, namely a true prophet speaks for God (see Deuteronomy 18:19–22).

Zephaniah’s concise conclusion in 3:20e claims that he has been true to his prophetic mandate. He has spoken the words of God.

The author claims divine authority throughout the book in numerous ways. The most common technique is by using direct speech in the mouth of God. When Yahweh says, “I will punish evil”, the author attempts to move out of the scene and allow God to speak directly to his audience. These direct statements are sometimes underlined with an affirmation that this is an “oracle of Yahweh” (1:2b, 3e, 2:9b, 3:8b).

A final consideration regarding this statement revolves around the question of whether or not it should be seen as a separate rhetorical unit. It could be argued that the sentence simply assigns the previous affirmations to Yahweh, and fulfills no larger role in the textual organization. While that would be a legitimate analysis, this research prefers to mark it as a distinct unit which constitutes the second part of an *inclusio* with “word of Yahweh” found in the beginning words of the book.

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60 “Finally, v. 20 provides the climax for 3:14, and indeed for both the parenetic speech in 2:1–3:20 and even the book as a whole, by pointing to the future restoration and recognition of Jerusalem and the return of its exiles” (Sweeney 2003:207).
In this way the whole book is couched and presented as a message from Yahweh, certainly something that should not be taken lightly by the audience.

### 2.5 Rhetorical overview of Zephaniah 1–3

Zephaniah organizes his message in an ABAB structure, in which two announcements of punishment are followed by two appeals for repentance. The first announcement and appeal are directed to Judah and Jerusalem (1:4), while the second announcement and appeal are addressed to all the nations of the earth (3:8), including “the remnant of Israel” (3:13).\(^{61}\)

In all of the announcements of punishment, the prophet supplies his audience with the reasons why Yahweh decided to punish the nation in question. These reasons are given both in a direct and in an indirect fashion. In the case of Moab and Ammon God says that he “heard their tauntings” and “therefore” he would make Moab like Sodom and Ammon like Gomorrah (2:8–9). In the first announcement of punishment to Judah, God says that he will “cut off” the one who turned back from Yahweh (1:5–6). Implied in this description of divine punishment, the Judean audience can easily understand that their turning from God is the reason why they would be punished.

In all the appeals for repentance, Zephaniah provides his audience with ample motivation. In 2:1–3 a possible escape from punishment provides the motivation for repentance. In 3:8–20, the appeal is much more elaborate. While escape from punishment provides part of the motivation for repentance, the positive portrayal of divine blessings for the remnant (i.e. God’s people from among all nations) constitute a major motivating factor for loyalty to Yahweh.

This ABAB structure provides a basic rhetorical outline of the book of Zephaniah, which is shown in the following table.

#### Table 13: Rhetorical ABAB structure of Zephaniah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A – 1:2–18 – Destruction of Judah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B – 2:1–3 – Appeal to Judah to “seek the Lord”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A – 2:4–3:7 – Destruction of Nations (including Judah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B – 3:8–20 – Appeal to Nations and Judah to “wait on the Lord”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next table elaborates on this outline and indicates the implicit and explicit reasons for the punishments and the motivations used in the appeals.

#### Table 14: Complete rhetorical outline of Zephaniah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A – 1:2–18 – Destruction of Judah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:2–6 – Destruction of Judah and reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Baal and Molech worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Worship of the heavenly bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Turning back from Yahweh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{61}\) In the beginning of the book, the focus is on Jerusalem and Judah (1:4–2:3), but as the subject of restoration is explained, the author broadens the scope to “the remnant of Israel” (3:13, see also 3:14, 3:15), which presumably would include the northern tribes as well as the tribe of Judah.
1:7 – Declaration of the day of Yahweh for his “sacrifice”
1:8–13 – Destruction of Judah specified for guilty parties
   -Civil leaders committing syncretism
   -Merchants
   -Complacent wealthy people
1:14–16 – Description of the day of wrath
1:17–18 – Summary: All will be destroyed because of sin.

B – 2:1–3 – Appeal to Judah to “seek the Lord” with motivations
   2:1–2 – “Gather”
   -in order to avoid the anger of Yahweh
   2:3 – “Seek Yahweh, righteousness, and humility”
   -in order to avoid the anger of Yahweh

A – 2:4–3:7 – Destruction of Nations (including Judah)
   2:4–7 – Destruction of the Philistines (their land is given to Judah)
   2:8–11 – Destruction of the Ammonites and Moabites (their land is given to Judah)
   2:12 – Destruction of Cush
   2:13–15 – Destruction of Assyria
   3:1–5 – Destruction of Jerusalem
   3:6–7 – Rationale for divine destruction of the nations (i.e. Yahweh attempts to draw nations to himself with a demonstration of his punitive power over sinners.)

B – 3:8–20 – Appeal to Nations and Judah/Israel to “wait on the Lord” with motivations
   3:8 – 13 “Wait on me”
   -God will testify (positive or negative)
   -God will “gather” nations and kingdoms to curse them.
   -God will “burn” the earth, i.e. evil doers.
   -God will “convert” a remnant among the nations.
   -God will “purge the arrogant” from among his people.
   -God will give “rest and refuge” to his people.
   3:14 – 20 “Rejoice daughter of Zion”
   -God will “turn away your judgment”.
   -God will protect you.
   -God will love you.
   -God will remove the arrogant from your midst.
   -God will “return the exiles”.

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62 Another possibility would be to add verse 12 to the previous section as an indication of the extent to which God would submit the nations of the world. The only reason to not divide the text in this manner is to maintain the geographic symmetry in the oracles to the nations.
2.6 A Summary of rhetorical devices used in Zephaniah

Having worked through the text of the book of Zephaniah, a review of the various rhetorical devices used and discussed should prove helpful to reiterate the rhetoric used in this ancient Israelite prophetic literature.

Relevant contextual analysis

Zephaniah’s rhetoric bears the hallmark of his cultural and historical context. Indeed any good rhetorician must sincerely concern himself or herself with the situation and the background of the audience, i.e. their socio-cultural frame of reference. Zephaniah’s text aims directly at the Judean audience of Jerusalem during King Josiah’s religious reform in the midst of turmoil among the world leaders. His message also builds upon the history of his audience, calling attention to ancient events (e.g. the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah), as well as contemporary situations (e.g. parallel religious practices and the norms of civil leaders). Interwoven in these historical socio-political contexts, the prophet allows the background of their ancient religious heritage to penetrate his message and develop his appeal to the people.

Claim of divine authority

One key rhetorical device used by Zephaniah, particularly applicable to an Israelite world view, revolves around the concept of prophetic utterances. The prophet draws his authority from Yahweh who speaks through him. Prophets of Israel were both trained and untrained, rich and poor, urban and rural. Their background was not important with regard to their credibility in so much as their distinctive was that they spoke on behalf of God. Because of this theological base, Zephaniah uses various devices to identify his message as God’s message. He begins and concludes the book with affirmations that this is the word of God. He also uses direct speech on the part of Yahweh in 41% of the text. This technique is used to underline the divine authority of his message. The phrase “Oracle of Yahweh” or “Word of Yahweh” punctuates this divine claim in five different passages.

Hyperbole

Zephaniah uses hyperbole at the beginning of his message to shock his audience and gain their attention. His announcement of the “end of the earth” (1:2–4, 18) should be understood in this light, rather than as an eschatological prophecy. It is noteworthy that this cosmic cataclysm is used only at the beginning of the discourse. Once the audience has been “shocked”, there is no further need to use this device with reference to the whole earth. The instances of hyperbole in the rest of the book refer to more specific and limited geographic areas (e.g. “none will be left” 2:5).

63 This calculation is based upon verses where God is obviously speaking in first person. That amounts to 30 verses out of a total of 73. Verses counted as direct speech by God are: 1:2–6, 8–13,17, 2:5–10, 12, 3:6–13, 18–20.

64 Zephaniah 1:2b, 3e, 2:5b, 9b, 3:8e.
Dramatic appeal to the senses

The prophet’s description of the “day of the Lord” uses language that appeals to the physical senses of people to tap into their emotions. Sounds of crying, wailing, and warfare, along with visions of darkness and gloom, contribute to the emotional distress of the occasion (1:10, 14–16). In 1:17 there is a particularly grotesque image of “blood and entrails” being poured out on the ground. This language has much the same impact as hyperbole on the Israelite audience as they listen to the prophet.

Metaphor and similes

Hebrew poetry typically uses many figures of speech, especially metaphors and similes. Zephaniah is no exception. He uses metaphors to describe God’s probing Jerusalem to find the evil doers (1:12). The “sacrifice” image in 1:7 actually constitutes a metaphor in that it is not a true gesture of worship. The leaders of Jerusalem are depicted as “roaring lions” and “evening wolves” (3:3), and the Judean exiles are called “the lame” in 3:19. Zephaniah also uses similes in various passages (1:12, 17, 2:2).

Contra-expectation

One of Zephaniah’s most spectacular rhetorical devices employs contra-expectation to surprise his Israelite audience and invite them to see something from a totally different perspective. When the prophet talks about a “sacrifice” and “God consecrating those invited” (1:7), they have no idea that he is referring to their destruction. This type of device not only surprises the audience, but it forces them to reflect on the meaning of words at a deeper level. Metaphors have that rhetorical effect, especially when their form leads them in a different direction from their meaning. Another example is found in chapter 2:4–3:5, where the oracle against Jerusalem follows the oracles against the nations, no doubt surprising the Israelite audience that their plight would be the same as that of the pagans.

Indirect statement of reason

Zephaniah can be very direct in stating the reasons for which God is punishing people. He explicitly states, for example, that the Moabites and Ammonites will be punished because they insulted Israel and tried to take her land (2:8–10). However Zephaniah also uses indirect statement of reason, relying on his audience’s theological and intertextual frame of reference (i.e. torah) to interpret descriptions as a statement of reason. In 1:4–9 the author states that God will punish the remnant of Baal, those who worship celestial bodies, worshippers of Molech, and those avoiding the threshold. On the surface these are descriptions of who will be punished, but any ancient Israelite would understand immediately the direct relationship between the punishment and the sin that brought on the punishment. This indirect statement of reason has the same advantage of the rhetorical device of contra-expectation, in that it forces the audience to reflect at a deeper level than what is being stated on the surface seeking personal relevance in the communication.

Rhetorical use of lexical items

Zephaniah uses lexical choices in a variety of ways to enhance the rhetorical impact of his message. In 1:10–11, for example, he uses series of synonyms or related words to build emotional intensity (i.e. cry > wail > loud crash > wail). In 1:11 and
2:5 he uses the term “Canaan”, as a double entendre to communicate the enmity between the people in question and God’s people. The author exploits masterfully lexical linkage throughout the whole book, both in a contrastive manner (e.g. 3:8e and 3:19c) and in a non-contrastive manner (e.g. 1:18c and 3:19a), to provide cohesion and emphasis.

**Direct discourse**

On two occasions Zephaniah uses direct discourse in a rhetorical fashion. In both cases the author attempts to express more than what was actually said. He wants to help the audience feel the “attitude” or “perception” of the reported speaker. In 2:15 the direct discourse in the mouth of Nineveh describes her pride. In 3:7 God’s words exemplify his perceptions and hopes for the nations he was trying to reach. This technique of direct discourse has a powerful impact because it invites the audience to become a participant in others’ thoughts.

**Thematic symmetry**

While some may argue that thematic symmetry constitutes a component of discourse analysis rather than rhetorical analysis, it seems legitimate to see the linking of strophes and the symmetry of stanzas as a way to lead the audience’s thought processes to a particular conclusion. The overall ABAB thematic structure of the book, for example, leads the reader/listener to understand that God’s threats of punishment are motivated by a desire for repentance. Geographical symmetry in 1:10–11 and in 2:4–15, helps the reader to not only visualize the actions taking place, but also comprehend the underlying message. In the case of geographical symmetry in the nation oracles, the underlying message is that all of the earth is subject to Yahweh’s control. Indeed this kind of symmetry aids the author in making his point and helping the audience see the message as a whole.

2.7 A summary of rhetorical arguments in Zephaniah

Rhetoric goes beyond stylistic techniques and devices to include considerations about the mode of argumentation. The speaker persuades his/her audience to implement a particular action based on a series of arguments or reasons. These are deeply rooted in the cognitive environment of the Hebrew world in the seventh century.

In this discourse Zephaniah appeals to Judah to be loyal to Yahweh and his Torah covenant. The arguments in favor of that “seeking Yahweh” (2:3) are described in the following sub-sections.

**Punishment**

A typical argument used in Hebrew prophetic literature to motivate people to repent revolves around the concept of punishment. This argument seems to be a universal motivation for behavior change. Zephaniah graphically describes the divine punishment that people will receive if they do not turn to him. This “day of God’s great wrath” serves as the principal backdrop for Zephaniah’s appeal. Intense physical pain resulting in a violent death (e.g. 1:17) lurks over those who refuse to give

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65 In reality, these two domains are inter-related, at times even inter-woven with each other.
credence to the prophetic message. Since many of the guilty parties in Zephaniah’s audience were wealthy, it comes as no surprise that a plundering of their wealth (1:13), and a destruction of their assets (2:7, 9, 14) constitutes another aspect of their punishment.

Not only is the severity of the punishment used to motivate people, but this is coupled with the imminence of the punishment. In 2:2 the prophet describes this punitive event as something overtaking man swiftly and suddenly, like the chaff that is quickly blown away, never to return again.

**Reward**

Juxtaposed to the punishment is the reward that is promised to those who respond positively to the appeal for repentance. A reward with tremendous historical and theological heritage for the Israelites was the possibility to maintain control over the land that God had given to their patriarchs. Zephaniah makes this promise in relation to the destruction of the Philistines, Moabites, and Ammonites who had taken some of the land in question (2:4–6, 8–11). This promised inheritance was the most important reward that the Israelites could hope for.

**Social Justice**

An argument related to the concept of reward deals with the social issues of the time. Zephaniah underlines serious abuses by the rich and the powerful, who God promises to punish (1:9, 3:3–4, 11, 19). This sense of divine justice no doubt appealed to the oppressed. The idea of having a society where those abuses did not exist must have encouraged them to align themselves with the righteous Yahweh who would dispense his justice each morning (3:5).

**Shalom**

While Zephaniah does not use the word “shalom”, he certainly evokes the Israelite cognitive frame of reference where shalom is connected to following Yahweh. This shalom is both social and spiritual in nature. The community will be free from the “arrogant” and will be allowed to rest without being terrorized (3:11–13). Members of God’s people will be consoled and loved by their “warrior Savior” (3:17).

**Honor**

Zephaniah’s audience had been humiliated over the centuries by their powerful enemies in the Middle East. Israel had been carried off to Assyrian captivity, and Judah was being threatened on every side. The divine promise of receiving honor “among all the peoples of the earth”, was no doubt a tremendous motivation for them to turn back to their God. This key value in their culture had been absent since the decline of the Davidic kingdom; a possible return to an honored position among the nations was a powerful motivation. Zephaniah also promises that they would not be “put to shame” for the sins they had committed (3:11).

**Theological tradition**

Zephaniah mentions two important and interrelated elements of Israelite tradition, the temple and torah (3:4). The Judean society during the time of Josiah could easily see that these traditional elements of their religious heritage had degenerated. The prophet says that the “priests profane the sanctuary and do violence
to the law. (3:4)” The image of a saved community consists of “the meek and humble” on Yahweh’s “holy mountain” (3:11–13). Purity and righteousness, so long upheld by the Torah, would be restored in a society where people remained loyal to Yahweh, the King of Israel.

Superiority of Yahweh

The prophet’s presentation of Yahweh in this book supersedes the image of a local god, who reigns only in Israel. While he is the “King of Israel” (3:15), he is also the Lord over all the nations. Each nation had their god or gods, and Zephaniah claims Yahweh is superior to them all and will indeed cause them to “waste away” (2:11). His worshippers will come from all over the earth, even “from beyond the rivers of Cush” (3:10), and bring him offerings (3:10). Zephaniah encourages his audience to follow Yahweh because he is the greatest of all, and will ultimately cause every one to bow in submission.
3 – Contextual frames of reference in Zephaniah’s textual structure

3.1 Textual frames of reference

The previous discussion has focused around the “mental models” (Wendland 2008:110) that deeply influence the formulation of a discourse or communication event. Wendland’s contextual frames of reference, socio-cultural, organizational, and situational, have been examined to explore the foundation stones of Zephaniah’s work. They constitute the heart of the audience’s cognitive environment.

In that context Zephaniah developed a “text” that merits careful examination from a “textual frame of reference.” This element of Wendland’s model directs our research toward the grammatical, stylistic, organizational, rhetorical, and literary features that the Hebrew author used in his discourse. These features were not idiosyncratic, but rather came from a repertoire of textual devices available to the seventh century Israelite world.

**Intertextuality**

The underlying concept of this research and Wendland’s model revolves around the important influence of context. The last chapter showed how the worldview of a culture influences a particular discourse. That mental mindset leads the author to relate to his/her audience in a particular way. In that process the author mentally accesses other analogous discourses that resonate in that context, and uses them to formulate a new discourse. Wendland expresses this concept of intertextuality in the following way:

No text exists in and of itself alone either. Rather, it always consists, more or less, of other texts. In other words, a given text is either partially or wholly derived from, based on, related to, or in some way conditioned by other texts with respect to general ideas, presuppositions, structural arrangements, particular concepts, key terms, or memorable phrases. These are all different aspects of intertextual influence (Wendland 2008:110).

Some examples of intertextuality have already been mentioned in the previous chapter in the discussion on the situational frame of reference, such as the connections between Zephaniah and Deuteronomy. Another example can be seen by comparing Isaiah 34:5–16 with the book of Zephaniah. It would appear that Zephaniah used some of the same notions and phrases originally authored by Isaiah in an analogous context of prophetic doom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isaiah 34</th>
<th>Zephaniah</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34:6</td>
<td>1:7</td>
<td>“the Lord holds a sacrifice”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34:8</td>
<td>1:14–15, 18</td>
<td>“the Lord’s day of retribution”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34:9</td>
<td>2:9</td>
<td>“land shall become burning pitch”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34:11</td>
<td>2:14</td>
<td>“desert owl and screech owl”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34:12</td>
<td>2:15</td>
<td>kingdom in ruins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perhaps the key element in common between the two prophetic writings, that of Isaiah 34 and Zephaniah, is the “cosmic cataclysm” promised as divine reaction to Israel’s rebellion against their covenant with Yahweh. Isaiah in at least two cases capped an accusatory discourse aimed at specific people groups with a pronouncement of cataclysmic proportions. In Isaiah 28–33, for example, the prophet discusses Ephraim, Jerusalem, and those of Judah who put their faith in Egypt instead of Yahweh and then concludes in chapter 34 with the announcement that the whole universe will be destroyed. The relationship between this terminology and that of Zephaniah’s initial hyperbole is evident, though he begins with the cataclysm and then passes on to the specific accusations against the nations.

This type of prophetic discourse and terminology constituted part of the cognitive environment of Zephaniah’s audience, in particular with regards to the domain of known religious writings. There had been previous religious upheaval and reform, as well as social distress over pending invasive armies. The prophets had spoken and written about such things, and they did it in a specific manner. Given that scenario, it is no surprise that Zephaniah builds his particular hortatory approach using the same terminology, almost as if he wanted to bolster his own message by pointing out the similarity with other renown prophets and what they had said in similar circumstances.

**Intratextuality**

While intertextuality consists of an external literary influence on the discourse, intratextuality comes from an internal conception of how one might employ literary devices available to the Hebrew literary world of the seventh century. These devices can be used in many ways to provide rhetorical emphasis, architectonic cohesion, and an overall aesthetic effect. Wendland explains that the goal of this type of analysis is to understand the “interrelated and interacting features of a given text’s architecture as a means of arriving at a better attested hypothesis concerning its main communicative functions in the initial biblical environment.” (Wendland 1995:119)

Each language has a rich repertoire of communication tools to accomplish the necessary communicative functions. Fokkelman refers to these tools and functions in the following way:

By making the most of his or her linguistic tools, the poet creates an immense richness of meaning, and this richness becomes available if we as readers know how to handle the density; how we can cautiously tackle complexity, probe the various layers one by one, and unfold them. The poet creates this abundance of meanings by visiting all the nooks and crannies of the language, and by being an expert at it....They brilliantly exploit the differences and contrasts inherent in their language as a system (2000:15–16).

It is of paramount importance to understand that these discourse techniques are language specific. Each language expresses the rhetoric of its texts using different

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67 Wendland 2008:54).
linguistic devices. When someone reads a text from another language from the perspective of his/her own language’s discourse framework, they will likely fail to understand the richness of the message, and probably not appreciate the intricacy of the rhetoric used, which basically comes from a different “frame of reference”.

Obviously, if the text is not understood in its own discourse context, it will be difficult to translate the text into another language and maintain the same impact that the original message had on its audience. In this light, Wendland points out the value of discourse studies with regards to Bible translation when he says, “The results of such a comprehensive and multifaceted compositional study may then serve as the basis for a recreation of the essence of the biblical message in a meaningfully equivalent and pragmatically relevant manner within a new language-culture setting and situations context.” (Wendland 1995:119)

Frames of reference are not only language specific, but they are also genre specific. Text linguists have shown that grammatical, organizational, and stylistic conventions vary from one genre to another. Linguistic devices used to tell a story will differ from those used in a persuasive speech. Wendland explains this in his discussion of “genre criticism”:

Every literary genre observes its own rules or procedures of construction and may therefore be classified on the basis of its distinctive stylistic and pragmatic features. Such attributes pertain largely to linguistic organization; but topical content, such as major themes and motifs, and a progressive illocutionary configuration, or format, are also involved (Wendland in Bergen 1994:377).

The term “genre” has been used in many different ways, not so much because people define the word differently, but because they apply the standard definition at various levels. Longman easily defines the term as “a group of texts similar in their mood, content, structure or phraseology.” (1988:20 as cited in Bergman 1994:377) The issue becomes the level at which such similarities are examined.

This research proposes a three tiered examination of a text to determine the genre. The first level regards the basic literary distinction between prose and poetry. These two types greatly affect the way the text is structured and analyzed. A second level examines the communication purpose of the discourse. Longacre, for example, began with a fourfold division of narrative, hortatory, procedural, and expository (1983:3). He later expanded this list to include predictive and juridical material (Longacre 1987 in Bodine 1992:177–178). These divisions describe the basic purposes for the formulation of the text, be that to tell a story, persuade people to do something, explain a process to follow, etc. The final level focuses on the theme of the discourse. Biblical scholars have identified various types of discourse in the Bible that have common themes such as lament, eulogy, enthronement, warning, etc. (Muilenburg 1969:3–4).

Based on this approach the text of Zephaniah can be classified as a Hebrew prophetic warning formulated in hortatory poetry. All three genre levels or distinctions play an important role in the discourse. The poetical nature of the text greatly affects its grammatical form. The fact that the author is attempting to persuade his audience, rather than narrate a story or expound on a truth, further affects the stylistic choices. As a Hebrew prophetic warning,
Zephaniah uses many distinct rhetorical features common to other Hebrew prophets in analogous texts.

Understanding the genre provides important clues to the meaning of a given text. Since certain types of discourse express meaning in various ways, understanding the genre can help the audience arrive at those intended meanings. Wendland explains it in these words:

The typical conventions associated with a particular genre furnish a specific hermeneutical strategy that guides them through the composition – informing, enlightening, motivating, and sometimes even surprising them along the way….Genre thus acts like a “program” that gives shape to a text and arranges its details into an identifiable, more readily processed pattern – or better, a system of linear, concentric, and hierarchically organized patterns which interact and overlap to encompass the literary whole (in Bergen 1994:379).

3.2 A proposed methodology

The present chapter proposes to analyze the textual frame of reference of the book of Zephaniah, and to discover the various ways in which grammatical forms are used on a discourse level. The text has been divided in a somewhat traditional manner, based on grammatical and semantic elements. Each unit is then analyzed from a linguistic perspective with special attention to discourse features based on the surface grammar.

The text chart incorporated in this chapter provides a detailed presentation of the Hebrew text divided into poetic lines and stanzas. Each line is referenced by chapter, verse, and line (e.g. 3:15b) in the first column to facilitate cross-references with other translations. The Hebrew text in column 2 is accompanied by a semi-literal English translation in column 3 designed to help the non-Hebrew reader understand and visualize the linguistic form of the original text. Because of the importance of the Hebrew verb in this study, each English gloss of a Hebrew verb has two tags attached by a hyphen. The tag at the beginning of the gloss indicates the grammatical person of each verb (e.g. 1cs – first person common singular, 2fp – second person feminine plural), while the tag at the end of the gloss indicates which Hebrew verb form is used (e.g. P – the “perfect” form). The abbreviations used are as follows:

I – imperfect
Ics – imperfect with waw consecutive
P – perfect
Pcs – perfect with waw consecutive
IMP – imperative
INFab – infinitive absolute
INFcon – infinitive construct
PT – participle

In addition to the abbreviation, three formatting techniques are used to simplify the recognition of the verb form used. The perfect forms are indicated by a bolded text, the imperfect forms with an italicized text, and the other forms are underlined.

The fourth column provides syntactical information about word order and sentence expansions. The abbreviations used are as followed:

S – subject
V – verb
O – object
The purpose of the following description is not to provide a complete exegesis of every verse in Zephaniah, a task left to the commentaries. Rather the purpose is to describe the grammatical features of the text pertinent to the discourse analysis. Much phonological and grammatical information will be ignored since it does not really contribute to the analysis of the overall text, but hopefully those elements that demonstrate the structure of Zephaniah’s message will be discussed in sufficient detail. An English translation of the text is provided at the beginning of each stanza (the same translation provided in chapter 1), along with a copy of the first four columns of the data chart used in the analysis. Various tables attempt to summarize and visualize the structure and to highlight particular discourse devices used by the author.

3.3 Grammatical description of the text of Zephaniah

Zephaniah 1:1 – Title and setting

Alternative Translation: that happened to Zephaniah.

See chapter 1 for a description of the translation style used.

See appendix: “Prophetic Literature Introductory Material”
forward. Sweeney correctly concludes that “because of their introductory character and function, superscriptions are generically and structurally distinct from the material that they introduce.” (Sweeney 2003:45) This certainly proves to be the case in Zephaniah.

**Zephaniah 1:2–6 – Divine punishment on the earth**

2 I will utterly end everything from the face of the earth,
   Oracle of Yahweh,
3 I will end man and animals,
   I will end the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
   and the incitements with the evil ones.

And I will cut man from the face of the earth,
   Oracle of Yahweh,
4 and I will stretch out my hand against Judah
   and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
   and I will cut the remnant of Baal from this place,
   and the name of the pagan priests with (God’s) priests,
5 and the worshippers on the roofs to the hosts of the heavens,
   and the worshippers, the swearers to Yahweh,
   and the swearers to Molech,
6 and the ones turning back from Yahweh
   and those who do not seek Yahweh,
   and (those who) do not inquire of him.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Morphology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:2a</td>
<td>סֵפֶךָ אֵשֶׁת פִּילָדָם אֲשֶׁר מָשָׁל פִּילָדָם</td>
<td>collect-INFab 1s-end-I everything from the face of the earth (adama).</td>
<td>VVO&lt;sub&gt;p&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:2b</td>
<td>נַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה</td>
<td>Oracle of Yahweh.</td>
<td>S(Nv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3a</td>
<td>אָשֶׁת אֱלֹהֵי אֲדָם</td>
<td>1s-end-I man and animals.</td>
<td>VO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3b</td>
<td>אָשֶׁת שָׁם שְׁמֶשֶׁת אוֹדֵר וְנֵיס</td>
<td>1s-end-I the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea.</td>
<td>VO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3c</td>
<td>וְמְפֶכֶלָהוֹת אַתָּה אֵשֶׁת</td>
<td>and the incitements with the evil ones.</td>
<td>W&lt;sub&gt;Nv&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3d</td>
<td>הָבֹטֶה הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר מָשָׁל פִּילָדָם</td>
<td>and 1s-cut-Pcs [d.o.] man from the face of the earth (adama).</td>
<td>W&lt;sub&gt;VO&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;p&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3e</td>
<td>נַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה</td>
<td>Oracle of Yahweh.</td>
<td>S(Nv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4a</td>
<td>אֵלָה הָאָרֶץ רֵדֵי יְהוָה אֵלָה הָאָרֶץ רַע הָאָרֶץ</td>
<td>And 1s-stretch.out-Pcs my hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.</td>
<td>W&lt;sub&gt;VO&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;o&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4b</td>
<td>הָבֹטֶה הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר מָשָׁל פִּילָדָם</td>
<td>And 1s-cut-Pcs from this place [d.o.] the remnant of Baal,</td>
<td>W&lt;sub&gt;V&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;p&lt;/sub&gt; &lt;sup&gt;o&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Zephaniah begins the actual prophetic message with two symmetrically balanced tricola. The first one (1:3a-c) employs the imperfect aspect, while the second one (1:3d-1:4b) employs the perfect aspect. The first and second colon in both tricola are separated by the prophetic “oracle of Yahweh.” The second and third colon in both tricola contain multiple direct objects. The grammatical symmetry produces a cohesive literary unit.

The first colon provides an emphatic summary statement of the terrible divine punishment that has been decreed on the world. Zephaniah uses a common grammatical technique to emphasize this point, namely an infinitive absolute followed by an imperfect aspect verb. Typically in this structure, Biblical Hebrew uses the same verb in the infinitive and the finite form. Zephaniah however uses two separate lexical items (סָקִים “to collect” and מָסָר “to end”), that are phonologically similar when conjugated (i.e. they use the same three consonants). Sweeney points out that other analogous constructions (Jeremiah 8:13, Isaiah. 28:28, 2 Samuel 1:6) “involve instances in which the two roots share two root letters, which perhaps plays a role in prompting their association.” (Sweeney 2003:59)

The phrase “oracle of Yahweh” between the first and second colon in both tricola merits close attention. Some scholars think that such a phrase should be interpreted as a unit boundary. Sweeney, for example, argues that “there is no syntactical join” between 1:2a and 1:3a (Sweeney 2003:57). He assumes that “oracle of Yahweh” concludes a unit. However, the assumption that “oracle of Yahweh” is always found at a literary unit boundary does not prove to be true. Often this phrase seems to be strategically placed between two closely related parts of a discourse (e.g. Isaiah 31:9, 37:34, Jeremiah 4:1, 9, Joel 2:12, Amos 3:10, Zephaniah 3:8, etc.). Given the grammatical symmetry of these two tricola, it is certainly reasonable to conclude that “oracle of Yahweh” does not mark the end of a unit, but rather serves as a link between the cola in question.
Reinier de Blois argues that “oracle of Yahweh” may function as an introductory boundary marker that formally follows the first line of the unit in question. While it may seem strange to have an introductory marker in a non-initial slot, this explanation would not be contradictory to the data found in this stanza of Zephaniah. The first unit consisting of three imperfect verbs and the second unit consisting of three perfects, are both “introduced” (conceptually not formally) by the “oracle of Yahweh” phrase.

Another element of grammatical symmetry that provides cohesion in this stanza regards the parallel structure of the direct objects. The first colon of each tricolon uses similar adjunct phrases to describe the degree of divine destruction, namely “everything from the face of the earth” (1:2a), and “man from the face of the earth” (1:3d). The second colon of each tricolon both have a compound direct object, namely “man and animals” (1:3a), and “Judah and all inhabitants of Jerusalem” (1:4a). The third colon of the first tricolon has a compound direct object, “birds of the heavens and fish of the sea” (1:3b). The third colon of the second tricolon has a single direct object, “the remnant of Baal” (1:4b).

The third colon of each tricolon is followed by multiple direct object clauses connected with waw conjunctions. The translation of the conjunctive direct object clause in the first tricola is problematic, but the symmetrical structure of the text offers a clue to the solution. Sweeney argues that it would be “nonsensical” to translate לְהַעֲנִיָּהוֹןַ הַמָּכָּה תֻּלְהָכָה as “and the stumbling blocks with the wicked.” He takes תֻּלְהָכָה as a hiphil participle without a hireq, and the te’ as a direct object marker. This produces the translation “and those who cause the wicked to stumble.” (2003:64)

Translating this phrase as two substantives joined by the conjunction “with” seems to be a better solution. This interpretation maintains the symmetry of the double direct objects found in the preceding two lines. The translation is far from nonsensical as it refers to the fact that God will put an end not only to evil doers, but to those people (i.e. women – note the participle is feminine) and/or things (e.g. idols) that incite them to evil. Indeed this concept is paralleled in the third colon of the second tricolon in question (1:4b-c).

Furthermore, the usage of כִּיָּהוֹן (direct object marker or “with”) in 1:4c without the waw conjunction as in 1:5a–1:6c could be explained by translating it as the conjunction “with” instead of the direct object marker. This structure-based interpretation would provide the third colon of the second tricolon with two direct objects joined by the כִּיָּהוֹן “with” preposition exactly like the third colon of the first tricolon. The grammatical and semantic symmetry of the two lines can be seen in the following table:

Table 16: Symmetry of lines 1:3c and 1:4b-c

| 1:3c | and the incitements with כִּיָּהוֹן the evil ones |
| 1:4c | the remnant of Baal with כִּיָּהוֹן the name of the pagan priests with priests |

71 Personal communication, September 2004.
72 1:4c seems to be an exception, but in reality 1:4b and 1:4c can be conceived as a single line (See discussion below).
The following schema demonstrates the grammatical symmetry of this section. Note the three uses of the imperfect aspect followed by the three uses of the perfect aspect, each of which is preceded by a *waw*, and the phrase “Oracle of Yahweh” between the first and second verbs. From a more semantic or lexical perspective it might be noted that both tricola begin with a clause that ends with “from the face of the earth,” and that the direct objects grow increasingly more specific throughout the series (i.e. “everything,” “man and animals,” “birds and fish,” “offenses and evil ones”).

Table 17: Grammatical symmetry of 1:2–4

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>I will emphatically end (imperfect) everything from the face of the earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Oracle of Yahweh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>I will end (imperfect) man and animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>I will end (imperfect) birds and fish,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>with incitements and evil ones.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>And I will cut off (perfect) man from the face of the earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B’</td>
<td>Oracle of Yahweh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’</td>
<td>And I will stretch out (perfect) my hand on Judah and those of Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D’</td>
<td>And I will cut off (perfect) from this place the remnant of Baal,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E’</td>
<td>with the name of pagan priests with priests, …etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The list of direct objects in the first and second series merits some consideration. The first line (1:2a) indicates that “everything” will be brought to an end. This is qualified in 1:3a and in 1:3b in a binary fashion. “Men” and “animals” constitute a basic division between living organisms on the earth. “Birds” and “fish” indicate all living organisms “in the heavens” and those “in the waters.” The final compound direct object in 1:3c begins to foreground the moral cause of the divine punishment, saying that both the incitements to evil and the evil doers will be brought to their end.

The second series also begins with the generic direct object of “man,” and then grows increasingly more specific and moral in nature. The line 1:4a uses a compound direct object, “Judah” and the “inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Line 1:4b and line 1:4c are in reality a single line joined with the conjunction “with”. This explains the absence of the *waw*, in that the *waw* would not be appropriate if the א is translated as “with.” Line 1:4c also has a binary contrastive element between the “pagan priests” and the divinely approved “priests” (הַנְּקֵדִים הַנְּקֵדִים). While line 1:5a has a single direct object, line 1:5b introduces two types of “swearers,” namely those who swear by the name of Yahweh and those that swear by the name of Molech. Finally line 1:6a has a single direct object, that is then further modified by *asher* clauses in 1:6b and 1:6c.

As the schema below shows, this list of direct objects displays a grammatical symmetry in which the author employs a single direct object followed by either a compound direct object, or a direct object exhibiting a binary nature.

Table 18: Structure of direct objects in 1:4–6

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>on Judah and on inhabitants of Jerusalem - double</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>d.o. remnant of Baal with name of pagan priests with priests - double</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

83
B d.o. worshippers on roof to the hosts of the heavens - single
A d.o. worshippers – swearers to Yahweh and swearers to Molech - double
B d.o. ones turning back from Yahweh - single
A asher - those not seeking Yahweh and those not inquiring of him – double

The grammatical and lexical symmetry found in 1:2–6 justifies the identification of this pericope as a single stanza composed of two related strophes. The first (1:2–3c) is marked by the imperfect, while the second strophe (1:3d-6c) is marked by the perfect. This division helps explain why the parallel asher clauses in 1:6b and 1:6c utilize the perfect verb with a negative particle. This verb choice maintains the imperfect/perfect symmetry between the two verses.73

The verbs in this stanza point toward the same divine punishment, without any clear temporal or aspectual distinctions between the clauses. The “ending” of man in 1:3a (imperfect) does not indicate an action done at a different time (verb tense) or in a different manner (verb aspect) from the “cutting” of man from the face of the earth in 1:3d (perfect). From a semantic perspective, they seem both to refer to the same event. The difference of verbal form between the first tricolon and the second tricolon resembles a case of Hebrew verb consecution in which “waw consecutive + perfect refers to the same temporal spheres and aspects as imperfect forms.” (Van der Merwe 1999:169 electronic edition)

While this explains the use of imperfect verbs followed by perfect verbs with the same temporal and aspectual reference, it seems also to constitute a literary/linguistic device enhancing the cohesion and the aesthetic value of the text. The consecution follows a poetic design between the two tricola. It would have been possible for the author to have used six imperfect verbs to describe this event, but the choice to use a symmetrical pattern could have possibly been driven by text aesthetics.74 Patterson recognizes this use of syntax as a rhetorical way to reinforce a strong theological statement (2003:270).

Zephaniah 1:7–16 – The day of Yahweh and His “sacrifice”
7 Hush before the Lord Yahweh, for the day of Yahweh is near, for Yahweh has established a sacrifice, he has consecrated his invited ones.

73 This work defines the various components of poetic structure according to the appendix “Components of Poetic Structure.” It should be noted that “verse” can refer either to a poetic component or a type of division commonly used in literature. The context should clarify the ambiguity between these two common usages.

74 If the author had used all imperfects for these six actions, the three waw would have been missing, and such absence could have a potential semantic impact. Nevertheless, the clauses in the second tricolon do not seem to have an interrelation that is dependent upon the waw. In fact, they are similar semantically to the first tricolon in that they both develop from generic to specific, and they both conclude with a negative reference to evil.
8 And it will come to pass in the day of Yahweh’s sacrifice, and I will come against the princes, and against the sons of the king, and against all those wearing foreign dress.
9 I will come against all those leaping on the threshold in that day, (against) those filling their master’s house (with) violence and deceit. 75

10 And it will come to pass in that day, oracle of Yahweh, a cry will cry out from the “Fish Gate,” and a howling from the “Second Quarter,” and a great crashing from the hills.
11 Wail inhabitants of the “Market Area,” for all the merchants will be silenced, and all those weighing silver will be cut off.
And it will come to pass in that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will come against the men thickening on their dregs, the ones saying in their hearts, “Yahweh does no good, and he does no bad.”

Their wealth will become plunder, and their houses will be destroyed. They will build houses, but they will not inhabit (them). They will plant vineyards, but they will not drink their wine.

The great day of Yahweh (is) near. It (is) near, and it is hastening greatly. The noise of the day of Yahweh (will be) bitter. The warrior cries out there.
The next stanza begins with the interjection לִדַע “hush”, followed by two ki clauses. It would be possible to interpret the לִדַע “hush” as an imperative, as it is obviously used in Nehemiah 8:11 (see also Jdg. 3:19, Amos 6:10, 8:3, Hab. 2:20, Zec. 2:17). Whichever interpretation is chosen, the word definitely suggests the beginning of a new stanza in the discourse.

The two ki clauses could be taken as causal following the opening imperative/interjection “to be silent before the Lord.” They provide the reasons for the terrifying silence using two verbs in the perfect aspect. The third verb in line 1:7d is also in the perfect.

Following this grammatically powerful affirmation, that the world should be silent before the Lord who is planning a sacrifice on the “day of Yahweh” for the invited ones, there are three strophes that form a tightly knit unit. Each begins with כֶּלֶי “it will be”, followed by a temporal marker referring to the “day” in question (see 1:8a, 1:10a, 1:12a). It is also noteworthy that these three strophes contain a numerically increasing series of perfect aspect verbs (three in 1:8–9, four in 1:10–11, and five in 1:12–13). These two devices provide cohesion in the unit.

The first of these three strophes is quite straightforward. The same perfect verb יִפְסָר—קָרְבָּנַי “I will visit” is used twice with multiple expansions employing the preposition לָא “against”, following the introductory clause.

The second strophe places “the oracle of the Lord” between the introductory clause and the first of three perfect aspect verbs. It has already been pointed out that Zephaniah often places “oracle of the Lord” between two parts of the same unit (see 1:2–3). In line 1:11a there is an imperative with much the same force and structure as the one used in 1:7. The command to wail is followed by a ki clause giving the reason behind the command. Some might see this imperative as the beginning of a new section, as was the case in 1:7, were it not for the obvious symmetry of the three strophes in 1:8–16.

The third strophe uses an imperfect verb in conjunction with a perfect verb. The two parallel lines (1:12b-c) are virtually synonymous referring to the same divine action. There appears to be no difference in the “time” of the action they refer to, nor in the “manner” that the action is done. While this contrastive verb-form pair may

76 Perhaps this effort to have a numerically increasing series of perfect aspect verbs accounts for the lack of a verb in 1:9b where it might be expected.
have an aesthetic component, it is probably best explained as a waw + perfect construction following an imperfect, and thus assuming the aspectual characteristics of an imperfect. There does seem to be a sense of “progression” in this consecution in that the first line talks about the “search” and the second refers to the “visitation.” This element of progression is not uncommon in Biblical Hebrew (Van der Merwe 1990:169).

A different usage of the imperfect verb is found in 1:12e-f. These two lines give the direct discourse of the men referred to in 1:12d (“the ones saying”), which is actually an apposition to the men referred to in 1:12c (“the men thickening on their dregs”). It is not surprising to find the imperfect verb used in these lines since they represent an example of direct speech. A shift in verb usage is quite common between discursive and direct speech. 77

The grammatical symmetry of these three strophes is presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 19: Grammatical symmetry of 1:8–13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strophe 1:8–9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waw + copula (perfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waw + perfect verb + הָלַע phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waw + perfect verb + הָלַע phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe 1:10–11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waw + copula (perfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“oracle of Yahweh”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfect verb + 3 יְנֵים phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ki) + perfect verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ki) + perfect verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strophe 1:12–13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waw + copula (perfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imperfect/perfect contrastive couplet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repartée (using imperfect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfect verb + 2 participles in apposition to direct object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfect verb + contrastive negative imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfect verb + contrastive negative imperfect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After this unit of three strophes, there are two more strophes with parallel structures. The first is found in lines 1:14a-1:15a where there are six verbless clauses where the copula is elided. The second strophe is found in lines 1:15a-1:16a where there are six noun phrases that all begin with the word יָמִי “day”. Line 1:15a is calculated to be in both strophes in that it is a verbless clause that begins with יָמִי “day”.

Zephaniah 1:7–16 forms a highly symmetrical unit with a particular emphasis on the theme “The day of Yahweh.” Lines 1:7a-d announce the day of Yahweh, the day of his sacrifice. This announcement is followed by three small strophes whose

first line includes an adverbial phrase pointing to “the day of Yahweh” ( “day of Yahweh” 1:8a-9b, “that day” 1:10a-11c, “that time” 1:12a-13f). They serve to clarify who exactly will suffer on the day of judgment. The next strophe (1:14a-15a) begins with “the day of Yahweh is near”, which is identical to line 1:7b. This strophe of verbless clauses and the following strophe of noun phrases all deal with the nature of the “day of Yahweh.” The following schema summarizes the thematic and grammatical symmetry of 1:7–16.

Table 20: Thematic and grammatical symmetry of 1:7–16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Grammatical Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:7</td>
<td>“The day of Yahweh is near”</td>
<td>[initial announcement]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:8–9</td>
<td>“The day will be…”</td>
<td>[1 of 3 similar strophes]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10–11</td>
<td>“The day will be…”</td>
<td>[2 of 3 similar strophes]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:12–13</td>
<td>“The day will be…”</td>
<td>[3 of 3 similar strophes]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:14a-15a</td>
<td>“The day of Yahweh is near…”</td>
<td>[6 verbless clauses]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15a-16a</td>
<td>“The day …”</td>
<td>[6 noun phrases]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zephaniah 1:17–18 – A summary of the divine punishment

17I will distress man,  
and they will walk as blind ones,  
for they sin against Yahweh.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust,  
and their bowels like dung.  
18Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them  
in the day of Yahweh’s anger.  
In the fire of his passion all the land will be consumed,  
for certainly he will make a terrifying destruction of all the inhabitants of the land.
The first chapter is concluded by two verses that are grammatically juxtaposed in regards to verb aspect and person shift. Verse 17 uses the perfect aspect four times. Once the perfect aspect follows a *ki* and can be explained as normal completed action. The other three instances, on the other hand, clearly indicate future action. Typically one would expect this meaning from a *waw* + perfect when it follows an imperfect, but in this passage they precede three uses of the imperfect. This structure is analogous to the structure found in 1:2–3 previously discussed for its aesthetic quality.

### Table 21: Multiple verb contrastive couplet in 1:17–18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part A</th>
<th>Part B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>waw</em> + Perfect – “I will distress man.”</td>
<td><em>gam</em> Imperfect – “Even their silver… will not be able to save them…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>waw</em> + Perfect – “They will walk as blind men.”</td>
<td><em>waw</em> + Imperfect – “The land will be consumed by the fire of his passion.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ki</em> + Perfect – “For they sinned against Yahweh.”</td>
<td><em>ki</em> + Participle – “For certainly quick destruction…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>waw</em> + Perfect – “Their blood will be poured out like dust.”</td>
<td>Imperfect – “…he will do with all the inhabitants of the land.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Person shift is another discourse technique seen in these two verses. Verse 17 refers to God in the first person, and verse 18 refers to him in the third person. God begins by stating how he will punish man; the author then continues in third person stating how God will accomplish the judgment. This juxtaposition of person shift with regard to God underlines the action in question in a symmetrically balanced fashion. This person shift actually fits into a larger picture in the whole chapter, as can be seen from the following schema:

### Table 22: Person shift in Zephaniah 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1:2–6</th>
<th>1:7</th>
<th>1:8–17</th>
<th>1:18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person</td>
<td>Third person</td>
<td>First person</td>
<td>Third person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One could postulate that the shift to third person increases the focus on the subject and his action, since it appears in “peak” positions. One could also postulate that it fulfills a “summarizing” role in that it repeats what has already been said in a condensed fashion.

It is interesting to note that the final verse forms an *inclusio* begun at the beginning of the chapter. This *inclusio* is both semantic and grammatical in nature. From a semantic perspective it refers to the divine punishment of the world, while from a grammatical perspective, both 1:2a-3b and 1:18a-c use the imperfect verb aspect.

### Zephaniah 2:1–3 – Divine appeal to repentance

1. *Gather yourselves,*
gather oh undesired nation,
before the appointed time arrives
and the day passes like chaff,
so that the great anger of Yahweh will not come upon you,
so that the day of Yahweh’s anger will not come upon you.

Seek Yahweh,
all the humble of the land
who obey his judgments.
Seek righteousness.
Seek humility.
Perhaps you will be hidden on the day of Yahweh’s anger.

| 2:1a | 2mp-Gather.selves-IMP | V |
| 2:1b | and 2mp-gather-IMP the nation NEG be.desired-PT | VSVNV |
| 2:2a | >before become-INF con | VS |
| 2:2b | >as chaff/oppressor 3ms-pass-P day. | SV |
| 2:2c | >before anger anger of Yahweh NEG 3ms-cope-l on you, | NVSPS |
| 2:2d | >before the day of anger of Yahweh NEG 3ms-cope-l on you. | NVSPS |
| 2:3a | 2mp-Seek-IMP [d.o.] Yahweh all humble/poor of the land, | VOS |
| 2:3b | >who 3mp-obey-P his judgments, | AsherOV |
| 2:3c | 2mp-Seek-IMP righteousness, | VO |
| 2:3d | 2mp-Seek-IMP humility/poverty, | VO |
| 2:3e | perhaps 2mp-be.hidden-l in day of anger of Yahweh. | V²p |

In this stanza the author uses a series of imperative forms to urge the audience to return to the Lord. He uses two forms (hithpolel and polel respectively) of קָבַשׁ “to gather” (lines 2:1a-b), followed by יָשָׁר מֶשֶׁהוּ פָעַל “seek (mp),” which is used three times (lines 2:3a-d). The two forms of קָבַשׁ “to gather” are usually translated with two different verbs (e.g. gather and assemble) “in order to distinguish their respective semantic functions.” (Sweeney 2003:110). The ancient translations followed this strategy as well (see LXX “gather together and unite”, Peshitta “gather yourselves and assemble”, Vulgate “assemble, be gathered”).

However, the question should be asked as to why the author would use the same verb root twice. The presence of the waw coordinating conjunction between the two could point to separate semantic connotations of the two verbal forms. In
idiomatic English one might translate, “Pull yourselves together and assemble.” This translation would be acceptable because the juxtaposed semantic elements are not the same. The first implies a mental process while the second implies a corporal action. Perhaps this type of distinction could be sought between the hithpolel and the polel forms here.

The translation “assemble yourselves and gather” on the other hand, does not seem to be permissible. If the author intended to use synonymous parallelism, he/she would have chosen two synonyms rather than use the same lexical item twice. The Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible comes closest to imitating the Hebrew form with the translation, “Entassez-vous, tassez-vous.” Unfortunately, this strategy would probably be labelled as overly redundant by most modern speakers of French.78

Another possible explanation that lacks any conclusive evidence, is that this construction was used to reinforce or emphasize the concept, much like Hebrew does when it uses the infinitive and imperfect of the same verb together.79 If such is the case, an appropriate translation might use only one verb and emphasize it in another manner (e.g. “Assemble yourselves immediately!”)

In the subordinate clauses that follow these imperatives, various forms are used as the need arises. In line 2:1b a perfect is used along with a negative particle to identify the subject of the imperative verb. In line 2:2a an infinitive is used in conjunction with the temporal subordinate conjunction ἐγέρσθη “before.” In line 2:2b the perfect is used to identify the typical way in which chaff behaves. In lines 2:2c-d the imperfect is used twice with a negative particle to indicate the pending possible divine action.

In the third verse a perfect is used in a subordinate asher clause between the first and second imperative to identify the subject (comp. line 2:1b). This series of imperatives is concluded by another subordinate clause using an imperfect to indicate the hypothetical possibility that the divine punishment could be averted.

A careful study of the verb aspects used (see table below), points to two generalizations regarding the perfect and the imperfect as used in subordinate constructions. The perfect denotes actions that describe standard behavior, almost to the point of having an adjectival quality. The nations are “without shame” (2:1b); the chaff “passes by” (2:2b); the humble “obey” (2:3b) God’s judgments. On the other hand, the imperfect indicates hypothetical actions/states. The anger of God might come upon the nations (2:2c-d); the humble of the earth might be spared from Yahweh’s wrath (2:3e). The use of the infinitive could be distinguished from the use

78 See HALOT p. 1154-1155a for other translation strategies.

79 “The infinitive absolute occurs most frequently in immediate connexion with the finite verb of the same stem, in order in various ways to define more accurately or to strengthen the idea of the verb....The infinitive absolute used before the verb to strengthen the verbal idea, i.e. to emphasize in this way either the certainty (especially in the case of threats) or the forcibleness and completeness of an occurrence. In English, such an infinitive is mostly expressed by a corresponding adverb, but sometimes merely by putting greater stress on the verb....The infinitive absolute is used before the verb with less emphasis: (1) Frequently at the beginning of the statement....Elsewhere the infinitive absolute is evidently used only as possessing a certain fullness of sound.....The infinitive absolute after the verb, sometimes to intensify the idea of the verb....sometimes to express the long continuance of an action....” (Gesenius, Kautzsch and Cowley 1910:342–343).
of the imperfect in that it denotes an action that is not hypothetical (e.g. “The appointed time will certainly arrive.” 2:2a). The table below illustrates the usages of the various verb forms of this passage.

Table 23: Verb forms used in 2:1–3

| Gather yourselves [imperative], | Gather [imperative] the nations, |
| (who) are undesired [perfect], | before the appointed time arrives [infinitive], |
| like chaff, the day has passed [perfect], | before the (great) anger of Yahweh not come [imperfect] on you, |
| before the day of Yahweh’s anger not come [imperfect] on you. |

Seek [imperative] Yahweh all the humble of the earth, that obey [perfect] his judgments, Seek [imperative] righteousness, Seek [imperative] humility, perhaps you will be hid (imperfect) in the day of Yahweh’s anger.

Zephaniah 2:4–7 – Divine punishment for the Philistines

4 For Gaza will be abandoned, and Ashkelon will be a desolation. They will drive out Ashdod in full daylight, and Ekron will be uprooted.

5 Woe to the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of Kerethites. The word of Yahweh is against you Canaan, land of Philistines, and I will destroy all of your inhabitants, and the sea coast will be pasture lands and sheep pens, and the coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah. They will pasture on them. They will lie down at night in the houses of Ashkelon, for Yahweh their God will visit them, and return their captives.
This stanza is introduced with an asseverative *ki* clause regarding the destruction of the Philistine cities. The imperfect aspect is used three times in 2:4, each time at the end of the line. The *waw* connects line 2:4b with 2:4a, and line 2:4d with 2:4c. The three imperfect verbs, all clause final, along with the *waw* symmetry, present these four lines as a unit.

Verse 5 continues to predict the same Philistine destruction with the use of "woe" and two verbless clauses. A series of three perfect verbs, connected with *waw*, are juxtaposed with a series of three imperfect verbs. This multiple verb contrastive couplet concludes with a causal *ki* clause that is the first line in a single verb contrastive couplet. The symmetry is a remarkable cohesive device as can be seen in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:5c</td>
<td>וָבֵשׁ מִשָּׁם וְהָאָרֶץ צַעִיד</td>
<td>(be) against you(pl) Canaan, land of Philistines</td>
<td>WVOPp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:6a</td>
<td>וָבֵשׁ מִשָּׁם וְהָאָרֶץ צַעִיד</td>
<td>and 1cs-destroy-Pcs you from any inhabitant.</td>
<td>WVSPrn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7a</td>
<td>וָבֵשׁ מִשָּׁם וְהָאָרֶץ צַעִיד</td>
<td>the land of the sea coast, pasture lands and pens of sheep.</td>
<td>WVPp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7b</td>
<td>וָבֵשׁ מִשָּׁם וְהָאָרֶץ צַעִיד</td>
<td>and the coast 3ms-be-Pcs for remnant of the house of Judah</td>
<td>WVSpp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7c</td>
<td>וָבֵשׁ מִשָּׁם וְהָאָרֶץ צַעִיד</td>
<td>3cs-pasture-I on them.</td>
<td>PpVnun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7d</td>
<td>וָבֵשׁ מִשָּׁם וְהָאָרֶץ צַעִיד</td>
<td>in the houses of Ashkelon 3cs-lie.down-I in evening.</td>
<td>Pp2Vnun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7e</td>
<td>וָבֵשׁ מִשָּׁם וְהָאָרֶץ צַעִיד</td>
<td>for Yahweh their God 3ms-visit-I them.</td>
<td>Kivos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and 3ms-return-Pcs their captives.</td>
<td>WVO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: Grammatical symmetry in 2:4–7

**First pair of Philistine woe:**

*ki* Gaza will be abandoned [imperfect-final],

*waw* Ashkelon (will be given) to destruction,

**Second pair of Philistine woe:**

Ashdod, at noon they will drive her out [imperfect-final],

*waw* Ekron will be uprooted [imperfect-final].

**Introduction to Crete/Canaan/Philistine woe:**

94
Woe inhabitants of the sea coast nation of Crete,
the word of Yahweh (is) against you, Canaan land of the Philistines.

First pair:

waw I will destroy [perfect-initial] your inhabitants,
waw the sea coast will be [perfect-initial] pastures…,
waw the coast will be [perfect initial] for the remnant of the house of Judah.

Second pair:

On them they will pasture [imperfect-final],
in the houses of Ashkelon, in the evening, they will lie down [imperfect-final],
ki Yahweh their God will visit them [imperfect-initial]

waw he will return [perfect-initial] their exiles.

It is noteworthy in this section that the author not only plays with the
perfect/imperfect contrast, but he also alternates between sentence-initial and

Between the two pairs found in the Crete/Canaan/Philistine stanza, the
presence versus the absence of waw as a line connector should also be noted. In the
author’s symmetry, he also provides variety so as not to be locked into a single
structural model. For example, in the first woe series, he uses waw to link the second
colon in two bicola, while in the second woe series, he uses the conjunction to link the
lines of a tricola followed by another tricola where the waw is notably absent. It is
also interesting to note the overlap between the multiple verb contrastive couplet
(2:5c-2:7d) and the single verb contrastive couplet (2:7d-2:7e). All of these linguistic
devices provide the Hebrew poet with tools to enhance cohesion and aesthetic value
in their texts.

Contrary to many scholars, Sweeney argues that verse 4 belongs to the unit in
verses 1–3. He bases his argument on “the conjunctive function of the introductory
יְהוּד” (Sweeney 2003:11) While Sweeney is correct in arguing for a conjunctive
function, it seems quite plausible that י is functioning here as a strophe conjunction
rather than a subordinate clause conjunction. This means that the entire unit of v. 5–7
provides the motivational reason behind the exhortation of v. 1–3. If י is a
subordinate clause conjunction as Sweeney suggests, it would be difficult to explain
the presence of the soph passuq at the end of v. 3. From a semantic viewpoint it is
difficult to see how 2:4a could be the subordinate clause of 2:3e. In reality 2:3e seems
to be somewhat subordinate to 2:3d (i.e. “Seek humility; perhaps you will be hid in
the day of Yahweh’s anger.”)

Sweeney goes on to argue that v. 4 does not fit with verse 5 because of the
second to third person shift. This observation is based on the conclusion that "יְהוּד
“woe” is a “second person address form,”80 as well as the clear presence of a second
person plural pronoun in 2:5. It is debatable whether this argument suffices to negate
the clear semantic connection between 2:4 and 2:5–7. While the presence of the
masoretic sētûmā (closed section) at the end of v. 4 seems to indicate a section

80 Sweeney 2003:112.
break, the presence of an setûmâ marker should not be used to discredit the obvious semantic cohesion between verse 4 and the following section.

The assonance in v. 4 between the names of the four Philistine cities and the verbs that are used to describe their plight (Gaza – forsaken, Ashkelon – desolate, Ashdod – driven out, Ekron – uprooted), provides another noteworthy cohesive device in this stanza.

An interesting morphological phenomenon in 2:6 and 2:7a provides an extreme example of how grammar can be manipulated for aesthetic purposes. These two strophes use the same noun חֹסֶל “coast, land” as subject, and the same verb יָתַה “to be” as predicate, but the verb is conjugated as third feminine singular in 2:6 and third masculine singular in 2:7a. This is the only instance where חֹסֶל is taken as feminine in the Hebrew Bible (BDB 1953:286). Sweeney attributes the 3fs to 3ms shift of the verb “to be” here as a shift in speaker (2003:125), but it is unclear how a third person copula can indicate such a shift. Deliberate poetic manipulation of the morphology for aesthetic reasons seems to be the only adequate explanation.

The same type of masculine/feminine couplet interplay can be noted in 2:5a-c. In 2:5b the word of Yahweh is against “you” (masculine plural) with reference to “inhabitants” (masculine plural) in 2:5a. קֵנֶם אַרְּעַי פַּלַי הָעָם “Canaan land of Philistines” is then found in 2:5b as the apposition of the previous masculine plural pronoun. Keying on the noun אַרְּעַי “land” (feminine singular) in this noun phrase, 2:5c uses the feminine singular pronoun as the direct object. Sweeney’s attempt to link the second person feminine form to the metaphorical reference of a woman “‘divorced’ and left ‘destitute’” by God is speculative (2003:128).

The overall symmetry of these lines is noteworthy. The following table shows the masculine/feminine couplets.

| Table 25: Masculine/feminine couplets in 2:5a-7a |
| “Woe inhabitants (mp)…” |
| The word of Yahweh is against you (mp), |
| Canaan, land (fs) of Philistines, |
| I will destroy you (fs), |
| and the coast (m/f) will be (3fs) pastures… |
| and the coast (m/f) will be (3ms) for the remnant.” |

A case of lexical recursion in 2:5–7 provides cohesion while also subtly underlining the important truth of Israel’s victory over her neighbors. The Hebrew term יֹשְׁבֵי תֹּם נַה “inhabitants of the region of the sea” is used to identify the Kerethites and then in the following two lines the same word יֹשְׁבֵי תֹּם נַה “region” is used to indicate that the Kerethite property has passed to the people of Judah.

**Zephaniah 2:8–11 – Divine punishment for the Moabites**

8 I heard the taunt of Moab, and the reviling words of the sons of Amon, who taunted my people.

and rose up against their border.

Therefore I swear, oracle of Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, Moab will become like Sodom, and Amon’s sons will become like Gomorrah, a possession of grass, and a pit of salt, and a desolation forever.

The remnant of my people will pillage them, and the rest of my nation will possess them.

This will be the reward for their haughtiness, for they insulted, and they rose up against the people of Yahweh of hosts.

Awe inspiring is Yahweh to them, for he wastes away all gods of the earth, and all islands of the nations, each man in his place, will bow down to him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:8a</td>
<td>1cs-hear-P the taunt of Moab and the reviling words of the sons of Amon, VO^0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:8b</td>
<td>&gt;that 3cs-taunt-P my people, Asher VO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:8c</td>
<td>&gt;and 3cs-rise.up-l against their boundary. ^VPp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9a</td>
<td>Therefore I living, (i.e. Therefore, I swear,) S(Nv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9b</td>
<td>oracle of Yahweh of hosts God of Israel, S(Nv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9c</td>
<td>that Moab 3fs-be-I as Sodom, ^KSPmV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9d</td>
<td>and the sons of Amon (be) as Gomorrah, ^WSPm(Nv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9e</td>
<td>&gt;possession of grass, SNv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9f</td>
<td>&gt;and salt WSNv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9g</td>
<td>&gt;and desolation forever ^WSNV^p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9h</td>
<td>remnant of my people 3mp-pillage-I them, SVO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:9i</td>
<td>and the rest of (my) nation possess-I them. ^WSVO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10a</td>
<td>This (be) to them the substitute for their haughtiness, S^p^a^p^ NV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10b</td>
<td>for 3cp-taunt-P ^KV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:10c</td>
<td>and 3cp-rise.up-lcs against the people of Yahweh of Hosts. ^WVPp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this stanza the author continues the announcement of divine punishment, this time against Moab, with a perfect verb (2:8a), followed by a contrastive couplet in lines 2:8b-c. This couplet is parallel to lines 2:10b-c which uses the same identical verbs. In between this contrastive couplet inclusio, there is another divine oracle. Instead of using the yūh “woe” form as in verse 5, the author uses an oath formula, "therefore (as surely as) I live" (2:9a), followed by the noun phrase yān a'-yax šˇˇek al, “oracle of Yahweh.”

Verse 2:11 concludes this unit with the same type of contrastive couplet used in 2:8b-c and 2:10b-c. In each case the perfect is followed by the imperfect according to the standard Hebrew verbal conventions. The final effect is not only a logical communication using the Hebrew verb, but an aesthetically pleasing presentation. This underlines the way that poetry can use traditional grammar while simultaneously enhancing the rhetorical impact.

It is noteworthy that each of these 3 couplets is preceded by a statement which uses a different grammatical structure (i.e. 2:8a – perfect verb, 2:10a – verbless clause, 2:11a – participle).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2:11a</th>
<th>Awe.inspiring-PT (be) Yahweh to them,</th>
<th>PraS(Nv)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:11b</td>
<td>for 3ms-waste.away-P [d.o.] all gods of the earth,</td>
<td>KVO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:11c</td>
<td>and all islands of the nations, each man in his place, 3cp-bow.down-I to him.</td>
<td>WvSPlS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26: Symmetry of contrastive couplets in 2:8–2:11
- 2:8a – Introductory statement (perfect)
- 2:8b-c – contrastive couplet (perfect/imperfect)
- 2:9a-b – Oath formula, oracle of Yahweh
- 2:9c-i – “ki” punishment statements (imperfect)
- 2:10a – Summary statement (verbless)
- 2:10b-c – “for” contrastive couplet (perfect/imperfect)
- 2:11a – Summary statement (participle)
- 2:11b-c – contrastive couplet (perfect/imperfect)

**Zephaniah 2:12 – Divine punishment for the Cushites**

12 You Cushites also, they will be pierced by my sword.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2:12a</th>
<th>Also you(pl) Cushites,</th>
<th>S(Nv)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:12b</td>
<td>3cp-(be) pierced.ones-PT of my sword.</td>
<td>PraS(Nv)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the oracles against the Philistines (2:4–7) and the Moabites (2:8–11), the author begins his third and fourth oracles against the Cushites and the Assyrians.
respectively, an enemy located at the extreme south, and another to the extreme north. In addition to the thematic shift, the unit is demarcated by the particle also, thus providing a syntactical link to the previous oracles, and introducing a new element at the same time (Sweeney 2003:145). Sweeney divides 2:12–15 into two parts, the oracle against the Cushites and the oracle against Assyria.

While this may be desirable on thematic grounds, the syntactical evidence is debatable. Sweeney argues that “the conjunctive waw in v. 13 marks the beginning of a new oracular subunit” (Sweeney 2003:145), but it could also be argued that the conjunctive nature of the waw points to a continuation of the same unit, as opposed to marking a new oracle. Wendland argues in a personal communication that the shift from second person in 2:12 to third person in 2:13 also serves to denote two separate oracles. Either analysis would be possible. From a thematic perspective, if 2:12–15 is considered as a single oracle, one could postulate a thematic symmetry in that the first two oracles in chapter 2 are against Judah’s neighbors, Philistia and Moab, while the third one regards the distant nations to the south and the north.

The oracle begins with a second person vocative address to the Cushites, which Sweeney labels a “fictive address.” Because of the shift to third person and the unlikely case that Cushites would actually read this text, he argues that the intention was not to communicate directly with the Cushites, rather to call to the attention of the Israelite audience the defeat of Cush in 663 B.C.E. which demonstrates how Yahweh would indeed defeat his enemies (Sweeney 2003:146).

Zephaniah 2:13–15 – Divine punishment for the Assyrians

13 He will stretch out his hand against the north, and he will destroy Assyria, and he will put Nineveh to destruction, dry as the desert.
14 And flocks and all animals of the nation will lie down in her midst, even the pelican and the owl will pass the night on her capitals, and a voice will sing on the window “destruction on the threshold” for the cedar is laid bare.

15 This is the joyous city living in security, who said in her heart, “Me and nothing else forever.” How she will be given to destruction, a resting place for the animals? Everyone passing by her will hiss, (they) will shake (their) hand.
Following the proclamation about the Cushites, the text then begins the oracle against the Assyrians with a series of three imperfect verbs with the conjunctive *waw*. The objects of these verbs all point to the same divine enemy with increasing specificity (i.e. “the north,” “Assyria,” “Nineveh”).

A fourth *waw* connects the destruction of these three objects with the resulting situation in which the animals inhabit the ruins of Assyria (cf. Zephaniah 1:3 where people and animals are all destroyed by God).

This is described by the use of two contrastive couplets, the second strophe of which begins with a subordinate conjunction. The alternation of verb aspects forms an ABBA chiasm which serves to enhance the aesthetic impact of the passage.

Table 27: Chiasm of verb aspect in 2:14

| 2:14c | flocks (perfect)…
| 2:14d | even the owl passes the night (imperfect)…
| 2:15a | a voice sings (imperfect)…
| 2:15b | for he laid bare the cedar (perfect)…

Sweeney interprets this syntactical shift of verb forms as an indication of tense and aspect. He says, “…the general future orientation remains. The shift may be explained by content as well since v. 13 portrays YHWH’s punitive actions against Nineveh whereas v. 14 describes the consequences for the city now that YHWH has turned it into a dry, desolate ruin.” (Sweeney 2003:152) In 2:14a the use of the *waw* + perfect assumes the temporal characteristics of the imperfect, while 2:14d uses the perfect to provide background information that help explain the action in 2:14c.

The summary-appraisal beginning in v. 15 is introduced by the initial demonstrative *t’◊z* (Sweeney 2003:150), as was the case in 2:10a. This is followed by a rare direct discourse on the part of the punishable party that demonstrates Assyria’s self-centered nature (2:15c).

The reaction to this statement is a two part rhetorical question (2:15d-e) regarding what could have possibly reduced the glorious Nineveh to this deplorable
state. The only answer is Yahweh, which is confirmed by the reaction of people who pass by the ruins and scoff at the fallen Nineveh (Sweeney 2003:155). It is interesting to note how the absence of conjunctions in v. 15 tends to enhance the compactness, and thus the cohesiveness, of this passage. The tight and minimal structure of a simple direct discourse, followed by a rhetorical question, which in turn is followed by a succinct enigmatic answer, all without the use of any sort of connectives, is a powerful and dramatic way to conclude the three oracles of chapter 2.

**Zephaniah 3:1–5 – Divine oracle against Judah**

1 Woe rebellious one, and defiled one, the oppressing city.
   She does not obey a voice,

2 she does not take admonition,
   she does not trust in Yahweh,
   she does not draw near to her God.

3 Her chiefs among her are roaring lions,
   her judges are evening wolves,
   not flaying in the morning.

4 Her prophets are insolent men of treachery.
   Her priests profane the sanctuary;
   they violate the Torah.

5 Yahweh is righteous in her midst,
   he does no wickedness.
   Each morning he gives his judgment,
   each day he is not missed,
   and the wicked know no shame.

---

82 Another interpretation would require an unlikely translation of 2:15e-f. If the passage was translated, “a resting place for all the animals passing by,” then the next line could offer a specific answer to the rhetorically motivated question, namely that Yahweh, who accomplishes such a mighty destruction with a simple “whistle” (cf. Isaiah 5:26, 7:18) and a “waving of his hand,” both of which are expressed by the imperfect verb aspect (2:15f-g). This interpretation of 2:15f-g would nicely account for the third person singular form of the verbs used. It would also answer the question posed in 2:15d-e in such a way that corresponds to the conclusion of the first (2:7d–3) and second (2:11) oracles, namely that God will overcome evil. Unfortunately this translation does not comply to the grammatical form of the text.
This stanza begins with יָוֵה “woe” which typically introduces a divine oracle. It is a continuation of the oracle series found in chapter 2. This particular judgment oracle is addressed to the “rebellious, defiled, and oppressing city” of Jerusalem. Five negated perfect verbs are used to describe the spiritual state of the city.

In 3:3a a verbless clause introduces a subunit of this oracle with reference to the evil regularly committed by the political leaders of the city. The negated perfect verb is used to liken them to wolves who do not wait till morning to flay their prey.

In 3:4a another verbless clause introduces a third sub-unit which deals with the evil deeds of Jerusalem’s religious leaders. Perfect verbs with negative connotations (i.e. “profane” and “violate”) are used to describe their behavior.

In 3:5a the same type of verbless clause used to introduce the other sub-units, is used a third time to turn the description to Yahweh. The first two statements about

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83 It seems more logical to interpret these terms in their negative sense, as opposed to an attempt to read them in a positive manner as some, like the LXX, have tried to do (see Sweeney 2003:159–161).

84 Sweeney argues strongly against the inclusion of v. 5 in this section. His arguments are noted below along with this author’s response in parenthesis: 1) “First, v. 5 is frequently judged to be a secondary redactional addition because of its hymnic characteristics, but diachronic grounds hardly provide the basis for making a synchronic decision concerning the structure of the present form of the text.” - (Whether or not v. 5 is considered a “redactional addition” has no bearing on whether or not it should be included on thematic or syntactical grounds.) 2) “Second, v. 5 lacks a syntactical conjunction with the preceding material, which indicates that it constitutes the beginning of a new sub-unit within vv. 1–20.” – (The lack of a conjunction does not prove a lack of connection. The verbless clauses are united to each other in this section by their similarity rather than by conjunctions.) 3) “Third, v. 5 marks the beginning of a pronounced thematic shift in that it portrays YHWH’s righteousness, whereas vv. 1–4 portray Jerusalem’s lack of righteousness.” – (There is no thematic shift in v. 5 if the theme of the section is taken to be “contrastive behavior of God and his people.”) 4) “Fourth, although v. 6 begins
God’s behavior use the imperfect verb form to describe his righteousness. The thematic contrast between God and his people is underlined with the contrast in verbal forms used in the descriptions.

The stanza concludes with a contrastive couplet (3:5d-e) using the perfect form to affirm God’s righteousness, and the imperfect form to describe the stubborn spirit of the wicked.

The cohesion of this unit is based on the systematic introduction of various classes of the Judean society by using verbless clauses. Each segment is then described with a perfect verb form where negation is dominant. The moral contrast between God and society is then expressed by a shift in verbal aspect. Finally, a contrastive couplet concludes this stanza on the contrast between God and his people.

The following table summarizes the way in which grammatical symmetry is used in conjunction with this thematic contrast.

**Table 28: Grammatical symmetry and thematic contrast in 3:1–5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction of stanza – <em>hoy</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People of Jerusalem – verbless clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Behavior – perfect verbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

with first person verbal forms that indicates speech by YHWH, v. 5 functions as an introduction to the speech in that it identifies YHWH as the speaker. Otherwise, the reader/hearer is left to wait for the appearance of the oracular formula in v. 8, which also identifies YHWH as the speaker.” – (Yahweh “in the midst of Jerusalem” does not seem to be an appropriate introduction of God “cutting the nations.” The very nature of the actions described in the first person are clearly identified as divine action without a formal introduction.) 5) “Fifth, the statement in v. 5 that ‘YHWH is righteous in her [Jerusalem’s] midst’ might be taken as a contrast to the statement in v. 3 that ‘her [Jerusalem’s] officials in her midst are roaring lions’ that is intended to link the two verses together. Nevertheless, the phrase in v. 5 points forward to the statement made by the prophet to Jerusalem in v. 18, ‘YHWH your G-d is in your midst,’ to portray the realization of YHWH’s righteousness.” – (The lexical similarity used in the contrast between 3:3 and 3:5, and in the connection between 3:5 and 3:18, are both noteworthy. It is difficult to see how one could insist that it marks the beginning of the next unit as opposed to the end of the preceding unit.) 6) “Sixth, the contention that YHWH is righteous forms the basic premise of the following material in vv. 6–13 and 14–20, in which YHWH is portrayed as taking action to purge both Jerusalem and the nations of the world at large to restore Jerusalem as the divine bride and thus as the holy center of all creation.” – (Yahweh’s righteousness can be a theme in one section, that then provides the premise for subsequent sections.) Sweeney (2003:158).
Civil leaders – verbless clause
Negative Behavior – perfect verbs
Religious leaders – verbless clause
Negative Behavior – perfect verbs
Yahweh – verbless clause
Positive Behavior – imperfect verbs
Conclusion: contrast between God and people – contrastive couplet

Zephaniah 3:6–7 – Divine oracle against “the nations”

6I cut off nations,
their parapets were destroyed.
I devastated the people from their streets,
their cities were laid waste without men, without inhabitants.

7I said,
“Surely you will fear me,
you will accept correction”,
and her dwelling place will not be cut off
by all that I brought upon her.
But they rose up early (and) they perverted all their deeds.

This stanza resembles the “woe” oracles of 2:4–7 and 2:8–11 in that the actual oracle (3:8a-b) is preceded by a description of divine punishment (compare 3:6–7 with 2:4–5 and 2:8–9). God speaks in first person in 3:6 using four perfect verbs to indicate his past punishment of the “nations” which seems to include Judah (Sweeney 2003:175). These actions are known to have been done in the past, not because of the choice of perfect verbs, though it will be argued later that the absence of the waw before the perfect may indicate a reference to the past, but because of the direct discourse in 3:7 that explains that God had punished the nations in an effort to lead them (or Jerusalem) to repentance.

The main clauses of the direct discourse use imperfect verbs. In the context of direct discourse this verb choice indicates future action from the viewpoint of the
speaker. In contrast, the perfect verb of the asher clause indicates past action from the viewpoint of the speaker.

The perfect verbs following the direct discourse (3:7f-g) indicate a different time frame, namely a period after the punishment when it was clear that God’s action had not produced the desired repentance. The following table presents the various verbs of this passage in their proper time frame.

**Table 29: The verbs of 3:6–7 in temporal perspective**

Note: Indirect speech is marked by ------, while direct speech is marked by - - - - - . Imperfect verbs are in italics, while perfect verbs are not italicized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past punishment</th>
<th>Future hope</th>
<th>Past failure to repent</th>
<th>Author’s time of writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cut 3:6a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destroy 3:6b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devastate 3:6c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waste 3:6d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>said 3:7a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>visit 3:7e</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fear 3:7b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take correction 3:7c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not be cut 3:7d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a difficulty in this passage regarding the pronominal antecedents. In 3:6–7a the first person indicates God. His actions were directed against סְבִּיק “the nations” (3mp). In 3:7b-c God speaks directly to a 2fs identity. In 3:7d-e, in the same direct discourse with presumably the same addressee in mind, he refers to a 3fs identity. Following the direct discourse, either the author of the book, or God, the speaker in 3:7a-e, refers to a 3cp identity. The question arises of who was being referred to in these instances, and why, given that different forms have the same antecedent, does the author make these pronominal shifts.

**Table 30: Pronominal antecedents in 3:6–7**

| 3:6a   | “I cut the nations (mp) … , |
| 3:7a   | I said, |
| 3:7b   | ‘Surely you (2fs) will fear me. |
| 3:7c   | You (2fs) will take correction.’ |
| 3:7d   | And her (3fs) dwelling will not be cut off (3ms). |
| 3:7e   | all that I visited on her (3fs). |
| 3:7f   | But they (3cp) rose early. |
| 3:7g   | They (3cp) perverted all their deeds. |
There appears to be two different possible antecedents of the 3cp identity in 3:7f-g, either the nations or Jerusalem. The immediate context (3:6) points to the nations (3mp) and their cities (3fp). The broader context would suggest that Judah/Jerusalem is the antecedent (see “rebellious city” in 3:1 as fs, implied “you” in 3:8 as 2mp, “daughter of Zion” in 3:14 as 2fs, “Israel” in 3:14 as 2mp, “daughter of Jerusalem” in 3:14 as 3fs/2fs) Obviously the use of three pronominal forms in these cola make either interpretation far from certain. Independently of the pronominal structure, Sweeney’s suggestion that both “the nations” and “Judah” are included, seems to be the most likely (2003:175).

The question remains, however, why the author would use three different pronominal forms with the same antecedent. A possible answer might be a rhetorical intention to move the reader from a direct “you” to a more removed “they” to underline the all inclusiveness of the divine punishment. Literal grammatically corresponding antecedents are not to be sought in this passage; the nations and Judah are all in the same predicament before the Creator and Judge of the universe.

Zephaniah 3:8–13 – Divine oracle to save a remnant

8 Therefore, wait for me, oracle of Yahweh, for the day of my rising to take plunder, for my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them my indignation, all my mighty anger. For all the earth will be consumed by the fire of my passion, 9 for then I will restore a faultless lip to the peoples, (for) all of them to call in the name of Yahweh, (and) to serve him next to each other. 10 From across the rivers of Cush, my worshippers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, will bring my offering.

11 In that day you will not be ashamed of all your deeds by which you rebelled against me. For then I will turn away from your midst those exulting ones of your haughtiness, and you will no longer continue to be haughty in my holy mountain. 12 And I will leave a humble and meek people in your midst, and they will take refuge in the name of Yahweh. 13 The remnant of Israel will not do evil, they will not speak a lie, and a tongue of deceit will not be found in their mouth. For they will graze, and they will lie down, and nothing will be terrifying (to them).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:8d</td>
<td>for my decision (is) to gather-INFcon nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8e</td>
<td>&gt;to assemble-INFcon kingdoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8f</td>
<td>&gt;to pour out-INFcon on them my indignation, all the anger of my nose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8g</td>
<td>for by the fire of my passion all the earth 3fs-be.consumed-I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:9a</td>
<td>for then 1cs-change-I be.purified-PT lip to the peoples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:9b</td>
<td>&gt;to call-INFcon all of them in the name of Yahweh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:9c</td>
<td>&gt;to serve-INFcon him &quot;one shoulder&quot; (in unity).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:10a</td>
<td>from across the rivers of Cush my worshippers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, 3mp-bring-I my offering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:11a</td>
<td>in that day NEG 2fs-be.ashamed-I from all your deeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:11b</td>
<td>&gt;that 2fs-rebelled-P against me Asher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:11c</td>
<td>for then 1cs-turn-I from your midst the exulting ones of your haughtiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:11d</td>
<td>and NEG 2fs-continue-I to.be.haughty-INFcon still in my holy mountain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:12a</td>
<td>And 1cs-leave-Pcs in your midst a humble and meek people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:12b</td>
<td>and 3cp-refuge-Pcs in name of Yahweh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13a</td>
<td>The remnant of Israel NEG 3mp-do-I evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13b</td>
<td>and NEG 3mp-speak-I lie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13c</td>
<td>and NEG 3ms-be.found-I in their mouth a tongue of deceit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13d</td>
<td>for 3mp-graze-I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13e</td>
<td>and 3cp-lie.down-Pcs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13f</td>
<td>and none terrifying-PT.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are three strophes in this stanza based on symmetrical grammatical structures (see 3:8–9, 3:10–11, 3:12–13). The unit begins with a 2mp imperative followed by four distinct statements concerning God’s eschatological punitive and salvific actions. The symmetry of the main finite verb forms and the addition of non-finite verb forms demonstrates the cohesiveness of the strophe as illustrated in the table below:

Table 31: Grammatical symmetry in 3:8–9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“therefore” + Imperative + Infinitive</th>
<th>“for” + Infinitive × 3</th>
<th>“for” + Imperfect</th>
<th>“for” + Imperfect + Infinitive × 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The second strophe (3:10–11) refers to the restoration of God’s people with two grammatically analogous structures that use imperfects and negated imperfects. This is noted in the following table:

Table 32: Grammatical symmetry in 3:10–11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Imperfect</th>
<th>Negated Imperfect (asher + Perfect)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>“for” + Imperfect</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The perfect used in the subordinate asher clause shows how the author can interject a non-symmetrical element when required. The perfect here obviously indicates past completed action.

The third strophe (3:12–13) describes the spiritual state of God’s restored people using a symmetrical structure that alternates between perfects and imperfects, as well as positive and negated verb forms. This can be seen in the following table:

Table 33: Grammatical symmetry in 3:12–13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perfect</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
<th>Negated Imperfect × 3</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
<th>Negated Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zephaniah 3:14–20d – Divine promise of salvation

14 Shout with joy, daughter of Zion,
Shout out, Israel.
Rejoice and be glad with all (your) heart, daughter of Jerusalem.
15 Yahweh has turned away your judgment,
he has turned away your enemy.
The King of Israel, Yahweh, is in your midst.
You will never fear evil.
16 In that day it will be said to Jerusalem,
“Do not fear Zion, let your hands not drop.”

17 Yahweh your God is in your midst, a warrior who saves. He will rejoice over you with joy, he will be silent in his love, he will rejoice over you with a shout of joy.

18 I will remove from you those grieving for the appointed time; they were a burden on her, a reproach.

19 Behold I will deal with all your oppressors at that time, and I will save the limping one, and I will gather the scattered one. I will make them a praise and an honor in all the earth where they have been put to shame.

20 In that time I will bring you back, and in the time of my gathering of you, indeed I will make you an honor and a praise among all the peoples of the earth, in my returning your captives before you.
appointed time 1cs-gather-P from your midst.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Verb Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:18b</td>
<td>חָפְצֵךְ לְשׁוֹאֵל לָחֶם</td>
<td>appointed time 1cs-gather-P from your midst.</td>
<td>VPrnVPrn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19a</td>
<td>לֹא שָׁמֵעַ אֶל מָשָׁר כְּפָת הָוִי</td>
<td>&gt;3cp-be-P burden on her, a reproach.</td>
<td>VoPp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19b</td>
<td>וְהַגְּדֵדוּ אֶל עַצְמֵיכֶם</td>
<td>Behold me do-PT [d.o.] all your oppressors in that time,</td>
<td>VoPp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19c</td>
<td>וְהַגְּדֵדוּ אֶל עַצְמֵיכֶם</td>
<td>and 1cs-save-Pcs [d.o.] the limping-PT one,</td>
<td>WVO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19d</td>
<td>וְהַגְּדֵדוּ אֶל עַצְמֵיכֶם</td>
<td>and the dispersed-PT one 1cs-gather-l.</td>
<td>OV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20a</td>
<td>בַּשָּׁת הָוִי אֵלֶּה יַעֲשֶׂה</td>
<td>I-make-Pcs them to a praise and to a name in all the earth their shame.</td>
<td>WVOppp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20b</td>
<td>בֵּשָׁת הָוִי אֵלֶּה יַעֲשֶׂה</td>
<td>In that time 1cs-bring-l [d.o.] you(pl),</td>
<td>PpVO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20c</td>
<td>בֵּשָׁת הָוִי אֵלֶּה יַעֲשֶׂה</td>
<td>and in the time gather-INFcon of me [d.o.] you(pl),</td>
<td>WppVpp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20d</td>
<td>בֵּשָׁת הָוִי אֵלֶּה יַעֲשֶׂה</td>
<td>indeed I-give.make-l [d.o.] you(pl) to a name and to a praise in all the peoples of the earth</td>
<td>KpVppp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final stanza of Zephaniah (3:14–20) begins with three semantically similar imperatives directed to the people of God. These are followed by three strophes begun by, or centered around, a clause without a finite verb (3:15c, 3:17a-b, 3:19a).

The first of these strophes (3:15a-16c) begins with two clauses using perfect verbs, followed by two more clauses that use imperfect verbs. This contrastive couplet is centered around the verbless predication stating that the King of Israel, Yahweh, is in their midst. The final imperfect verb introduces a direct discourse couplet that uses negated imperfect verbs. The following table indicates the base semantic propositions along with the types of verbs used to express them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Verb Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:15a</td>
<td>וְיָשָׂר יְהֹוָה מֵעָבְדֵיךָ</td>
<td>Perfect - Yahweh turns away your judgment.</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:15b</td>
<td>וְיָשָׂר יְהֹוָה מֵעָבְדֵיךָ</td>
<td>Perfect - Yahweh turns aside your enemy.</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:15c</td>
<td>בִּקְרֵי יְהֹוָה יִהְיֶה לְךָ</td>
<td>Verbless – Yahweh is King.</td>
<td>Verbless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:16a</td>
<td>כָּפָל לְךָ תַּקִּם</td>
<td>Imperfect – You will never fear evil.</td>
<td>Imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:16b</td>
<td>כָּפָל לְךָ תַּקִּם</td>
<td>He will say,</td>
<td>Imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:16c</td>
<td>כָּפָל לְךָ תַּקִּם</td>
<td>Negated Imperfect – Do not fear Zion.</td>
<td>Negated Imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:16d</td>
<td>כָּפָל לְךָ תַּקִּם</td>
<td>Negated Imperfect – Let not your hands drop.</td>
<td>Negated Imperfect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second strophe (3:17–18) is introduced by another verbless clause stating that Yahweh is a saving warrior in the midst of his people. This affirmation is followed by a multiple verb contrastive couplet, two clauses using the imperfect
followed by two clauses using the perfect. The contrast between the two verb forms in
the couplet is intensified due to the semantically contrastive elements that they
express. The imperfects are connected with “love” and “joy,” while the perfects deal
with “grief,” “burden,” and “reproach.” These elements are presented in the table
below:

Table 35: Thematic and grammatical symmetry in 3:17–18
Verbless – Yahweh is a saving warrior in your midst.
Imperfect – He consoles with his love.
Imperfect – He rejoices over you with shouts of joy.
Perfect – I remove the grief of the feast from you.
Perfect – They are a burden and reproach to you.

The third and final strophe (3:19–20) begins with the climactic hinneh,
followed by a non-finite verb clause. The next three clauses are joined by three waws.
The first two of these clauses demonstrate an interesting chiastic structure at the
semantic and grammatical levels. In this chiasm three elements are noteworthy: a) the
direct objects in both clauses are participles, b) the word order of the two clauses are
reversed, and c) the verb aspects used form a contrastive couplet.

Table 36: Thematic and grammatical symmetry in 3:19
hinneh – I act (Participle) on to your oppressors at that time.
waw – I save (Perfect) the limping (Participle).
waw – The scattered (Participle) I gather (Imperfect).
waw – I change (Perfect) their shame to praise in all the earth.

The next four lines also have a parallel grammatical structure, where the
imperfect verb clause is followed by a second clause using an infinitive. The parallel
temporal adverbial phrases are also noteworthy. The following table serves to
illustrate this structure:

Table 37: Thematic and grammatical symmetry in 3:20
In that time I bring (Imperfect) you,
and in the time of my gathering (Infinitive) you,
indeed I will make (Imperfect) you an honor and a praise among all nations,
in my returning (Infinitive) your captives to you.

Zephaniah 3:20e - Conclusion

(Thus) says Yahweh.

The book is concluded with the short but powerful statement, “Yahweh has
spoke.” While this perfect verb clause is grammatically disconnected from the
preceding phrases, it completes the inclusio that was begun in 1:1a, כִּלְכָּלָה “The
word of Yahweh.”
3.4 Structural overview of Zephaniah 1–3

Before passing on to a summary of all the discourse features found in Zephaniah, an overview of the structure of the entire book is in order. Up to this point the text has been analyzed by stanzas in a “micro” approach. It is important to see how these stanzas are sewn together to form a unified whole.

Boundaries within a text need to be delineated in order to appreciate the cohesion of the text. Wendland states this fact very clearly: “Coherence refers to the characteristics of connectivity, conjunction, and congruence which a text displays with respect to both form and meaning. The result is an impression of unity and harmony in which the whole is clearly greater than, distinct from, or not immediately derivable from the sum of its individual parts. And yet all of the constituent elements fit together appropriately to comprise the composition in its entirety.” (Wendland 1994:30)

The author of Zephaniah uses various techniques to demarcate his text, namely *inclusio*, exclamatory statements, and hortatory imperatives. Authoritarian attributes and key connector particles are sprinkled throughout the text, but they are best viewed in the individual sub-units of the text. The best way to demonstrate the use of the three main text delimiters is to view them in the overall structure of the book. The purpose of the following table is to show how Zephaniah uses these techniques to create a symmetrical text structure. The text in bold represents the citation used as a textual border with the reference in parenthesis. The discourse technique is indicated in square brackets. Indention is used to demonstrate the symmetry of the various sections.

**Table 38: Overall structure of text delimiters in Zephaniah**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word of Yahweh (1:1)</th>
<th>inclusio – see 3:20e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hush (1:7a)</td>
<td>exclamatory statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wail (1:11a)</td>
<td>exclamatory statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gather together</strong> (2:1a-b)</td>
<td>exclamatory statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek (2:3a)</td>
<td>hortatory imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek (2:3c)</td>
<td>hortatory imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek (2:3d)</td>
<td>hortatory imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woe (2:5a)</td>
<td>exclamatory statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woe (3:1a)</td>
<td>exclamatory statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait (3:8a)</td>
<td>exclamatory statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shout (3:14a)</td>
<td>hortatory imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shout (3:14b)</td>
<td>hortatory imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rejoice</strong> (3:14c)</td>
<td>hortatory imperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behold (hinneh) (3:19a)</td>
<td>exclamatory statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Says Yahweh (3:20e)</td>
<td>inclusio – see 1:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to this table the text of Zephaniah consists of a neat A-B-A’-B’ structure within the bounds of an *inclusio*. A *hinneh* clause at the end of the book introduces the concluding statement. The distinction between “exclamatory statement” and “hortatory imperative” aids the exegete in seeing the overall discourse structure. An exclamatory statement may at first glance appear to be an imperative, in fact it may actually be a verb in the imperative mood (e.g. 1:11a, 3:8a). It differs however from the hortatory imperative in that it does not exhort one to an actual
change of behavior. It is more of an attention-getting device, than a command or an exhortation. God’s message in Zephaniah is not for everyone to “hush” or to “wail,” but rather to “seek righteousness” and “rejoice” in the salvation of Yahweh.

Loren Bliese points out, “Hebrew poetry has structural symmetry that helps to identify peaks or points of prominence.” (1994:67) An overview of Zephaniah shows that a symmetrical presentation of three exclamatory statements, followed by three hortatory imperatives, and then repeated a second time, suggests that the prominent message is centered around the two sets of consecutive hortatory imperatives. Seeking Yahweh and rejoicing in God’s salvation is indeed the prominent point of the book.

The salvation focus is then reiterated in the final strophe of the book, introduced by the climactic particle hinneh. In this passage Yahweh promises salvation from the destruction and punishment that was described throughout the entire book. Muilenburg attests this climactic characteristic to the hinneh particle: “Characteristically it [hinneh] appears in striking contexts, either by introducing a poem or strophe or by bringing it to its culmination.” (1969:14)

The role of the inclusio formed by 1:1 and 3:20e clearly introduces and concludes the book on an authoritative note. Soulen points out that this is a common rhetorical tool: “The inclusio is a rhetorical device which features a significant reduplication of linguistic material - whether formal or semantic - or the obvious continuation of a thought pattern, at the borders of a given literary unit, that is, at its beginning and also at the end of the same segment.” (1976:82–83 in Wendland 1995:46)

It is interesting to note that the discourse structure of Zephaniah based on rhetorical devices coincides nicely with a more semantic structuring of the text. The following outline of the book represents the semantic structure that has been followed throughout this analysis. The two stanzas “Appeal to change” (2:1–3) and “Promises resulting from a change” (3:8–20) match the prominent stanzas of the book based on the rhetorical devices used.

Table 39: Semantic outline of Zephaniah

1:1 - Title and setting

Generic punishment
1:2–6 - Divine punishment on the earth
1:7–16 - The day of Yahweh & His sacrifice
1:17–18 - A summary of the divine punishment

Appeal to change
2:1–3 - Divine appeal to repentance

Specific punishment
2:4–7 - Divine punishment for the Philistines
2:8–11 - Divine punishment for the Moabites
2:12 - Divine punishment for the Cushites
2:13–15 - Divine punishment for the Assyrians
3:1–5 - Divine oracle against Judah
3:6–7 - Divine oracle against the nations*

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Promise resulting from a change  
(i.e. a type of “appeal” or “motivation”)  
3:8–13 - Divine oracle to save a remnant  
3:14–20 - Divine promise of salvation  
3:20e - Conclusion  

3.5 A Summary of rhetorical devices used in Zephaniah  

After having viewed various grammatical devices used throughout the discourse of Zephaniah, it might be helpful to summarize them in three major categories. The first category regards techniques to maintain cohesion within the sub-units of the text, and consequently provide a grammatical division of the text as a whole. The second category includes devices used to enhance the aesthetics of the text. These stylistic elements also contribute to a sub-division of the text, because the symmetry of various elements obviously binds them together as distinct units. The final category provides examples of how the text grammar is used to mark discourse climax and/or thematic focus. This section will be concluded with an overview of verbal hierarchy for hortatory discourse based on the data in Zephaniah.  

Discourse devices for cohesion  
Inclusio  
By definition inclusio is a device that unites a text by marking its beginning and end with something similar, be it in form or in concept. Fokkelman says, “Poets can also wrap up their work by using a frame that offers a slight variation on the idea of identical beginning and end.” (2000:144) Zephaniah does this at the macro level by stating in the beginning that the text in question is the “word of Yahweh” (1:1). At the conclusion of the book (3:20e) he repeats the same concept, though with a different lexical and grammatical form, saying, “God has spoken.” 

In addition to this inclusio at the macro level, there are also examples of smaller units being open and closed with an inclusio, like a chapter (1:2a-3b with 1:18a-c) and a single strophe (2:8b-c with 2:10b-c).  

Repetition of lexical/semantic elements  
Repetition is a classical way to bind a text together, especially if the lexical item in question is used in the same syntactical position. The three strophes in 1:8a-16a, for example, all begin with the copula plus waw followed by a temporal prepositional phrase, thus distinguishing them and uniting them at the same time. The next strophe (1:14a-16a) picks up on this temporal element and repeats the word נַע “day” eight times.  

Repetition of grammatical structures  
The two parallel strophes 1:2a–3e and 1:4a–6c use the same grammatical structures. This parallelism consists of three clauses using finite verbs. Both strophes have “Oracle of Yahweh” inserted between their first two cola, as well as having multiple direct objects connected with their third colon.  

Another example parallels identical grammatical and lexical structures. At the beginning of a strophe in 2:8a-c, there is a perfect verb meaning “taunt” juxtaposed
with the imperfect verb “rise up.” At the end of the strophe, forming a nice *inclusio*,
the same two verbs are conjugated in the same manner.

**Contrast of grammatical structures**

Discussions on Hebrew parallelism typically point out that where there are
synonymous parallel structures, it will be no surprise to find antithetic parallel
structures as well. What is true with reference to meaning turns out to be true
regarding form as well. This study of Zephaniah has found it to be quite common for
contrastive grammatical forms to be juxtaposed to each other for no apparent semantic
reason. The juxtaposition of a perfect verb and an imperfect verb, for example,
labeled as a “contrastive couplet,” provides the same cohesion of the classic parallel
bicola so common in Hebrew poetry.

A clear example of this is in 2:10b-c where the first verb is in the perfect form
and the second in the imperfect form. Both refer to the same action but with
contrastive grammatical forms. The same couplet structure can occur with multiple
verbs as well. In 1:2a-3c three imperfect verbs referring to the divine destruction of
the world are juxtaposed to three perfect verbs referring to the same destruction.

These contrastive couplets have a multiple effect on the text. In the first place
they provide cohesion in that they link the two actions, interestingly by using
opposing verbal forms. A second effect they have is to keep the text from being
monotonous. In prophetic literature certain themes such as divine punishment are
repeated in a single passage many times. This discourse device of contrastive couplets
provides the author another way to repeat a concept without using the same form.

A final example of contrastive couplets shows how the contrast of
grammatical forms can be used to reinforce a contrast in spiritual states. In 3:1–5 a
multiple verb contrastive couplet contrasts the negative spiritual state of Israel with
the positive spiritual nature of Yahweh. A series of perfect verbs are used to refer to
Israel’s flaws, but when the author begins to describe the attributes of Yahweh, he
switches to the imperfect in 3:5b-c. Interestingly the strophe concludes with another
contrastive couplet tied to these spiritual nuances, but using the reversed antecedents.
The first verb referring to God is in the perfect, while the second verb referring to
Israel is in the imperfect. Wendland notices the same type of phenomenon in Psalm

**waw conjunction**

No discussion on cohesion would be complete without mention of the *waw*
“and” conjunction. By definition a coordinating conjunction links elements together,
thus providing cohesion. In the case of the *waw* “and” this can happen at two different
levels, individual words (e.g. 2:6, 9e-g) and separate clauses (2:9h-i).

The absence of the *waw*, commonly known as asyndeton (Murphy 2003:32),
also proves to have an interesting role in discourse cohesion. Obviously the lack of a
conjunction could underline some sort of a break in the flow of the discourse. When
the Philistine woe oracle ends and the Moabite woe oracle begins, the lack of *waw*
obviously indicates a discourse border. There is a discontinuity between the two
oracles expressed by the absence of the conjunction.

On the other hand, there are cases where the presence of the *waw* is juxtaposed
to its absence in a parallel fashion. In these cases it might be said that the lack of the
conjunction actually conjoins the two sub-units. In 2:5c-7a there are three clauses
joined by waw. These are juxtaposed to 2:7b-c where two clauses without waw are presented in contrast to the previous unit.

It appears that sometimes the absence of a coordinating conjunction is a specific tool by the author to tighten the link between clauses. The clauses in 2:15, for example, seem to be tightly woven together by the absence of the expected waw. It produces almost a "staccato" effect.

**Discourse devices for text aesthetics**

It should be noted that there is an overlap between discourse devices used to provide cohesion in a text and those used for the purpose of text aesthetics. Many of the cohesion devices also enhance the literary beauty of a discourse (e.g. contrastive verb couplets). All of these devices contribute to the rhetorical strategy of the text in various overlapping.

**Grammatical chiasmus**

There are a few cases in Zephaniah where grammatical structures, rather than semantic elements, are used to create a chiasmus. One of these is in 3:19b-c where a verb precedes the participle direct object in the first line, and follows it in the second line. Another example can be seen in 2:14.

**Masculine/Feminine contrast**

Zephaniah shows how morphological gender contrasts can be used for aesthetic purposes in Hebrew poetry. Different forms are used in 2:6 and 2:7a in reference to the same noun. The same type of phenomenon is present in 2:5a-c.

**Numerical symmetry**

There are cases in Zephaniah where certain grammatical structures are juxtaposed to others in such a way that one is led to believe that the author wants to enhance the aesthetics of his text by the actual number of juxtaposed structures. One example is found in 1:14a-15a where six verbless clauses are juxtaposed to a list of six noun phrases in 1:15b-1:16a.

In the section 1:8–13 a different type of numerical symmetry is used. The first sub-unit (1:8–9) uses three perfect verbs, the second (1:10–11) uses four, and the last (1:12–13) uses five. It is highly improbable that this incremental usage of perfect verbs is a mere coincidence. Numerical symmetry seems to be another discourse device used by the Hebrews to enhance the beauty of their literature.

**Increasing specificity**

Certain sections in Zephaniah seem to employ the generic-specific spectrum to develop movement in the text. The first two woe oracles in chapter 1 are good examples. Yahweh begins by promising that he will “end everything” on the face of the earth. He then proceeds to talk about the destruction of men, animals, birds, fish, and evil ones. In 1:4 he localizes the destruction to Judah and then to Jerusalem, followed by a more specific list of just what type of evil people are being targeted in his punishment. Rather than interpreting this passage as the announcement of an apocalyptic event in which the whole world is destroyed, it might be better to see it as a rhetorical strategy to gradually focus on the real problem.

**The use of direct speech**
Direct speech is used three times in the book of Zephaniah. In the first two cases (1:12e-f, 2:15b), God uses the very words of the wicked to demonstrate their attitude. The third usage is in 3:16b-c where Yahweh’s comforting words, “Do not fear Zion / Let not your hands drop” affirms the future salvation of his people. It is noteworthy that this last instance occurs in a section where Yahweh is referred to in the third person singular. This use of direct speech seems to add a personal touch to the text as the actual words spoken are recorded, as well as emphasizing the point being made.

Person shift

Person shift, the phenomenon of referring to the same person or referent with different personal pronouns, or using verbs conjugated with different person (e.g. first and third person) in the same pericope, is an interesting rhetorical device. There are two types of person shift in Zephaniah that demand attention. The first deals with who is speaking, while the second deals with who is being addressed. The problem with the subject referents is that direct discourse markers or quotation formulas are often not used to identify the speaker. The problem with the indirect object referents is that there is often a switch from second to third person, sometimes in the same speech occasion.\(^85\)

The speaker in 1:2–6 uses the first person “I”. He is identified as God in the two “Oracle of Yahweh” references (1:2b, 1:3e) and in the “Word of Yahweh” reference in the introduction of the book (1:1). It appears however that the divine speech is interrupted in 1:7, where people are enjoined to be silent before Yahweh, for “he” will consecrate his invited ones to his sacrifice. The subject returns to first person in 1:8–17, before slipping back to third person in 1:18.

This abrupt change to third person can be explained in one of two ways. The first would see verse 7 as the author’s comment on the preceding divine direct discourse. The whole book could be analyzed in this way. Zephaniah receives revelations from God, he reports them word for word, and then he comments on them. The supporting evidence of this interpretation lies in the unquestionable switch from first to third person. The puzzling issue however, would be why these shifts are never introduced with some sort of a quotation formula, either in the first person sections or in the third person sections.\(^86\)

A second way to explain this person shift is as a rhetorical device used to call attention to various parts of the speaker’s message. This interpretation would say that the whole book is God’s direct message, and that God refers to himself in the third

\(^{85}\) Haleem (2011:190) cites Al-Zarkashi, a famous Arabic rhetorician as saying, “...the change of speech from one mode to another, for the sake of freshness and variety for the listener, to renew his interest, and to keep his mind from boredom and frustration, through having one mode continuously at his ear.” Talking about iltifat, i.e. the Quranic Arabic word describing various devices such as person shift, Haleem (2011:191) says, “In fact, in all these types we have a departure from the normal expected usage of language in a particular context for a particular rhetorical purpose.”

\(^{86}\) Haleem (2011:199) suggests that this device is used in the Qur’an for “dramatic effect”.

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person from time to time as a way to vary his discourse, and/or to emphasize certain aspects of his message.  

This interpretation would explain the lack of explicit quotation formulas. It would also be congruent with portions of the first person speech where God (i.e. “I”) refers to “Yahweh” (1:8a-b, 1:17a, c).

Finally this second interpretation concurs with the observation that the third person sections are often prominent passages that are being emphasized. In 1:7, for example, an interjection is used to introduce the key concept of the “day of Yahweh” and “his sacrifice.” The final verse of the chapter (1:18) switches to third person as it closes the inclusio with 1:2 speaking of the total destruction of the earth, and can even be seen as a type of summary of the first section of the book.

In 2:11 third person is used to make a global theological affirmation that Yahweh will destroy all the gods of the earth, quite a climactic statement in the midst of four oracles directed to Israel’s enemies. The final verse of the chapter (2:15f-g) also uses third person to make a final statement global destruction will be ordered by the simple whistle of God and the waving of his hand.

The third chapter concludes the oracle series by focusing on the sin of Judah in 3:1–5. This stanza uses the third person subject with reference to God. This focus can be considered the climax of the oracle series. The final third person section is 3:14–17, a passage considered to be prominent due to the three consecutive imperatives.

The second type of person shift in Zephaniah refers to those who are being addressed by Yahweh. A case in point begins in 2:4 where God addresses the Philistines referring to them by the names of their most famous cities, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron. Then in 2:5b-c he switches to the second person masculine plural in his address. In the following section he again uses the third person proper name of Moab in his oracle address. However when he ends the oracle against the Moabites and begins his address to the Cushites, he switches to the second person masculine plural. His final oracle against Israel’s enemies is addressed to the Assyrians in the third person form (2:13–15).

In chapter 3 Yahweh turns his oracle address to Israel, whom he refers to in the third person singular feminine, as the rebellious, defiled, and oppressing city. In 3:11 the oracle regarding Israel turns positive and Yahweh begins to use the second person feminine with reference to his people. In 3:16 he resumes the third person reference to Jerusalem, only to switch back to the second person in 3:17.

The literal interpretation of this continual switch in pronominal reference would suggest that certain people were present and others were absent during God’s speech. This does not of course concur with the implied sitz im leben of the text of Zephaniah. It is more likely that this person shift is yet another rhetorical device that the author masterfully uses.

But what could the purpose of this person shift be? Sweeney suggests that “the inconsistency in address forms indicates that there is not an immediate concern to address the nations themselves; rather the text is concerned with the underlying

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87 Haleem (2011:198) argues that God makes proclamations about himself using his name “which is more important than the pronoun; it makes the matter explicitly exclusive to Allah. Stating the name of Allah, moreover, in the three successive statements makes each of them absolute, independent and quotable.”
addressee of these oracles, which must be the people of Jerusalem and Judah, as indicated in 2:1–3.” (2003:8) If this was truly the case, it would be odd for Yahweh to use 2:4–18, a significant section of the book, to refer to the enemy nations. God’s focus may have very well been on Judah, but there is a universal message in Zephaniah as well (cf. 2:11). This reasoning also fails to take into consideration that the author uses person shift with reference to Judah as well.

Ryou takes a different position. He maintains the following regarding the person shift with reference to Jerusalem: “Thus the rhetorical effect cannot be missed when this shift occurs. This rhetorical device functions to reinforce the severity of guilt and sin on the part of the unexpected addressee, the city Jerusalem.” (Ryou in De Regt 2001:221) De Regt concurs that this can be a way for Hebrew poets to emphasize prominent passages or mark the peak of a discourse. His analysis of Amos shows “that they can help to indicate a climax in the text if third person forms occur before and after.” (De Regt 2001:220–221) He makes the same claims regarding Zephaniah 3:9–13 (2001:223).

In addition to serving as a peak marker, person shift also is used as a structuring device which keeps the text moving forward, marking turning points in the text. De Regt explains this usage in the following manner: “So the same referent can be referred to with more than one grammatical person. Change of grammatical person while still referring to the same participant is a text-structuring device: in a context of, say, third person references, the brief changes to second person address forms mark the beginning (or end) of a new strophe. Change of grammatical person in reference to the same participant is a genre convention and a structuring device in prophecy as well as in poetry.” (De Regt 2001:214) He goes on to specify that in Zephaniah they “mark turning points in the text.” (2001:221)

**Discourse devices for text emphasis**

The previous discussion on person shift demonstrates how some discourse devices can be used in more than one way. While this section deals with devices used to mark text emphasis, devices used for text structuring and text aesthetics should be considered as complementary to the same purpose.

**Person shift**

(See discussion above)

**The **ki** particle**

The **ki** particle or subordinating conjunction has been an object of study of Hebrew scholars for many years. As a subordinate conjunction it can describe the time in which the main verb occurred, the object of the verb, or the cause of the action expressed by the main verb (Harris 1980:971, BDB 1952:472). The causal function of **ki** “for” can be seen in Zephaniah 1:17c, 2:7d, 2:10b, 2:11b, 2:14d, and 3:11c. This usage is rather straightforward and indicates a causal relationship between the subordinate clause and the main clause.

Another function of the **ki** particle is to introduce a new section or indicate some sort of a break in the text. In Zephaniah 2:4a and 2:9c the particle introduces a woe oracle. There is clearly no temporal, objectival, or causal relationship with the preceding clauses. In 3:13d the **ki** particle marks the second part of a contrastive verb couplet. The first half of the couplet uses the imperfect verb to describe the moral nature of Israel, and the second half, introduced by the **ki** particle, uses the perfect
verb to describe the blessed state of God’s people. Regarding this function Wendland states, “In Hosea such special rhetorical usage was often found at a discourse boundary, either the initial or the final one.” (1995:40)

A third function of this multifaceted particle is to emphasize a particular point or make a strong affirmation. Scholars have referred to this as the “asseverative usage.” (Harris 1980:971, Murphy 2003:31) Wendland states that “in dramatic, elevated speech...it [ki] is frequently employed intensively to highlight an utterance, i.e. ‘Indeed’, ‘surely’, ‘certainly’, etc., either with or without its underlying causal implication.” (1995:40) It is interesting to note that after three of the six exclamatory statements in Zephaniah (1:7b-c, 1:11b, 3:8–10), ki “for” is used to introduce a strong statement. One might argue that there is somewhat of a causal notion in these instances, but that seems to be secondary to the emphatic role. In fact, there are two ki clauses after the first statement and three after the third statement. Other examples are found in 1:18c and 3:20c, both climactic passages.

The hinneh particle

This particle has often been noted as a prominence marker (Harris 1980:506). Its one occurrence in Zephaniah begins the final strophe (3:19a) of the book announcing the salvation of God’s people. Coupled with subject fronting, it underlines the climactic nature of this event.

Word order shift

It is a well known fact that any shift away from the typical VSO word order in Biblical Hebrew should be carefully noted as some sort of discourse device. Typically this has been labeled a peak marker, but Bandstra widens the scope of this marker, showing that it can be important in text structuring as well as a prominence marker. He explains: “What previously has been termed ‘emphasis’ now can be understood more profitably as the discourse effect of placing new information in the position where given information is typically found. Thus, the presumption that first position in the clause is always the place of emphasis is not correct. But when something other than a WP [ waw-prefix] is found in first position, something significant has taken place. Perhaps a better term to apply to this fronting transformation is ‘topicalization’. Topicalization is the process whereby a writer brings into prominence new information and places it into the given information slot or the topic position.” (Bandstra 1986:120) Based on this role of word order shift, he comments on the importance of discourse analysis that has been stressed in this study: “Word order is thus seen to be one of the most significant syntactic factors which are responsible for maintaining continuity between clauses as well as indicating thematic breaks between strophes. The function of word order cannot be understood by examining clauses in isolation from discourse. Rather, an examination of discourse reveals the function of word order.” (Bandstra 1986:123)

Bandstra’s comments are helpful in the analysis of the woe oracles in chapter 2. The first oracle (2:4–7) begins with a ki + SV structure (2:4), and the second part of the second oracle (2:8–11) against Moab begins with the same structure. The third oracle against Ethiopia (2:12) begins with Also you Cushites,” which amounts to an adverb + SV if both 2:12a and 2:12b are taken together. The fourth oracle (2:13–15) against the Assyrians does not begin with a SV structure, but rather concludes with a sequence of three SV clauses (2:14b-d). It would appear from this
data that Bandstra is correct in assuming that word order shift has a role in strophe marking.

The other cases of SVO clauses in Zephaniah are not as easy to classify. In 3:3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, for example, the author fronts the subject in four consecutive phrase. In this pericope, he probably does not intend to mark distinct discourse units, since these are four analogous consecutive statements, that compose a single unit indicating the spiritual depravation of Jerusalem. One might postulate that he is using the SVO structure to mark topicalization, but one would expect more elaboration, if that was the case. Given the presence of four consecutive cases of SVO structure, there certainly seems to be some desire by the author to emphasize the fact that rulers, judges, prophets, and priests are doing exactly the opposite of what they would normally be expected to do.

The wordy clause in 3:10a begins with a subject as it describes the return from exile. This does not seem to be a strophe marker, but it is difficult to say that this clause has more prominence than those around it. In 3:13a-f an interesting example of subject fronting is seen in the context of a contrastive verb couplet where the subject is fronted at the beginning of the two parts of the couplet. Besides the aesthetic value of this symmetry, it more than likely helps focus on the constituent introduced in 3:9. 88

Table 40: Subject fronting in a contrastive verb couplet (Zephaniah 3:13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part A</th>
<th>Part B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The rest of Israel (Subject – fronted) will not do (Verb – Imperfect) evil, and will not speak (Verb – Imperfect) a lie, and a tongue of deceit (Subject – not fronted) will not be found in their mouth.</td>
<td>For they (Subject – fronted) will graze (Verb – Perfect), and they will lie down (Verb – Perfect), and none will be terrifying (Verb – Participle).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject fronting is also found in 1:18 where it appears to mark prominence as the universal judgment is reiterated. There are three clauses: the first is SVO, the second VO, and the third OV (only explicit constituents are indicated). This unusual combination of clauses with varying word order fronting both the subject and the object marks the prominent nature of the passage.

Two other instances of object fronting are found in 3:5c and 3:18a. Both of these are chiastic structures, and probably should not be considered as examples of prominence marking or strophe structuring.

Concentration of hortatory imperatives

In the section entitled “Structural overview of Zephaniah 1–3,” the presence of a sequence of hortatory imperatives was presented as a peak marking device. The sequence of three semantically related imperatives is a remarkable device that calls attention to the prominence of the exhortation. The fact that another sequence of three

88 Wendland in personal communication (2012).
semantically related imperatives is used in chapter 3 as well, highlights the importance of this technique.

There are several observations that distinguish this discourse device as important. The first is the rarity of the imperative form in the book. When an element is used sparingly it raises the audience’s expectation. The second is the concentration of the imperative form. The fact that it is used three consecutive times is certainly noteworthy. The use of the same verb repeatedly marks it as important. The final observation is that this sequence is later repeated in the book. This repetition not only links the two sequences together, but it tells the audience that this is a prominent passage. The hortatory imperatives in 3:14 are probably subordinate to those in 2:3 in that they represent an exhortation resulting from the obedience to the first set of commands. Because the people “sought Yahweh” (2:3) and were thus saved from their plight, they are commanded to “rejoice” (3:14) in the salvation they have received.

Concentration of exclamatory statements

Exclamatory statements by definition call attention to themselves. In Zephaniah, as can be seen in the “Structural overview of Zephaniah 1–3,” the symmetrical repetition of these statements throughout the book indicates that the author is attempting to maintain the attention of the audience as he leads them to an understanding of the principal points of God’s message.

The “Hush” exclamation in 1:7, along with the device of person shift, serves to mark a prominent passage in the first chapter that sets the stage for the whole book. The exclamatory statement in 2:1–2 calls for attention as the principal exhortation of the book is announced in 2:3. The “Woe” statement in 2:5a introduces the nature of God’s announcement to the Philistines, the Moabites, the Cushites, and the Assyrians. A second “Woe” statement in 3:1a helps refocus the attention of the audience from the sins of their enemies to their own spiritual degeneration. The final exclamatory statement in 3:8a sets the stage for the final sequence of hortatory imperatives. Israel is told to “wait for Yahweh” in anticipation of the time of rejoicing that will mark the end.

The use of rhetorical questions

Another technique to mark a prominent passage of a text is the use of a rhetorical question. Muilenberg states that “the questions often provide the climatic line of the strophe.” (1969:16) This may very well be the case in Zephaniah 2:15d-e. This particular question about how a city like Nineveh could have ever been destroyed is answered with a concise yet powerful reply in 2:15f-g, “He [God] whistles / He waves his hand.”

Verbal hierarchy in Zephaniah

A discourse study on the book of Zephaniah would not be complete without mentioning the issue of verbal hierarchy. Longacre’s work (1989) has brought scholars to the realization of the important role that the Hebrew verbal system plays in Hebrew discourse analysis. Scholars may not agree with his conclusions (e.g. Heimerdinger 1999), but no one can ignore the issue that he has raised.

From the beginning this study was interested in whether or not there might be a correspondence between the findings of Longacre on the role of the Hebrew verb in hortatory prose and the type of hortatory discourse found in Zephaniah. Longacre
maintained that there were different “bands” that presented different types of information in the discourse. He believed that each band of information typically used a particular verbal form to encode that information. His verb ranking is as follows:

**Table 41: Longacre’s verb ranking in hortatory Hebrew prose (1989:121)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 1: Primary line of Exhortation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Imperative (2b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Cohortative (1p)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Jussive (3p)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 2: Secondary line of Exhortation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 יָשׁ + jussive / imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Modal imperfect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 3: Results/Consequences (Motivation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 waw consecutive + perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 נָל + imperfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 (Future) perfect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 4: Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Perfect (of past events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Participles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Nominal clauses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study of Zephaniah did not find two separate lines of exhortation in the discourse. The only verbal form used in this sense was the imperative. This does not contradict the findings of Longacre in Hebrew prose, rather it simply notes that the issue of command mitigation was absent in Zephaniah.

Band three speaks of “results” and “consequences” that serve as motivation for obeying a particular exhortation. This study of Zephaniah has found a slightly different emphasis. The author focuses on “future intentions” on the part of God, which rhetorically indicate not only the hypothetical results and consequences of disobedience, but the motivation for people to obey the divine exhortation in question. In this particular type of information Zephaniah uses the perfect and the imperfect verbs interchangeably. In addition to these common verbal structures, he sometimes uses participles and nominal clauses in the same manner.

Longacre’s fourth band deals with setting. Zephaniah has only a few clauses that deal with setting or past events. These are encoded with the perfect and the imperfect verbs.

Overall it is difficult to fit Zephaniah’s verb usage into Longacre’s schema. Wanting to create an analogous schema based on the data in Zephaniah, the following bands could be postulated:

**Table 42: Verb ranking in Zephaniah’s prophetic hortatory text**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 1: Exhortation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Imperative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Interjections / Imperatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Band 2: Future Intentions
2.1 Perfect / Imperfect
2.2 Nominal clauses following Verbal clauses
2.3 Infinitives following a finite verb

Band 3: Past Behavior
3.1 asher + Perfect

Band 4: Direct Discourse
4.1 Imperfect

However, one problem that Heimerdinger raises concerning Longacre’s work regards the whole concept of “verb ranking.” (1999:76) The idea that different parts of the discourse are more “important” or “dominant” than others may be difficult to prove since each part has a role in completing the message. To push that reasoning forward and say that certain verbal forms are more critical than others within a band, may also be difficult to prove.

An alternative approach would be to look at how different verbal forms are used in a given text. Such an inventory has the advantage of beginning with the surface forms and noting information about their usage, rather than postulating an overarching structure and trying to fit the surface forms into the superimposed structure. The following table attempts to list the various finite verbal forms found in Zephaniah and point out how they are used. The references for each verbal form can be found in the next section “Temporal considerations regarding the Hebrew verb in Zephaniah.”

Table 43: Inventory of finite-verbal forms in Zephaniah

- Perfect consecutive (with וָא) (25 times)
  - Indicates divine intentions in the future (e.g. 1:8b, 1:17a).
  - Indicates setting for divine intentions in the future (e.g. 1:12a).
  - Indicates results of divine intervention in the future (e.g. 1:13c).
- Perfect (17 times)
  - Indicates a present or past action/state (e.g. 3:6a).
- Perfect preceded by asher (7 times)
  - Indicates a present or past action/state relative to a preceding noun (e.g. 1:1b, 1:6b).
- Perfect preceded by כִּי (8 times)
  - Indicates a present or past action that constitutes a “reason” (e.g. 1:11b).
- Perfect preceded by a negation (6 times)
  - Indicates a past action or state that was not completed (e.g. 3:1b).
- Imperfect consecutive/conversive (with וָא) (2 times).
  - Indicates a past historical action (e.g. 2:8c, 2:10c).
- Imperfect (30 times)
  - Indicates divine intentions in the future (e.g. 2:13a).
  - Indicates results of divine intervention in the future (e.g. 2:11c, 2:15g).
• Imperfect preceded by a waw conjunctive (e.g. 2:13a-c).
  o Indicates a future action that is grammatically joined with the
    preceding action to indicate that both actions were done, possibly with
    some semantic linkage as well (succession, cause/effect, etc.).

• Imperative (13 times)
  o Indicates a command which clearly tells someone what to do (2:3a).
    (Note: This has been referred to as a “hortatory imperative” in this
    chapter.)
  o Indicates a command which merely prepares someone for a specific
    action (2:1a, 3:8a). (Note: This has been referred to as an “exclamatory
    imperative” in this chapter, and can be expressed with an interjection
    as well as a verb.)

In addition to finite verbs, non-finite verbs must also be analyzed in order to
understand their function in the discourse of Zephaniah. This typology must be based
on the usage of the various forms. The following two tables provides those forms and
their references. The first one gives the legend used to mark them, and the second
provides the references of the various forms.

Table 44: Legend for the non-finite verb chart

• Infinitive absolute
  o /emp – adds emphasis
• Infinitive construct
  o /fv – completes a finite verb
  o /state – indicates state
  o /nc-emp – emphatic action in nominal clause
  o /res-emp – emphatic action resulting from another action
  o /fv-emp – completes a finite verb with major emphasis
• Participle
  o /n – like a noun
  o /v – like a verb
  o /adj – like an adjective
  o /adv – like an adverb
• Nominal clause
  o /pn – predicate nominative
  o /padj – predicate adjective
  o /pexist – predicate of existence
• Imperative
  o /excl – exclamatory imperative
  o /hor – hortatory imperative

Table 45: Non-finite verb chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive absolute</th>
<th>Infinitive construct</th>
<th>Participle</th>
<th>Nominal clause</th>
<th>Imperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:2a/emp</td>
<td>1:18a/fv</td>
<td>1:5a/n</td>
<td>1:7b/padj</td>
<td>1:7a/excl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:2a/state</td>
<td>1:5b/n</td>
<td>1:10c/pexist</td>
<td>1:11a/excl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following table provides an inventory of non-finite verbal forms in Zephaniah and postulates their main role in the discourse. Note that only the nominal clauses that have a copula function are referenced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1:5b/n</th>
<th>1:14a/padj</th>
<th>2:1a/excl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:8c/nc-emp</td>
<td>1:6a/n</td>
<td>1:14b/padj</td>
<td>2:1b/excl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8d/nc-emp</td>
<td>1:12d/v</td>
<td>1:14c/padj</td>
<td>2:3a/hor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8e/nc-emp</td>
<td>1:14e/v</td>
<td>1:15a/padj</td>
<td>2:3c/hor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:8f/nc-emp</td>
<td>1:18c/adv</td>
<td>2:5b/pexist</td>
<td>2:3d/hor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:9b/res-emp</td>
<td>2:1a/adj</td>
<td>2:10a/pn</td>
<td>3:8a/excl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:9c/res-emp</td>
<td>2:4a/adj</td>
<td>2:12b/padj</td>
<td>3:14a/hor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:11d/res-emp</td>
<td>2:15a/v</td>
<td>3:3a/pn</td>
<td>3:14c/hor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20b/fv-emp</td>
<td>2:15b/v</td>
<td>3:3b/pn</td>
<td>3:14c/hor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:20d/fv-emp</td>
<td>2:15b/v</td>
<td>3:4a/padj</td>
<td>3:19a/excl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:1a/v</td>
<td>3:5a/padj</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13f/v</td>
<td>3:15c/pexist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19a/v</td>
<td>3:17a/pexist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table provides an inventory of non-finite verbal forms in Zephaniah and postulates their main role in the discourse. Note that only the nominal clauses that have a copula function are referenced.

Table 46: Inventory of non-finite verbal forms in Zephaniah

- ** infinitive absolute (1 time)
  - Emphasizes the finite verb (e.g. 1:2a).
- ** infinitive construct (11 times)
  - Functions with a finite verb to express one finite action (e.g. 1:18a).
  - Functions with an adverb to express an existential state (e.g. 2:2a).
  - Emphasizes climactic action in a nominal clause (e.g. 3:8c-f).
  - Emphasizes climactic action as result of a finite verb (e.g. 3:9b-c, 3:11d)
  - Emphasizes climactic/summary action with generic finite verbs (e.g. 3:20b, 3:20d)
- ** Participles (18 times)
  - Describes someone who habitually does a particular action (like a noun) (e.g. 1:5a).
  - Describes someone who does an action in a finite situation (like a verb) (e.g. 2:15a).
  - Describes a quality of someone (like an adjective) (e.g. 2:1b).
  - Describes a quality of an action (like an adverb) (e.g. 1:18c).
- ** Nominal clauses (16 times)
  - Functions as a predicate nominative (e.g. 2:10a).
  - Functions as a predicate adjective (e.g. 1:14a).
  - Functions as a predicate of existence (e.g. 3:15c).

From this inventory it is clear that one can not automatically assign to particular verb forms certain roles in the discourse, with the exception perhaps of the imperatives, which by definition exhort others to action. Perfects, imperfects, and verbless clauses all make statements about divine action, and the negative or positive
behavior/character that motivates God to take that action. Perfect verbs are more frequent than imperfect verbs in Zephaniah, but whether or not that should be considered an element in ranking verb usage is another question.

It may seem strange that verbless predications should be included in an inventory of verb forms, however the absence of a verb in a proposition should not be ignored. In Hebrew it is not uncommon to omit the copula to form a predicate nominative or a predicate adjective structure. The same occurs in a predicate of existence where the author states that something exists without using the verb “to be.”

Participles tend to describe the nature or character of someone in the text. The action expressed is tied to the description of their character (e.g. “The joyous city is ‘inhabiting’ in security.” 2:15a, “Wolves are not ‘flaying’ in the morning.” 3:3b) Typically these are found in a subordinate syntactical structure.

Infinitives usually join a finite verb to complete the main verbal idea that the finite verb is unable to express by itself. In 3:11d, for example, the main idea is not that the people do not “continue,” but that they do not “continue to be haughty.” A similar construction is found in 1:18a. In the final verse of the book there are two cases where the infinitive is used as the main verb of a clause. This usage is unique and may indicate the prominence of the concluding passage in the text.

Imperatives obviously play a key role in hortatory discourse. By definition they are the verbal forms that clarify the content of the exhortation. Longacre describes the imperatives as the primary line of exhortation in hortatory prose (1989:180), and Partridge does the same in her study of the Psalms (1995:98).

Several other observations regarding verb usage should be included in this description of the Hebrew verbal system as used by Zephaniah. There are seven examples of asher clauses in the book, including those where the asher of the preceding clause serves as the relative pronoun of the second clause (1:1b, 6b-c, 2:3b, 2:8b-c, 3:11b). Each one of these clauses uses a perfect verb and could be easily interpreted as a “completed aspect” as is so commonly done in Hebrew grammar. In each case the relative clause is describing the action of someone identified in the main clause.

There are six verbs used in direct discourse clauses, all of which are imperfect (1:12e-f, 3:7b-c, 3:16b-c). The context indicates actions that are placed in the future and/or in a hypothetical situation. This coincides quite well with the common notion that imperfect indicates incompleted action. It should be noted that direct discourse is a distinct type of text that needs to be considered a part from other types. Niccacci understands this in his distinction between narrative prose and direct speech texts: “Indeed I think that this distinction is necessary in the analysis of Biblical Hebrew. The reason is that these two genres of the prose possess distinctive verb forms, while the verb forms attested in both have a different value.” (2002:182)

A final consideration regards negated verbal structures. The negative particle is found with imperfect and perfect verbs. Negated imperfect verbs seem to always have reference to either future (e.g. 1:13d, 13f, 3:5e, 11a, 11d, 13a-c, 15d) or hypothetical (e.g. 1:12e-f, 2:2c-d, 3:7d) actions. Negated perfect verbs tend to describe the nature or behavior of someone (e.g. 1:6b-c, 2:1b, 3:1b, 2a-c, 3b, 5d).

The primary difficulty with assigning the various Hebrew verb forms to a particular discourse role is that multiple devices are used in the composition of the discourse. The usage of various verb forms does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in conjunction with other discourse features. A multiple verb contrastive couplet is a good example. Verb form selection is important, but not because only one verb form
is used for a certain type of information, but because it fits into the overall structure of other devices such as syntactical symmetry. While it is possible at times to summarize verb form selection in the context of information typology, one should avoid the temptation of forcing verb forms into a discourse straight-jacket.

*Temporal considerations regarding the Hebrew verb in Zephaniah*

The issue of tense in the Hebrew verbal system has always been a controversial issue for grammarians (see McFall 1982). Hebrew students used to learn that the perfect verb corresponded to past tense and the imperfect verb to future tense. Scholars were plagued, however, with the numerous exceptions to this paradigm, and eventually turned to verb aspect to resolve the Hebrew verb enigma. Text linguistics has introduced other variables into the research such as genre and verbal hierarchy. Despite this evolution, the issue of tense continues to surface in Hebrew studies.

A study of the data in Zephaniah may shed some light on the issue. If one considers perfect verbs versus imperfect verbs, it is somewhat difficult to see a correlation with time. If however, one adds to the equation the presence or absence of certain particles, a clearer picture emerges. In this particular study each verb in Zephaniah was analyzed in a formal and a semantic context. The formal context refers to the presence of key grammatical particles and syntactical word order. The semantic context refers to the “apparent” temporal context that one can deduce from the actual message of the text at various points. At times the semantic context may not offer conclusive evidence as to which temporal reading might be most appropriate, but it can certainly help in the majority of the cases.

The data in the following table considers perfect and imperfect verbs in the syntactical context of their clause. Some are clause initial, while others are preceded by a *waw*, an *asher*, a *ki*, a *ke*, or a negative particle. In the case of imperfect verbs a distinction was made between *waw* conversives (i.e. *waw* followed by a *patah*) and *waw* consecutives (i.e. *waw* followed by *shewa*). In the body of the table the reference (chapter, verse, line) in which each verb is found, is followed by a backslash and an abbreviation which indicates the temporal reading of the verb according to the semantic context. The first line of the table indicates which construction is being considered in each column. The legend below gives the meaning of each abbreviation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 47: Legend for verb forms chart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>w/P - <em>waw</em> plus perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0/P - perfect without particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a/P - <em>asher</em> plus perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k/P - <em>ki</em> plus perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/P - negation plus perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/p - past tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/pr - habitual/present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(implied) - indicates that the particle in question is not actually present but it is implied from an earlier clause.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 48: Verb form chart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3d/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:8a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:8b/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:9a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:10a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:12a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:12c/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:13a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:13c/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:13e/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:17a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:17b/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:7c/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:14a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:12a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:12b/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19a/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19d/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:17d/f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:19c/f*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to this data it is clear that the *waw* plus perfect in Zephaniah indicates future action. All twenty-six occurrences of this form refer to an action that
is set in the future. This is nicely contrasted with the perfect verb without the $waw$ (or any other preceding particle), where it clearly refers to past action. Unfortunately there are not a lot of examples of this form, but 2:8a is clear reference to a historical clash between Moabites and Israelites. Another clear example is in 3:18b, where God refers to a past burden that he promises in 3:18a to remove. There are five more examples in 3:6–7 that could be interpreted as a future declaration, but careful exegesis demonstrates how they are better understood as past actions. Three other examples are in this same category, namely those in 3:15a, 3:15b, and 3:18b. They could easily be taken, on the grounds of the absence of a $waw$, as verbs indicating past actions and remain coherent with the text. Perfects without a preceding particle can also refer to actions that are ongoing in the present, such as 3:4b and 3:4c that refer to the evil deeds of the Jerusalem priests.

Perfects in $asher$ clauses can do the same thing. They can describe a present action or state (e.g. 1:6b, 1:6c), and in this way fulfill the function of the relative phrase that modifies a noun. Sometimes perfect verbs in $asher$ clauses refer to actions done in the past (e.g. 2:8b, 3:11b). It is noteworthy that Zephaniah never uses imperfects in this position.

Perfects that are negated tend to fulfill the same modifying role as perfects in $asher$ clauses. They indicate negated actions that describe the people in question (e.g. 2:1b, 3:1b, 3:2a, etc.).

Subordinate clauses that begin with $ki$ are somewhat more versatile with regards to tense. It appears that perfect verbs in these clauses can possibly denote actions that are in the present tense (e.g. 1:17c – “The people will walk as blind men because they are sinning against Yahweh”$^89$), the past tense (e.g. 2:10b – “This will be to them for their haughtiness, because they insulted and rose up against the people of Yahweh of Hosts”), and the future tense (e.g. 1:7c “…for the day of Yahweh is near, for Yahweh will establish a sacrifice.”). In these cases the context of the passage is the key to determine the temporal orientation of the action.

There are only a few imperfect verbs in Zephaniah that are preceded by the $waw$ conversive as commonly found in Hebrew narrative. The two examples, 2:8c and 2:10c, both refer to historic events in past time. Hortatory genre does not use this form often, but it is interesting that when it does, it is parallel with its narrative genre counterpart.

At this point it is important to make the distinction between the $waw$ conversive and the $waw$ conjunctive. In 2:11c and 2:13a-c there is a clear future time orientation, but the imperfect verb is used where one would expect the $waw$ plus perfect. This discrepancy is resolved by noting that these imperfects are preceded by a $waw$ conjunctive rather than a $waw$ conversive (Sweeney 2003:143). They function as imperfects without a preceding particle, and the conjunctions simply serve to link the clauses without affecting the verb tenses.

$^89$ The present tense was chosen in the translation of this example based on the likelihood that the author was not referencing past sins, but rather a continued state of sinning. It is possible that this was not the author’s intended purpose, and in that case this would not provide evidence for the point being made. The same could be said for the example of a future interpretation. If the “establishment” of the sacrifice was considered a prior divine decision, then perhaps the verb could be taken as an action done in the past.
Imperfect verbs without any particle correspond to the same temporal orientation as perfects preceded by *waw*, namely future tense. There are examples of this form in sentence initial position, as well as sentence medial or final position. The comments made about contrastive verb couplets help explain how perfects and imperfects can both be used with regards to the same temporal orientation. This contrastive use was a discourse device that Hebrew poets used effectively to create cohesion and emphasis in a text as has already been discussed.

Imperfect verbs in *ki* clauses in Zephaniah do not reflect the same versatility with regards to temporal orientation as the perfect verbs in *ki* clauses. In the data in this book all cases refer to future actions.

Negated imperfects are used in Zephaniah to refer to action done in the future and in the present. The future references include those indicating a hypothetical future action that may or may not take place (e.g. 1:12e, 1:12f, 1:18a, 2:2c, 2:2d, 3:7d). Even 1:13d and 1:13f could be included in this category. All of these are instances of things done in the future, but the emphasis seems to be on the hypothetical aspect of the verb rather than the future tense. Another category of negated imperfects (3:5c, 3:5e, 3:11a, 3:11d, 3:13a-c, 3:15d, 3:16b-c) refers to future actions that are all “habitual” in nature. They typically indicate an ongoing moral behavior that will occur in the future. While they do occur in the future, the emphasis is not on verb tense but on habitual verb aspect.

Based on the data found in Zephaniah, it is clear that the verbal system in Biblical Hebrew relies on a complex system of accompanying particles and verbal sequences to clarify the temporal reference in addition to the basic verbal forms of perfect and imperfect. The following table gives an overview of these combinations and their role in indicating verb tense.

**Table 49: Verb form summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENSE</th>
<th>BAND 1</th>
<th>BAND 2</th>
<th>BAND 3</th>
<th>BAND 4</th>
<th>BAND 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAST</td>
<td>0 + Perfect (clause initial) – Historical past action</td>
<td><em>waw</em> conversive + Imperfect – Historical past action</td>
<td><em>asher</em> + Perfect – Historical past action</td>
<td><em>ki</em> + Perfect – Historical past action</td>
<td><em>ki</em> + Perfect – Historical past action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESENT</td>
<td>0 + Perfect (non-initial) – Habitual present action</td>
<td><em>asher</em> + Perfect – Habitual present action</td>
<td><em>ke</em> + Perfect – Habitual present action</td>
<td>NEG + Perfect – Habitual present action</td>
<td><em>ki</em> + Perfect – Habitual present action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUTURE</td>
<td><em>waw</em> + Perfect (clause initial) – Historical future action</td>
<td>Imperfect – Historical future action</td>
<td><em>ki</em> + Perfect – Historical future action</td>
<td><em>ki</em> + Imperfect – Historical future action</td>
<td>NEG + Imperfect – Hypothetical future action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 – Contextual frames of reference in the Rhetoric of a Susu Xutuba

The focus of this research now turns from eighth century B.C. prophetic literature composed for the Hebrew people, to an analogous type of literature composed for the Susu people in the twenty-first century C.E. The book of Zephaniah was written by a religious leader who desired to influence the religious beliefs and practices of his audience. A Muslim Imam has composed a similar piece of literature to encourage his people to renew their connection with Allah.

While almost three millennia separate these two compositions, they both exhibit a similar focus and purpose. Their messages, perhaps originally presented orally and later in written form, make a direct appeal for religious renewal and reformation to their own people from a position of religious authority.

Despite this similarity, the two texts go about the task of religious persuasion in drastically different ways. The model of “contextual frames of reference” makes it clear that these differences must exist in so much as the audiences live in totally different cognitive environments. Religious persuasion can only take place when the cognitive environment of the audience is allowed to dictate the methodology of the argumentation and the linguistic manipulation of the text. In the end, the two separate analyses in this research seek to exemplify the importance of this communication principle.

4.1 Introduction to the Susu context

The Susu people

The Susu people live along the coast of West Africa in the Republic of Guinea and Sierra Leone. Their population no doubt surpasses one million, but solid statistical data is scarce. For the most part they are subsistent farmers, but along the coast many fish and process salt. Being one of the three largest ethnic groups in Guinea, they participate actively in the socio-political arena.

The vast majority are Muslims, though Christianity made its debut in the territory in the nineteenth century. While the Susu follow the Sunni form of Islam, traditional forms of animism often find their way into their daily way of life. Some Muslim karam/xə “sorcerers / teachers” are called upon to protect people from sickness or magic. This can be done with amulets that feature verses from the Qur’an or various sacrifices done in the name of Allah. Other karam/xə “sorcerers / teachers” limit themselves to more orthodox measures, such as communal prayers or sacrifices.

Christianity first entered Guinea through Anglican missionaries in the 1800’s. They began work in Susu territory, mainly in Boffa, Conakry, and on the islands off the coast from Conakry. Some Susu families have maintained that historic tie, but this represents a very small number of Susu. With the advent of French colonialism in the 1900’s, Catholicism established a foothold in Susu territory along the coast, but was frequented mainly by non-Susu ethnic groups. Since the 1960’s Evangelical Protestant groups have worked among the Susu throughout the territory, but numerically, the impact has been minimal.
The Susu “Xutuba”

As mentioned earlier, the majority of the Susu practice Islam. Their formal worship revolves around 5 liturgical prayers with specific body postures recited daily at 5:00, 14:00, 17:00, 19:00, and 20:00. These sali can be performed anywhere either individually or in group. People can enter a mosque for their prayers, but it is not obligatory. However, most Muslims will typically perform their 14:00 prayer on Fridays in the mosque.

The Susu word xutuba refers to the sermon preached by the Imam in the mosque before the 14:00 prayers on Fridays. The Imam typically delivers or reads his sermon from a pulpit at the front of the mosque, or from the niche in the eastern wall of the mosque which is reserved for the Imam. Frequently he divides the sermon in two parts, and delivers the second part which is usually quite short, after a brief interval. The xutuba plays an important role in religious formation among the Susu, since it constitutes one of the main sources of teaching for the average Muslim.

A proposed methodology

In order to analyze the rhetoric of this Susu xutuba and understand the contextual frames of reference that make it an efficient communication act, two aspects need to be examined. Chapter 3 will focus on the macro structure of the discourse and delineate the argumentation flow. Overall meaning and themes will be highlighted, especially with reference to the Susu Muslim cognitive environment. In Chapter 4 the focus will shift to the propositional structure of the discourse and underline specific techniques used by the author to present the message in an aesthetically attractive and rhetorically persuasive manner.

The present study proposes to analyze Susu rhetoric in the specific context of a xutuba. Four different sermons were transcribed and one was chosen as the most complete and representative. The text of this sermon will be presented in such a way as to give the reader the opportunity to see the original grammar and an English translation at the same time. The layout will consist of two columns. The column on the left provides the reader with the Susu text, indented according to phrase subordination. The column on the right will offer the reader a semi-literal translation, which is understandable, yet formal enough to display key grammatical elements of the original.

The text has been divided according to the development of the theme of the sermon per the discussion presented in chapter 3. Separate analyses of the textual structural devices (i.e. the formal linguistic organization) and those of the rhetorical devices (i.e. the “semantic flow” of the discourse) have been applied to the same text respecting the same divisions. This can be done since the two approaches complement each other; the textual structure supports the rhetorical structure. Each unit has a reference number, followed by a discourse component type. This particular sermon is composed of such types as values, exhortations, narratives, and blessings. In each stanza title the semantic content summary follows the component type label.

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90 Prayer times are fixed in relation with the sunrise and sunset and can vary during the year and in different places of the world. These prayer times refer to the normal times observed by the Susu in Guinea, West Africa.
Since the sermon used in this research has been divided into stanzas and strophes, the reference system indicates the unit in question. The reference X3.4.2, for example, indicates the xutuba number 3 (X3)\(^{91}\), stanza 4, strophe 2. The substrophes are divided from each other with blank lines and begin with a number to identify them.

A higher level division of the text will be given throughout the sermon in order to indicate the argumentation flow. This outline will attempt to present the macro structure of the discourse. After each point of the macro structure outline, the relevant text will be given under the component type labels mentioned above. A discussion of each point will follow the text.

4.2 Rhetorical description of a Xutuba

**Foundation of discourse**

**X3.1.1 – Value: God is our providing Lord and he gave us Islam**

Wo bara Ala tantu,  
mane naxan nemexi won ma.  
A mu won kixi sese ra,  
naxan xungbo l'Isilamu dine be.  
Wo bara seede na Ala ma.  
A mu won kixi sese ra,  
naxan xungbo l'Isilamu dine be.  
Won bara seede na Ala ma.  
Won Marigi na a tan nan na.  
You thank Allah,  
who is the one who nourishes us.  
He has not given us anything  
greater than the Islamic religion.  
You testify that to Allah.  
He has not given us anything  
greater than the Islamic religion.  
We testify that to Allah.  
He is our Lord.

**X3.1.2 – Value: Mohammed is God’s slave and messenger**

Won bara seede na Nkila Mohamedi ma.  
Ala xa konyi na a ra.  
Ala xa xerra na a ra,  
Ala xa konyi.  
We testify to Beloved Mohammed  
He is Allah’s slave.  
He is Allah’s messenger,  
Allah’s slave.

The first two strophes of this sermon provide a strong doctrinal foundation for the discussion that will follow. The author obviously has the intention of “building a house” and wants the foundation to be solid and unquestionable. Orthodoxy expresses an aurora of strength, and the belief that God is Lord and that Mohammed is his servant and messenger lies at the heart of Islamic orthodoxy. The first stanza boldly identifies this orthodox religion as the greatest gift of God to mankind.

Perhaps to establish the basic importance of God’s gift of the Islamic religion, the author underlines that God is the “one who nourishes us.” Nothing could be more foundational to the human existence than nourishment itself; it provides the very basis of life. If God has given us the gift of Islam, presumably God’s own religious system, surely one should conclude that his gift is as basic as nourishment itself.

Beginning the xutuba with this stanza corresponds somewhat to an Islamic tradition of beginning discourses or even actions with some reference to the Al-
**Fatiha**, i.e. the first chapter of the Qur’an. (Haleem 2011:27) The idea of affirming the oneness and the sovereignty of God, along with the role of the prophet Mohammed, constitutes an appropriate beginning to a religious discourse.

**Introduction of Discourse**

**X3.2.1 – Value: “Donkin Sali” is a happy occasion for Muslims.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children of Guinea, you should know that this Eid al-Adha before us, Allah made it a happy occasion, it is made into a trumpet blowing for Muslims. They should show happiness. Why should they show happiness?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La Gîne die, wo xa a kolon, a donkin sali naxan ya, Ala nan yi findixi xulunyi ra, a findi sara ti ra Misilimie be. E xa naxalinyi masen. E palaxinyi masenma munfera?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**X3.2.2 – Exposition: These are the 5 pillars of Islam.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Islam sits on five pillars: “There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Misimiliya daxxi pîlye suuli nan fari: Layilaha, ilanlahu, ilanlahu, Mohammedu rasurulahi.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**X3.2.3 – Value: This month is important because of the pilgrimage.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thanks be to the compassionate Allah within the year, they culminate this month. Muslim people come from all lands, they meet in that holy land. Mecca does not end, going around Allah’s house. When the pilgrims meet there, they wash there.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

After the broad foundation of Allah and his servant Mohammed, the author moves on to introduce the subject of the discourse, the **Donkin Sali**, or to say it in Arabic, the **Eid al-Adha**. He begins by presenting the holiday as a time of “trumpet blowing” rejoicing. Coupled with the earlier reference to human nourishment, the author clearly wants to portray the positive nature of this Islamic festival.

In the second stanza he weaves this holiday into the foundational “pillars” of Islam, although somewhat indirectly. This indirectness does not hinder the

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92 This expression is used to denote any type of destruction, cessation, or ruining, be it in a physical sense, be it in a more figurative sense. The sense here is, “Doing the hajj to Mecca does not consist in just circling around God’s house.”
understanding of the message by the intended audience, because the author knows their cognitive environment well. The indirectness stems from the fact that Donkin Sali is not really per se one of the five pillars, rather it is a holiday occurring during the time of the hajj, which is in fact the fifth pillar, something that his audience would know well. By referring to the five pillars of Islam, a reference which naturally flows from the previously stated theological doctrines, which in essence restate the first pillar of Islam, the author couches his subject matter in the heart of Islamic orthodoxy.

He explicitly connects the holiday with the hajj in the third stanza by stating that the pillars of Islam practiced all year “culminate this month” when Muslims meet together in Mecca. He uses the fact that the hajj is the final pillar in the list to affirm that it is the “culmination” of the other practices. While most orthodox Muslims would not rank the pillars as to their importance, the author here basically affirms that the hajj culminates the pillars, no doubt a technique to draw importance to the discourse at hand, a discourse that is not limited to just the hajj but which includes it.

**The pilgrimage shows that Islam is a religion of peace**

X3.3.1 – Value: The pilgrimage presents to the world that Islam is a peaceful religion.

Misimilimie a yatagi gbete masen
dunye mixi danxexe be,
naxee mu Misimilimja.
Yatagi mundun?
Misimilimie, e ngaxakeren nan e boore ra,
barenma nan e ra.
Misimilimie, i na lu e longori ra,
i bonge bara sa.
I xa nafuli, i ni, i wuli, i xa yuge kobie,
e birin bara kisi,
ha i na Misimilimie nan longori ra.
Na Misimilimja,
Misimilimie sigama na nan masende
dincla gbete be a nun mixie be,
naxee mu danxanyaxi dine yo ma,
a fasamaxili Misimilimja bongesa dine [na a] ra.
Lanyi diine na a ra.
Bnye rafran dine na a ra.
Digne birin nananxi i boore ma.
A na fe kana i ma,
i dyne a ma.
I sanxone iso a ya ra,
i ya fa a be.
Yi diine a kolonma na nan ma.

Islam shows another forehead
to the other people of the world
that are not in Islam.
Which forehead?
Muslims, they are brothers to each other,
they are relatives.
Muslims, when you are among them
you are at peace.
Your riches, your life, your blood, your bad
habits,
all is saved,
because you are among Muslims.
That Islam,
Muslims go to show it
to other religions and people,
who do not believe in any religion,
because clearly Islam is a peaceful religion.
It is a unity religion.
It is a loving religion.
Forgiveness is given to each other.
When someone hurts you,
you forgive him.
Pull your outstretched hurt foot back,
you let him pass.
This religion is known by that.

X3.3.2 – Narrative/Value: During the pilgrimage all different kinds of people
gather in peace.

1 - Xa [e] mini e xɔnyie,
e naxa fa naralan Maaka,
e xuie keren mara,
e mayingixie keren mara,
I xa [e] mini e xɔnyie,
If they leave their homes,
e naxa fa naralan Maaka,
and they meet in Mecca,
e xuie keren mara,
their languages are not the same,
e mayingixie keren mara,
their colors are not the same,
e yugue keren mara, their personalities are not the same, 
e xa namunye keren mara, their customs are not the same.

2 - Kɔnɔ Ala na e xili, But when Allah calls them, 
e toma ne birin sabatixi, and they meet there 
e djexi, one sees they are all settled, 
e sese mu tinma e boore xa mantɔrɔli ra. they are forgiving, 

X3.3.3 – Narative/Value: During the day of ‘Arafa different kinds of people unite.

Na waxati, xa e bara malan mɛnni, At that time, if they are gathered there, 
e xa malan xungbe laxe, on their big meeting day, 
naxan xungbo a birin be, which is bigger than all the others, 
nɔn lanxi ‘Arafa93 laxe ma, that is the ‘Arafa day, 
xɔn lanxi arabe ma, which is Wednesday.
Xa e bara malan, If they gather together, 
e naxa ti ‘Arafa kɛnɛ ma, they gather at the open place of ‘Arafa, 
e bɔnsɛ birin, all their tribes, 
mixi miliyan yo naxan naralanxi, all the millions of people gathered, 
na naxan xungbo a birin bɛ, they all gather in one place.

X3.3.4 – Value: Pilgrims are at peace with each other during the pilgrimage.

E birin xa masen Ala be, They all should say to Allah, 
“Kɔnyi na n na i be. “I am your slave. 
I mato, Look, 
nɔ to fɛxi be, 
galanbui mu na, there are no quarrels, 
gere mu na.” there are no wars.”
Ndɛ ndɛ mu tinna a xa fe ɛxe niya a boore ra. Some people do not want to hurt others. 
I te tiɔ te boore ma Maaka, If you step on someone in Mecca, 
i ne a fɔlara a be, “I haake to,” 
a fɛn a fɔlara i be, “I haake to.” 
I te naxan tixi a ma, you say to them, “Forgive me,” 
i ne a fɔlara a be, “I haake to.” 
I tixi a tɔn naxan ɛn fana, he also says to you, “Forgive me.” 
a fɛn a fɔlara i be, “I haake to.” You who stood on him, 
I tixi a tɔn naxan ɛn fana, you say to him, “Forgive me.” 
a fɛn a fɔlara i be, “I haake to.” The one you stood on also, 

X3.3.5 – Value: Islam is a peaceful religion and God forgives those who are peaceful.

Na na a ra, na yatagi naxa sa na ki Maaka, Therefore, that “forehead has been laid”

93 The name of a place in Mecca where Satan is symbolically stoned.
like that at Mecca,
showing to people,
that do not understand Islam,
that Islam is a peaceful religion,
it is a loving religion,
it is a unity religion.

But since we do not last
without people harming each other,
but at one point in time,
we must forgive each other.
That forgiveness makes Allah forgive us.
The prophet says, “Great is the name of Allah.”
People who are compassionate to the world,
they do good to other people,
they protect themselves from hurting people,
Allah will do good to them.
In the other world\(^4\), may Allah do good to us.

The author uses the metaphor of “the forehead of Islam” in this stanza to indicate a mark of identification. He claims that peace between fellow human beings characterizes Islam, and that the pilgrimage demonstrates this important quality in a number of ways. People from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds come together and celebrate this religious function in harmony as equals. There is no fighting between the pilgrims and they are all considered of equal status, as symbolized by their common dress.

The power of this rhetorical appeal can be appreciated only by understanding the feeling of oppression experienced by most Susu Muslims today. Both those in Guinea and Sierra Leone have experienced political reigns where the common man has found social upward mobility impossible. The gravity of their poverty and the exploitation by the ruling class promotes a feeling of desperate resignation in the majority of the Susu. The sentiment that the rich get richer at the expense of the poor and that there is no remedy for this oppressive cycle has become an open wound for the Susu people.

In this context, the author presents the *hajj* as an idyllic representation of Islam, thus insinuating that those who follow this religion can hope for a social situation where all are equal and people are loving and kind toward each other. This picture has a great appeal to the poor masses among the Susu and fosters the idea that Islam can be their social salvation.

At the end of this stanza, the author begins to transition into the next advantage of being a good Muslim. He affirms that as Muslims forgive each other for their inevitable social wrongs, God will forgive them for their sins and repay them with his own blessings in this world and the one to come. This appeal will be developed in the following stanza.

\(^4\) This word indicates man’s state after life on this earth. It includes heaven, hell, and a general description of whatever man will find on the other side of death.
The pilgrimage and fasting result in forgiveness of sins

X3.4.1 – Narrative: The pilgrimage and the fasting started yesterday.

The pilgrim was there yesterday. All other Muslims in other lands, they are fasting.

Why do you fast?
Why did you fast yesterday?
Why did you fast exactly yesterday?

X3.4.2 – Narrative: The angels ask God why he is creating man and putting him on the earth.

Because, yesterday Allah presented our words to the angels, yesterday.
When Allah created us, the honorable presentation was made to the angels.

The angels said to Allah, “You want to create people so they can stay on the earth?”
They falsely accuse each other, they shed each other’s blood, they ruin the earth.

We are agreed that if you leave us there, we will present to you “Glory to Allah.”
We will say “Allah is great” to you, we will have compassion on each other, we will not hurt each other.

But those that you have created, those ones, they will falsely accuse each other.

X3.4.3 – Narrative: God shows the angels the pilgrims in peace and unity.

Allah said, “OK, that which you have said, that is true.
But I know something about them, that you do not know.

Therefore when yesterday arrived, all the people of the world were gathered, one shirt, one head covering, that was hanging on them all.
One dress was tied on them all.

Refer to the beginning of the Muslim pilgrimage, the “hajj.”
E na e ya ragoro, a naxe,
    “Wo nu naxee ma,
a n na e be,
    wo nun nee nan man yire keren yi ki.
Wo nu naxee ma,
e e boore tsegema,
    wo wo ya ti e ra.
E tan nan naralanxi yi ki yire keren,
e mu bari baxxi keren,
e mu xui keren falama,
e pingi keren mara.
    Ka xo e tan nan wo yatagi yi ki,
birin dixe a boore be,
birin wakilixi a boore ra.
E tan nan e boore xanuxi yi ki kira keren na.
E man ghile kira keren na.
Gi ti mu na.
I ne tima e boore ma,
i ne a falama a be, “Djene,”
a fan a falama i be, “Djene.”

They looked down, and he said,
    “Those you talked about,
that I was for them,
you and they are in the same situation.
Those you talked about,
    that they falsely accuse each other,
look at them.
They are gathered together in one place,
though they were not born in the same house,
they do not speak the same language,
they are not the same color.
    But those who are before you like this,
    they all forgive each other,
they all help each other.
They love each other on the same road.
They go back on the same road.
There is not running and shuffling.
If you step on one of them,
you will say, “Forgive me,”
he also will say, “Forgive me.”

X3.4.4 – Narrative/Value: God will forgive the pilgrims of their sins.

A naxe, ”A n ba, a tan nan ya,
a n ba, n bara wo findi seeede ra to,
naxan birin na yi kene ma,
a nun naxan n xui suxuxi yi ki to,
n bara ya fa e ma,
n bara e yunubi xafari,
e xa ghi len e xñiyi n tan Ala dixexi ra."

He said, “Oh my father, that is it,
Oh my father, I have made you a witness today,
those here in this [prayer] place,
and those who obey my words today,
I have looked on them,
I have forgiven their sins,
so they can return to their homes with a
forgiving Allah.”

X3.4.5 - Value: We are fasting so we can be among the saved ones God talked to
the angels about.

Na na a to, won fan naxa sun xñø,
alako na masenyi ne tima Ala yi temui naxe,
a wasuma malekee be,
    “Wo nu naxee ma,
e n matandima,
i ma’ to e xui suxuxi boxi fari?”
A xa li won fan na na ya ma.
Hali won mu fa sese kana,
xñø a xa li won fan na xui suxui kui,
alako Ala na a fala
a bara ya fa a xui suxuma xeñø.
Won gbe xa lu na kui.
Ala xa na raba won be.

That is the reason we also fasted yesterday,
so that when Allah gives his speech,
he will boast to the angels,
    “Those who you said
they will disobey me,
do you not see how they obey on the earth?”
It should happen that we also be among them.
We should not ruin anything,
but it should happen that
    we also be in obedience
because Allah said
he forgives the obedient ones yesterday.
May we be among them.
May Allah do that for us.

In this stanza the author introduces the new subject of fasting. He states that
the pilgrims are “there” in Saudi Arabia, but that the Muslims elsewhere are fasting.
This of course is common knowledge for the audience, since they had fasted the day
before in preparation for Eid al-Adha. Pilgrims in the hajj, on the other hand, are not
required to fast in preparation for the festival.
In order to discuss the proper motivation for Muslim behavior, the author then asks the question of why Muslims fast. To respond to the somewhat rhetorical question of why Muslims fast, the author tells a presumably hypothetical story about a conversation between God and the angels. The angels expressed some consternation about why God would create creatures like human beings that instead of living at peace with each other, would falsely accuse each other, kill each other, and destroy their natural habitat. God responds by saying that he knows something about the humans that the angels do not know. At this point he reveals to them the idyllic scene of the multi-ethnic pilgrims living in harmony and equality with each other. God proudly affirms that these people are pleasing to him and that he has forgiven their sins.

The author points to this story and states that his audience should behave in such a way that God will be able to “boast to the angels” about the obedience of humans to the will of God, in this case his will of fasting. The pride of being “submissive to God” (i.e. Muslims) becomes a motivation for fasting, along with the motivation of the forgiveness that God promises those who obey him.

**Details about the pilgrimage compared to the non-pilgrim**

**X3.5.1 – Exposition: Clarifications about the pilgrimage (Pilgrims do not fast, but they do other things.)**


Brothers, that is enough, what Allah has given us. At the pilgrims return, we had been fasting. They do not fast. Today, they are there, what is their work? Throw rocks, circle the k’abah, shave the head, cut the throat of the animal.

**X3.5.2 – Exposition: Clarifications about the pilgrimage (Pilgrims do not offer a “lagiyanyi.”)**

Kana e tan mu lagiyanyi bama. Hiyila mu lagiyanyi bama. Mixie nan tun m’a kolon hiyila lagiyanyi ba mara.

But they do not offer the “lagiyanyi.” The pilgrim does not offer the “lagiyanyi.” People just do not know that the pilgrim is not a “lagiyanyi” offerer.

**X3.5.3 – Exposition: Clarifications about the pilgrimage (Pilgrims should go on the Humura at a separate time from the Hiyi, but it is permissible to go at the same time.)**

1 - I na siga hiyi, i naxa humura raba, i naxa hiyi raba. When you go on the “hajj,” you did the “’umrah,” you did the “hajj.”

2 - Ala naxe, a tan nan a fala i be, konyidi na humura raba Ala be, Allah says, he himself tells you, when a servant does the “’umrah” for Allah, a a niyafe i be i xa siga hiyi, he makes it happen for you that you go on the hajj,
i humura fan sa na fari.  
you add the “’umrah” to that.

3 - A naxe, “Awa, di hiyi bara siga na kui. 
   Xa n bara tin biyasi keren, 
   i lamma ne nu, 
   i fan xa humura raba a xati ma, 
   i gbilen i xanyi. 
   I man fa hiyi fan naba a xati ma, 
   i gbilen i xanyi, 
   yi fe fa ba won tagi. 
   Kon o to bara tin, 
   n to bara tin i be, 
   i na hiyi sato, 
   i xa humura sato yi biyasi keren na.

I bara xoni firin gano gome keren na.”

X3.5.4 – Exposition: Clarifications about the pilgrimage (Pilgrims should sacrifice the “habiyun” for the poor.)

1 - “I lammi fima ne, 
   naxan fima n ma yi jamanne misikin ne ma, 
   E xa a don, 
   i xuruse naxan kon naxabama.”

2 - Na xili n habiyun. 
   Hadiya na a ra, 
   lagiyanyi mara. 
   Hiyila fe firin na na. 
   A m’a xun. 
   Lagiyanyi bafe m’a xun. 
   Won tan naxan fan mu hiyi 
   lagiyanyi bafe na won tan nan xun.

X3.5.5 – Exposition: Non-pilgrims offer a “lagiyanyi.”

Won fan siga sali kene ma. 
E ne na xun bife to. 
E ne na e xa xuruse faxafe to, 
   e naxan sanbaxi Ala xa misikin ne ra 
   hiyi nun humura be. 
Won fan na sali kene ma. 
   Won fan na sali, 
   won xuruse faxa. 
   Won tan gbe lagiyanyi na ra 
   Won benba Ibrahima xa sunna, 
   won tan na nan nakamalima. 
   Ala xa won no na rabade.

X3.5.6 – Value: Donkin Sali is a happy day for good deeds, not bad ones.

1 - Ngaxakerenyie, seewe na Musulumue nan be to. 
   Nalaxinyi na e tan nan be to, 
   naxee Ala xui suxuxi. 
   Brothers, joy is for the Muslims today. 
   Happiness is for them today, 
   those who obey Allah’s voice.
Nourishment is for them today, because they, they do not make today a day to disobey Allah.

It is not their drinking day, it is not their dancing day, it is not their hating day, it is not their vengeance day.

They are calm today, they greet each other. They give to each other. May Allah make us that kind of people.

In this stanza the author makes a comparison between the Muslims in Mecca performing the Hajj, and those elsewhere who are celebrating the Eid al-Adha. He states that while the Muslims throughout the world were fasting in preparation for the Eid al-Adha, the pilgrims in Mecca were going through the basic rituals common to the hajj like the throwing of rocks at the stone pillar of Aqabah to symbolize the attempt to chase Satan away, the circling of the k’abah monument, the shaving of the head or cutting of one’s hair, and the sacrifice of a sheep, camel, or cow. His reference to these rituals needs no further explanation since the Susu Muslims have heard of these activities since they were children from their relatives who have completed the hajj and come home with their detailed stories about the whole experience.

However in the stanza X3.5.2, he feels the need to specify something that his audience does not know. He will return to this subject later in the strophe X3.5.5 where he repeats the fact that the pilgrims’ sacrifice is not the specific type of sacrifice that the Susu call a “lagiyanyi.” For the Susu a “lagiyanyi” indicates exclusively the sacrifice offered at Eid al-Adha, which represents God’s provision of a ram to Abraham that could be offered in place of his son, who he was about to kill in sacrifice according to God’s command. The author makes this clarification without linking it in anyway to his hortatory discourse. Since it does not serve to laud Islam or influence the ethical behavior of Muslims, one could see this statement as a way to enhance the author’s authority based on his knowledge of little-known religious information.

In the stanza X3.5.5 the author refers to the detail mentioned in X3.5.2 that the non-pilgrims offer a “lagiyanyi.” In this stanza he develops a comparison between the Muslims who are performing the hajj and those who are celebrating the Eid al-Adha at home. They both are in “a prayer place” and they are both killing an animal. He considers this gesture to be the will of God for Muslims and asks God that he will “enable” them to make this sacrifice. In the context of Susu poverty, the “enabling” no doubt refers to God providing the financial means for the family to buy a sheep and therefore have meat to eat on the day of the religious festival.

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The author develops this distinction by stating that pilgrims should give money to purchase a sacrifice to be eaten by the poor. This sacrifice is called a *habiyun* and should not be confused with the Susu “lagiyanyi.” When the pilgrims go on the *hajj*, they typically purchase a sacrifice that is made on their behalf in Mecca, and the meat is then sent out to the poor around the world.

In the third strophe of this stanza, he seems to mention another detail without a direct link to his hortatory discourse. He explains that there are two trips a pilgrim can make: an *‘umrah* which is not obligatory, and a *hajj* which is the obligatory fifth pillar of Islam. Typically these two ritual trips should be made in different occasions, but the author maintains that God made an exception and allows the pilgrim “to kill two birds with one stone.” The relevance of this detail, as mentioned with regards to the “lagiyanyi”, lies more in bolstering the authority of the author based on his knowledge base, rather than in developing the argumentation of the discourse as a whole.

The final strophe of this stanza returns to the theme of Islamic peace. The author states that the Feast of the Sacrifice is a happy day for those who obey God. He presents their example as an ideal to strive for. Instead of spending their time in evil deeds such as drinking alcohol, dancing, hating people, and getting vengeance on their enemies, they live in a state of harmonious peace. The author concludes with a blessing 99 in which he asks God to make him and his audience into that kind of model people. The blessing serves as an exhortation for the people to live according to the example of those good Muslims who are on the *hajj*.

**Exhortation to non-pilgrims in Guinea**

**X3.6.1 – Exhortation: Obey God’s will on this happy day (do not disobey God, have mercy on others, offer sacrifices, help others).**

1 - *Ala xa konyie, won ma xutube kui, wo nde nan ya?*   
   *Won naxan masenma won boore be, Ala matandi lxë mu ro ra.*  
   *Won tan nan seewa lxë a ra.*  
   Allah’s servants, in our sermon,  
   That which we tell each other,  
   We are in a day of joy.

2 - *Kôny na seriye kui:*   
   *I naxa Ala matandi, i kikini, i serexe i halale ra.*  
   *Ala matandie tan, won nu nee keren mara.*  
   *Nee tan, Ala ne lxë naxe Misimilie xa seewa,*  
   *nee tan Ala nan matandima.*  
   *N ba, won xa palaxin.*  
   *Won xa kata,*  
   *But in this law:*  
   *You should not disobey Allah,*  
   *show compassion,*  
   *make an honest sacrifice.*  
   *We are not the same as disobedient of Allah.*  
   *They, [when] Allah says day that Muslims should rejoice,*  
   *they disobey Allah.*  
   *My father, we should be happy.*  
   *We should try,*

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99 I define “blessing” in the analysis as an invocation of God’s intervention on man’s behalf. This may be specific or generic. In a real sense it constitutes a “prayer”, though formally it is not a request made to God in second person, rather in third person. Some may argue that this difference in form disqualifies a Susu “blessing” from being what Christians might consider a “prayer”, but others would argue that essentially it fulfills the same function.
Ala ficere naxan fixi won ma yi ki, 
won xa fan won boore ra.
Won bara "Maaka" falla.
Won xa fan won boore ra be.

with the means Allah gives to us,
we should be good to each other.
We have spoken of “Mecca.”
We should be good to each other here.

X3.6.2 – Exhortation (via rhetorical questions): We should be united like pilgrims.

1 - Munfera Ala dunuya Misimilie birin kixi, 
e sa fa ya, e boore man yire,
e sese xnyi mu demeexen na,
e xan e boore,
e wakili e boore ra?
Why does Allah give to Muslims from all over the world, they come together from their respective places, to a place that is not home for any of them, they care for each other, they help each other?

2 - Munfera won tan nax Be kelixi boxi keren ma, 
munfera wo tan nax Be xui keren falama, 
munfera won tan nax Be kelixi namane keren ma,
munfera wo tan mu luma xui keren, 
wo tan mu lanma fe keren ma?
Why do you who come from the same land, why do you who speak one language, why do you who come from the same country, why do you not agree in speech, [why] do you not become unified?

X3.6.3 – Hypothetical: If Guinean Muslims obeyed Islam, their land would have well-being and peace.

1 - Wo tan, i na wo knti, 
mixi kme yo kme, 
tongo solomanaani, a nun solomanaani, 
nun solomasaxan, 
xa na mu a nun suuli, 
a birin a falama ne, 
“Layila hayilanla Mohamodu rasurulahi.”
You, if you count yourselves, each hundred people, ninety and nine, [ninety] and eight, or [ninety] and five, they all say, “Layila hayilanla Mohamodu rasurulahi.”

2 - Xa Lagine Musulumie Misilimiya faxamu, 
e naxa sabari, 
e naxa ghesexannanteya lu, 
e naxa munfagiga lu, 
‘wanlahi,’ a lima ne, 
boxi bara findi heeri boxi ra, 
a bara findi bojesa boxi ra.
If Guinean Muslims understood Islam, they calmed down, they quit bothering each other, they abandoned gossip, I swear, it would happen, the land would become a productive land, it would become a peaceful land.

3 - Ba, won tan nan wuya ha, 
won findi fe kane ra be, 
fé bara kana na.
Because, we are very numerous, [who among us] are ruining things here, things are ruined there.

4 - Xa won findi fe yailanyi ra be, 
fé bara yaifan be.
Ala naxa won wuya fu ra.
Ala xa won findi seriye rakamali ra.
Ala xa won kinikini won yete ma.
If we become people who fix things here, things would be fixed here. May Allah not multiply us in vain. May Allah make us fulfill the law. May Allah make us have compassion on ourselves.

X3.6.4 – Value: The way to salvation is to be religious and not hurt others.

Muxu ne a falama wo be, 
muxu a falama wo be fe flixan fari, 
Wanlahi, kisi kira yo mu na, 
fo won xuru diine ma,
We say to you, we say to you with sincerity, I swear, there is no other salvation road, except disciplining ourselves with religion,
won won boore haake matanga.
keeping ourselves from hurting each other.

X3.6.5 – Exposition: Two evil things among the Susu are a) gossips, b) those who hate and hurt others out of envy.

1 - Hali muxu tan, Sosoe to mu munafagi kolon. Even us, Susus do not know gossip.
    I ne Sosoe be “munafagi,” If you say “gossip” to Susus,
    a ɲɛɛsɛ a ma, he thinks that it means,
    a mixi naxan sa mixi magima mixi xɔn. someone who runs to someone else.

2 - Sosoe man mu ɔmɔnnante kolon. Susus also do not know hate.
    I ne ɔmɔnnante, You say hate,
    e gere giri naxan ma the way they fight
    a mu dije, he does not forgive,
    a tan ana na nan na a ɔmɔnnante. he says that is a hater.

3 - Ala tan xɔnyi, ɔmɔnnante mu na xa ra. At Allah’s place, that is not a hater.
    Munafagi mu na boore fan xa mu ra. That other one is not a gossiper.

4 - ɔmɔnnante na nde ra Ala xɔnyi?
    Mixi xa heeri ɔmɔna mixi naxan ma, Who is a hater in Allah’s place?900

    mixi naxan yele a boore xa heeri ra,
    mixi naxan yele a boore tide,
    mixi naxan yele a ra.
    E xa a fala a boore be “inuwali.”
    Mixi naxan yele a ra,
    e xa a fala a boore be “soboti.”

5 - Munafagie, besɔɔnxɔnante na nde ra?
    Who is a gossiper and trouble-maker?
    Mixi naxan a panigexi, The person who decides,
    a xa a boore xa naafuli kana, he should destroy his friend’s prosperity,
    hali a mu a tan be. even if it does not become his own.

    Mixi to xirixi a ra na ki, Since people are tied-up like that,
    fo a lu alɔ muxu tan. he also must be like us.
    Na nan na ki, kɔbiri xa kana na[xan] yi,
    hali a mu lu a tan yi.
    N to xirixi a ra na ki, Since I am tied-up like that,
    a xa Imamunya, his being Imam,
    fo n na a ba na teku. it is necessary that I take that away from him.

    Muxu birir ghilen xanbi, After we return,
    hali a tan mu findi Imamu ra, even if he does not become Imam,
    a naxan baxi, the one who was removed,
    na fan mu findi a ra. that one also does not become Imam.

    Xɔnnante soɔi nan na ki, That is a hater’s personality,
    a yele a ra.

6 - Ala xa neme mixi ra a ya xɔri. May Allah help people in front of him.
    A na neme to mixi ma, When he sees that person being helped,
    a luxi ne afɔ e na te sa a tan ma, it is like fire is being put on him.
    Ala naxa won findi xɔnnante ra. May Allah keep us from becoming a hater.

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900 i.e. from God’s perception.
In this sixth stanza, after having built a rhetorical foundation for his global message, the author turns to his basic hortatory appeal asking his audience to reflect on their own identity. The choice is between “joy” and “disobedience to God.” He exhorts his people to not disobey God, rather to have compassion on others and offer the required sacrifices. He encourages people to use the means that God has given them to help others, thus creating a state of happiness. He alludes to the discussion of the hajj, and says that his audience should reduplicate those principles of peace and obedience “here,” as the others are doing in “Mecca.”

The exhortation via comparison between the pilgrims and the non-pilgrims continues in the second stanza. The message expressed by rhetorical questions clearly states that non-pilgrims should put away their petty differences and live in harmony with their fellow Muslims, just like the pilgrims have exemplified in their hajj. Perhaps a climatic point in the hortatory discourse appears in the hypothetical structure in the third stanza. The author states that since the majority of the Guinean population says the shahadah, a concise doctrinal statement of faith which indicates conversion to the Islamic faith (i.e. “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His prophet.”),\(^{101}\) if they put into practice the clear understanding of Islam, which would involve a calm and peaceful spirit between members of the society, where things like gossip were totally abandoned, Guinea would become a productive and peaceful land/society. The author places the responsibility clearly on the shoulders of the Guineans. He says the majority of Guineans are Muslims, and if they ruin things, their society will be ruined, but if they “repair” things, their society will exhibit the qualities advocated in the discourse. He closes this stanza with three blessings in which he prays that their Muslim majority would not be in vain, that the Muslims would accomplish the divine law, and that they would have compassion on each other.

The next stanza adds weight to the previous conditional statement. Not only is a “productive and peaceful society” at stake, but the very “salvation” of the Guineans is in the balance. The author urges his audience to understand the gravity by stating that there is “no other road to salvation” other than total submission to the Islamic religion and abstention from haake (i.e. sins that hurt fellow human beings). The final strophe of this stanza delves deeper into human behavior. The author captures the attention of his audience by saying that they, Susu Muslims, do not know what “gossipers” or “trouble-makers” really are. He says that the common understanding of a gossip is someone who gossips, and a trouble-maker is someone who fights with others. The author states that the divine reality goes deeper than the actions of these people; the reality of their sin lies in their non-altruistic attitude. He states that a gossip is someone who does not want someone else’s well-being. A trouble maker is someone who wants to destroy someone else’s prosperity, even if he does not gain anything from the other’s loss.

The author concludes the stanza with the blessing that God would help the person that the gossip or trouble-maker is trying to hurt, and that he would do it in such a way that the gossip or trouble-maker would be able to see it. He states that

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witnessing God’s benevolent action would be like having “fire heaped on him.”
Having said this, he prays that no one in his audience would be a “trouble-maker.”

**Part II – Exhortation to live in peace**

**X3.7.1 – Introduction to second part of Xutuba.**

Won ma xutuba rapphire,
mu xunse yoo xuranma won be?

In the conclusion of our “xutuba”
what will we read to ourselves?

**X3.7.2 – Exhortation: Fear God and love your neighbor as yourself.**

Won xa gaaxu Alay ra.
Won xa findi mixi gundi keren na.
Afgiyama mu sotama,
fo won tin Alay be.
I boore xa heeri xa rafan i ma.
I na txore to a ma,
a nimise lu i ma,
alo txore na i tan soto,
i nimisama ki naxe.
I boore naxa fura,
i palaxin.
I boore naxa kaame,
i palaxin.
I boore naxa txore,
i seewa.
I wama heeri naxan xan ma i yete be,
i na nan xanuma i ngaxakerenyi fan be.

We should fear Allah.
We should become one people.
The afterlife can not be obtained,
except that we accept Allah here.
Your fellow man’s prosperity should please you.
If you see him suffer,
his sadness should rest in you,
like when you obtain suffering,
and you are sad.
When your fellow man is sick,
do not be happy.
When your fellow man is hungry,
Do not be happy.
When your fellow man is suffering,
Do not be content.
The good you want for yourself,
you should love that for your relatives\(^{102}\) as well.

**X3.7.3 – Exhortation: Do not do anything to make your neighbor angry.**

1 - Ala xa xera naxe,
“Wo naxa wo boore xan de.
Wo nana geri de.
Wo naxa wo boore ranaaxu de.”

Allah’s messenger says,
“You should not hate each other.
You should not fight.
You should not make each other upset.”

2 - Na na a ra, a naxa tonyi daxo saabui birin na,
saabui naxan a niyama
Misimili firin xa ranaaxu a boore ma.
A mu lan muku,
won nde xa sare mati i boore xa sare mati kui.

That means, he prohibited anything,
anything which would make
two Muslims be upset with each other.
It is not right at all
that one of us should try to sell something [to someone] while your fellow man is selling
something to that same person.

Xa wo nuna[i] i boore yule na makiti,
sareseb barai ti a ya i,
a se nde maaxriinnma a ma,
i naxa a falu de, “Fa be, sare fanyi nan fa ya.”

If you and your fellow merchant are at the
market,
a purchase is going on before you,
he asks something of him,
you should not say, “Come here, this is a good
deal.”

3 - I na na raba,
i bara xononteja sa wo tagi,
i bara geri sa wo tagi.
Wo nana na niya wo boore ra.

When you do that,
you have put hate between you,
you have put fighting between you.
You should not do that to each other.

\(^{102}\) Lit. “from the same mother”, Fig. “those with whom you have a relationship”.

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Wo xa fndi ngaxakenmae ra Misilmipa kui. You should become “relatives” in Islam.

4 - Ala xa won no na ra. May Allah help us to be able to do that.

The xutuba typically consists of two distinct communication episodes. The Imam delivers the first part, and then sits down for a few minutes before continuing with the second part. During this second part the Imam can reiterate themes already presented, or he can introduce new issues. In this particular xutuba the second part or the “conclusion” employs multiple exhortation stanzas which refer back to issues discussed in the first half.

The author reconnects to the common theme of unity among Muslims to exhort his audience to have compassion and empathy for their fellow man. He identifies obedience to this principle as a condition for life with God in the afterlife. The principle of doing the good to others that one would want done to him, underlines the main exhortation of this discourse.

In the final strophe of this stanza, the author provides an example of behavior contrary to this principle. He speaks of someone trying to undersell a fellow merchant who is in the process of bargaining with a client. The choice of example fits the Susu social context quite well, since besides subsistence farming, small commerce constitutes the main activity the Susu use to make a living. This choice of a relevant example of negative behavior reinforces the author’s argument that people should live in harmony with each other.

Part II – Exhortations regarding the sacrifice

X3.8.1 – Blessings: May God help us all to be able to offer a "lagiyanyi."

Won man xa a kolon
lagiyanyi faxafè naxan won xun to,
won naxan masen,
Ala xa pe gbebe fi e ma,
e xa a sòt.
Ala xa won birin fndi lagiyan ba ra.

We should also know
the killing of the lagiyanyi
that is upon us today,
that we present,
if Allah has not given it to certain ones,
may Allah give them another year,
that they may obtain it.
May Allah make us all a lagiyanyi sacrificer.

X3.8.2 – Exhortation: The one offering the "lagiyanyi" should kill the sacrifice.

Lagiyan bama ne,
i tan naxan a baxi,
a kɔn naxaba.
Xa i mu nɔma,
i mixie yamari,
e kɔn naxaba i be.

The sacrificer of the lagiyanyi,
you who sacrifice it,
cut its throat.
If you can not,
order others,
they cut the throat for you.

X3.8.3 – Exhortation: Do not put the blood of the sacrifice on your neck.

Kɔnɔ i naxa a wuli so i kɔnyi ma.
Lagiyan wuli mu soma kɔnyi ma.

But you should not put its blood on your neck.
The blood of the lagiyanyi is not put on the neck.

X3.8.4 – Exhortation: Do not hold on to someone who is touching the sacrifice when it is killed.

A firin nde mixi naxa i xa donma suxu.
Lagiyan faxe,

Secondly people should not hold your shirt.
At the death of the lagiyanyi sacrifice,
won mu tima tunbusu ra xa mu ra de. we do not stand in a row at all.

Boore donma suxu keren a kan naxaba,

Others holding the shirt of the one cutting

na ma ya ma.

that is not to be done (lit. is not among it).

I tan nan a falama i xa denbaya be, You say to your family,
e mu donma xa mu suxuma, they do not hold his shirt at all,
wuli mu soma konji ma. the blood is not put on the neck.

X3.8.5 – Exhortation: Do not save the head and feet as a holy part of the sacrifice.

A falafe ba, The saying that,
a xunyi nun a sanyie a mu donma muku, his head and his feet should not be eaten at all,
fo Yonbente, except on Yonbente103,
nandi mara. that is not true.

Xa lagiyanyi ge faxade, If the lagiyanyi sacrifice has been killed,
naxan na i konji, that which you like,
n don.

na don. eat it.

Xa a nde nan pinma nunmare ra, If some is to be cooked in the evening,
a pin, cook it,
a don. eat it.

Ala xa won no na ra. May Allah enable us to do that.
I naka fefe sa ne.
Sese m'a ya ma.
A a kon nan naxabama, it is food.
sere na ra.

X3.8.6 – Exhortation: Do not distribute small pieces of the meat to others unless
you give them enough for a meal along with sauce.

1 - Wo man naxa a dxx segere ma, You (pl.) also should not put it in a basket,
i mixi fu ki lagiyanyi you give ten people lagiyanyi sacrifice

e mu bore sato. (meat),
A wo xa xuruse faxa, they do not obtain sauce.
wo xa kaametae ki. When you kill the animal,

1 I na i xa lagiyanyi sube fi naxan ma, If some is to be cooked in the evening,
a fan xa bore sato. you should give to the hungry.

2 - Fomma xa mara, When you give lagiyanyi meat to people,
donse na a ra. he/she should also get sauce.
Mixi ama na,
a horome se na a ra.
Horome se mara de, It is not a prayer,
lugase na a ra.
A barayi na a faxama be, it is food.
luge na a donma be.
A na a fi naxan ma,
A xa bore sato.

X3.8.7 – Blessings/Exhortation: May God enable us to be able to give to others.

Ala xa won no na ra. May Allah enable us to do that.
Mixi yo naxa a dxx segere ma.

1 I na a so mixi yi,

103 The first month of the year in the Susu calendar.
After having developed the exhortation regarding social harmony, the author moves to the religious matter of offering the sacrifice at Eid al-Adha. The exhortation begins with a blessing asking God to give people the means to be able to make this sacrifice. The author assumes that everyone would want to do this, but given the extensive poverty in the Susu society, he realizes that oftentimes people are unable to purchase a sheep to sacrifice. For this reason he appropriately asks God to enable everyone to make this sacrifice.

He then focuses on certain aspects of the ritual. His appeals focus on orthodox practices as opposed to certain human traditions that have crept into the Susu frame of reference. He first clarifies that the person who is responsible for the sacrifice should, if at all possible, be the person who actually slits the throat of the sacrificial lamb. Secondly, he states that no one should try to have some of the blood of the sacrifice placed on their neck. He goes on to say that people should not stand in a row attempting to touch someone who is directly or indirectly touching the person making the sacrifice. Both of these commands seem to de-emphasize the value of a physical contact with the sacrifice.

The fourth exhortation regarding the sacrifice deals with a tradition of saving the head and feet of the offered sheep to be eaten the following month. The Susu year begins with the month of Yonbente, which comes after the month of Donkinyi when Eid al-Adha occurs. The author says that parts of the sacrifice should not be put aside to eat at a later date.

The final exhortation connects back to the previous discussion on social unity and harmony. In order to receive blessings from giving some of the meat sacrificed to others, some Susu would cut the meat in small pieces in order to give it to more people. Their focus was obviously to receive more blessings by helping more people. The author clarifies that such a practice is not really altruistic in that a small portion of meat without any sauce to go with it does not enable someone to have a meal. The amount given was hardly worth the effort of cooking it. To justify this practice, some say that the meat given constituted a spiritual or symbolic gesture. The author disagrees and firmly states that the gift is a physical gift, and as such it should be more than a small piece of meat, insignificant for someone who is hungry.

The concluding blessing reconnects to the initial blessing of the stanza. The author asks God to help his audience have enough food to be able to give generously to others during this holiday, and thus protect them from the sin of being stingy. The religious sacrifice ties into the whole concept of social harmony and peace.

**Part II – Final blessings**

**X3.9.1 – Introduction to blessings.**

\[ \text{Won ma namipmne naxe a duba loxe nan to.} \]
\[ \text{Our prophet says that today is a day of prayer.} \]

\[ \text{Won xa duba won yete be a nun won ma boxi.} \]
\[ \text{Let us pray for each other and for our country.} \]

**X3.9.2 – Value: We come to you God and we trust you.**

\[ \text{Ala, muxu bara i makula,} \]
\[ \text{Allah, we have begged you,} \]
\[ \text{muxu i makulama ne,} \]
\[ \text{we will beg you,} \]
\[ \text{muxu xaxili tixi i ra.} \]
\[ \text{Our spirit depends on you.} \]
Xaxili tide gbete mu na muxu be, fo i tan. We have no other dependence outside of you.

X3.9.3 – Blessings: Deliver us from our enemies and make us happy.
I xa muxu yaxuie ramini taa,
i xa muxu raseewa. May you cast our enemies out of town,
may you make us happy.

X3.9.4 – Value: We have not done harm to others, and we are where you put us.
Muxu mu mixi yo xɔ, We have not hated anyone,
muxu mu mixi yo ratixi. we have not stopped anyone.
Muxu na muxu xɔnyi, We are at our dwelling,
i dendexen fixi muxu ma. which you have given us.
Ala muxu fan be. Allah assembled us here.

X3.9.5 – Blessings: Help us to be good and convert those who are evil.
Ala xa muxu rafan, May Allah make us love each other,
muxu xa muxu boore xanu be. may we love each other here.
Mixi paaaxie naxee na muxu ya ma, The evil people who are among us,
Ala xa i findi nee dandanma ra. may Allah make you their healer.
Xa naxan mu yalanma, If someone does not heal,
Ala xa won tanga na masiboe ma. may Allah protect us from that harm.
Mixi paaaxi yuge paaaxi, n Marigi i xa a ratanga,
 a fan xa yalan, An evil person with bad character,
a fan yuge xa fan, my Lord may you protect him,
a fan xa findi mixi fanyi ra. may he also be healed,
I xa na raba muxu be. may his character also become good,
I xa na raba muxu be. May you do that for us.

X3.9.6 – Value: Good people live in peace. God does not forgive trouble makers.
We are not trouble makers.
Ba xa wo nun mixi fanyi dɔɔ, Because if you live with good people,
i boxe bara sa, your heart is at peace.
Κɔɔ n Marigi, But my Lord,
xa naxan bara findi xunnapaaxui ra, if someone becomes a troublemaker,
i xɔnyi i mu pɔɔna ya fɔade a ma. at your dwelling you cannot care for him.
Muxu tan nu fɔ danxaniyaxi i tan nan ma. We have believed in you.
 A fè, paaaxi naxan natexi, The evil he planned,
muxu tan nu na natexi, we did not plan it,
muxu xa a raba mixi ra. that we should do it to people.

X3.9.7 – Blessings: Protect us. Make us good. Give us more time on earth.
I tan Ala, xa findi soɔri ra, Allah, may you become a soldier,
 naxan tima muxu nun nee tagi. who stands between us and them.
Muxu sutura kɔe, Protect us at night,
i xa muxu sutura yanyi. may you protect us in the daytime.
Ala xa temui gbete fi won ma. May Allah make us straight.
Ala xa temui gbete fi won ma. May Allah give us another time.

The final stanza of the discourse consists of a series of blessings offered for the audience and their country. The author begins by stating their total trust in God, who is recognized as the only one who can help them.

The first blessing aims at preserving the social harmony by asking God to send the “enemies” away. These trouble-makers compromise the peace that should exist in the land. God himself ordained that the audience live together in this land at peace
with each other. The presence of anyone who would compromise that ideal must be addressed.

Another solution to the presence of these social “enemies” involves the proactive reformation of these evil people. The author encourages his audience to be used by God to “heal” this evil by converting and transforming the trouble-makers into good responsible members of society. He recognizes that this will not always be possible, and in those cases he solicits the protection of God from their harm.

The discourse makes a clear distinction between the evil doers and those who promote social harmony. God is presented as a soldier who protects those who do good from those who do evil. He is invoked to help people live righteously and to have a long life.

4.3 A summary of the macro structure of the Xutuba

After having described in detail the contents of the various stanzas in this particular Susu Xutuba, it might be helpful to summarize that content in such a way as to observe the macro structure of the discourse. This will serve as a foundation for the subsequent analysis of argumentation techniques used by the Susu in this genre of discourse.

The Xutuba can be outlined in the following manner:

1. Foundational theological statement
2. Discussion of the hajj
   a. H*ajj is an example of divine ordained social harmony
      i. Angels are amazed at the peace and unity of the pilgrims
      ii. God gives forgiveness to the pilgrims
   b. Orthodox practices regarding the hajj
3. Discussion of Donkinyi
   a. Exhortation to be united like the pilgrims
      i. If Guineans obeyed Islam, they would have social harmony
      ii. If Guineans obeyed Islam, they would be saved
   b. Orthodox practices regarding the lagiyanyi
4. Final blessings
   a. May God enable us to offer the sacrifice
   b. May God deliver us from the enemies
   c. May God convert the evil doers
   d. May God make us good
   e. May God give us more time on earth

The author begins his sermon by laying a theological foundation on which to build his hortatory argument. That foundation, in keeping with the Susu tradition of beginning all endeavors by stating the shahadah, elaborates on the belief that there is only one God and that Mohammed is his prophet. Since this constitutes the first pillar of Islam, the author develops his own segue to list the other pillars, the last of which is the hajj.

The rationale for the author’s presentation on the hajj does not stem from a need to teach his listeners how to perform those details, since their very presence indicates that they are not in pilgrimage to Mecca. A procedural process would have focused on the details involved in the accomplishment of the task at hand. Here the stanzas clearly fall into an ortatory discourse which tires to persuade the audience of a
more righteous behavior. The purpose is not to explain a process, but to encourage a type of action. The author’s presentation of the hajj serves as a foundational model for his key exhortation to live at peace with one’s fellow man. He characterizes the hajj as an ideal example of the way God wants his followers to live in harmony with each other. He offers some clarification on orthodox practices during the hajj, but his illocutionary purpose for the whole stanza is to provide a model for his upcoming exhortation.

The key exhortation of the xutuba stresses the importance of living in social harmony. The author encourages his audience to imitate the unity of the pilgrims so that they can live in a society where peace and good-will reign. Since this peaceful life style pleases God, he will “save” those who live in such a manner, just like he does for the pilgrims in Mecca.

Since the author uses the hajj as a model of divine social harmony which he is advocating, he expands his discussion to include the lagiyanyi, the Susu term for the sacrifice offered during the month of donkinyi on the day of the Eid al-Adha. He offers a few considerations about orthodox practices connected with the sacrifice, but his intent is not necessarily to exhort the people to perform the sacrifice, something that they automatically do even without encouragement, rather he connects the occasion of the sacrifice to his main exhortation to live in social harmony.

The conclusion of the discourse follows the general Susu tradition of concluding a presentation or a dialogue with a series of blessings. The blessings focus on the key exhortation by asking God’s favor in fulfilling the conditions that enable a society to live in prosperity and peace.

4.4 A summary of the argumentation techniques used in the Xutuba

A hortatory discourse by definition attempts to build a case to persuade the audience that obeying the exhortation accrues worthy advantages. This argumentation can be done in various ways depending on the cultural context, the worldview, and the value system. Understanding those strategies in that cognitive environment can help a non-insider formulate an effective way to present an exhortation. The translator who wants to achieve the same illocutionary effects that his/her text had on the original audience, must reformulate the locutions according to the target audience’s frame of reference. This section attempts to summarize those techniques used in the Xutuba.

The role of authority

Traditional societies like the Susu respect their indigenous authorities because of their strong influence in maintaining community. People in these societies shy away from independent actions or viewpoints that differ from the status quo. They defer to accepted authority to not veer away from the tested and tried ways of the past.

In the religious context of the Xutuba, God himself constitutes the ultimate authority. His prophet Mohammed represents that authority among men according to the Islamic perspective, and orthodox Muslim religious leaders continue in that vein despite their lack of prophetic status.

The beginning of this Xutuba affirms to the audience that the content is congruent with and even derived from a divine source. God is recognized as the ultimate authority which provides basic human sustenance. The import of this statement surpasses an orthodox proclamation; it constitutes an essential component
of the persuasive power of the whole sermon. While the author would probably never claim “divine inspiration”, his first paragraph links his message to the Sovereign One who cannot be disobeyed.

While the Susu religious leader appeals to an authority higher than himself, a technique used to enhance his “authority” involves exhibiting knowledge that surpasses that of the normal person. One way in which the author does this in the Xutuba is with the usage of many Arabic terms and phrases that are recognized as Qur’anic, but which are not commonly known by normal Susu people. In X3.2.2 for example, the five pillars of Islam are stated in Arabic. Various terms regarding the *hajj* are cited in Arabic like ‘*arafa* (X3.3.3), *humura* (X3.5.3), and *habiyun* (X3.5.4). One citation of the prophet Mohammed is given in Arabic as well (X3.3.5). All of these cases undergird the authority of the author of the Xutuba and therefore encourage the audience to accept the message as valid.

Another example of technical knowledge that enhances the author’s authority, regards some details about the pilgrims’ sacrifice performed during the *hajj*. Though Susu might think of that sacrifice as their *lagiyanyi*, the author makes the point that it is technically a different sacrifice called the *habiyun* (X3.5.2 and X3.5.6). He also distinguishes between the commonly known *hajj* and another religious pilgrimage to Mecca called the *humura* that does not constitute common knowledge at all (X3.5.5). Making these points does little to advance his argument, except for the enhancement of his authority as a religious leader who is very well informed, and thus merits his audience’s attention.

**Value statements**

Paragraphs or stanzas indicating positive values compose the majority of the Xutuba text. These affirmations range from clear value statements (e.g. “The way to salvation is to be religious and not hurt others.” X3.6.5) to more general statements about religious behavior. This type of information provides the foundation for the exhortations in the discourse.

An example of the interplay between value statements and exhortations can be seen in X3.5.8 and X3.6.1. The author states very solemnly that Donkin Sali is a time for good deeds and happiness, rather than a time of evil deeds that disrupt social harmony. Based on this value statement, he then makes the clear exhortation that we should not disobey God; we should be good to each other.

An interesting variation of these value statements is the use of narrative. Stories can be used to demonstrate a particular value. In the Xutuba the author tells the story of an interaction between God and the angels who discuss the validity of God’s decision to create people given their tendencies toward hatred and ill-will. In the story God uses the pilgrims at the *hajj* to refute their argument. The story makes the value statement that God created human beings with the capacity to live in social harmony as is demonstrated by Muslim pilgrims.

**Exposition**

Expository statements in the discourse provide a doctrinal basis from which the author derives an environment of agreement. When religious statements are made that conform with the general knowledge base of the audience, a communication “comfort zone” permeates the interchange and gives credibility to the speaker. Then, when other statements are made outside of the audience’s knowledge base or *modus operandi*, they have a reason to accept that as equally true. The fifth stanza for
example, has five expository strophes on various details about the sacrifices of the pilgrims and the non-pilgrims. Acceptance of these truths poses no threat to the audience because it requires no change of behavior. But when the author makes various exhortations about these same sacrifices in stanza eight, the audience realizes that their behavior must be changed. The audience has bolstered his hortatory force by having already established himself as a speaker of doctrinal truth.

**Exhortations**

Exhortations constitute the most basic part of a hortatory discourse. They formulate most transparently the purpose of the author’s presentation, as he/she clearly states what action they desire to be taken by their audience.

After having laid a solid foundation of the value of social harmony, the author makes the first formal exhortation in X3.6.1. He states that people should not disobey God, they should show compassion and unity to each other, and they should offer the appropriate sacrifices.

He develops this exhortation with two rhetorical questions in X3.6.2. First he asks why God would bring multiple nationalities together in Mecca to forgive and help each other. The question leads the audience to see social harmony as divinely ordained. He then poses the second question of why people of the same nationality would not want to live in unity. In this way the author actually places the resulting exhortation in the mind of his audience who no doubt is thinking, “We should live in unity with each other here just like the pilgrims in Mecca.”

As previously stated, the Xutuba is divided into two parts. The second part concludes the hortatory discourse with a special emphasis on the key exhortations. In fact the purpose for this formal division of the discourse seems to be that of highlighting the main point of the sermon. The exhortations in X3.7.2-3 clearly demonstrate the author’s focus on social harmony. He wants people to become ngaxakeryeni (“relatives”) in their Islamic faith avoiding all forms of hatred and ill-will.

The exhortations in X3.8.2-7 seem to be somewhat anti-climactic. They deal with specific details regarding the way in which the sacrifice should be offered. The fact that he mentions these things comes as no surprise given the context; they were Muslims who were about to celebrate the Eid al-Ahadah. However the author does not bother with supporting these exhortations as he has done with the issue of social harmony. He treats them as less important or secondary. It is interesting that in the end he uses them to reiterate the exhortation to love one’s fellow-man. He does this by reprimanding people for the practice of giving excessively small portions of the sacrificial meat to their neighbors. With this he returns to his focus issue of social harmony.

**Hypothetical statements**

The Xutuba has two occurrences of hypothetical statements in X3.6.3. These merit special attention because the author uses these locutions to actually motivate and exhort his audience at the same time. Basically he says that if Guineans treated each other as God teaches, “the land would become a productive land.” Clearly he is exhorting his audience to behave in a certain way, but he is also providing a strong motivation, namely that this behavior will lead to financial productivity and a better society. In the next stanza he calls this the kisi kira (“salvation road”), a strong motivation for a people in despair.
Blessings

The Susu use blessings extensively in everyday speech and in formal communication events. Formal speakers always conclude their speeches with blessings, as well as using them throughout their speech. Blessings are frequently pronounced in leave-taking and in the context of normal conversation when situations of suffering are referenced.

The extensive use of blessings stems from the key role that Islamic faith plays in the Susu culture. They believe that God can alter their state in life, and that pronouncing a blessing may induce that divine intervention. The fact that blessings are frequent in this Xutuba is not surprising.

Blessings are found throughout the sermon analyzed, but 12 out of 19 occur in the second half of the Xutuba after stanza X3,7,1. Speakers tend to conclude their discourse with extensive use of blessings, and the author of this Xutuba was no exception.

Blessings can serve as a window into the Susu mindset. They show what is important to the Susu, as well as the fact that they believe God can help them obtain those particular things or qualities. The blessings in this Xutuba deal with the following: material gain, spiritual blessings, protection from evil, long life, and spiritual qualities. The following table illustrates their distribution and subject matter.
Table 50: Blessings in Xutuba 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subject matter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Material gain</td>
<td>Being able to have a sheep to sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Having food to eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being able to have a sheep to sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being able to have a sheep to sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being able to have a sheep to sacrifice and something to give to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being able to have a sheep to sacrifice and something to give to others (formulated in the negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Spiritual blessings</td>
<td>Having salvation in the afterlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being forgiven of sins by God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Spiritual qualities</td>
<td>Being good people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Obeying the law of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being compassionate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being “related” in the faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being loving of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being “healers” of others who are not good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Being made “straight” by God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>Being protected from evil-doers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Long life</td>
<td>Have “another year”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Have “another time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Have “another time”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 The relevance of the discourse to the Susu frame of reference

The Susu cultural reality constitutes the backdrop of this Xutuba. The relevance of the communication depends on the author’s ability to intersect his message with issues relevant to the Susu people. This takes place in at least three key frames of reference: their material environment, their social environment, and their religious environment.

Material environment

Most Susu live in a context of serious poverty. Their principal occupation consists of subsistence farming and fishing. A few are involved in commerce, but typically the income does not meet all of the basic needs of a normal family. Some have relatives who work good jobs in the capital or abroad, and who provide a large part of the family’s needed income.

The author of the Xutuba under examination shows a clear understanding of this Susu world. In multiple instances he refers to God providing the “means” for his listeners to obtain a sacrifice that they can offer at the feast of Donkinyi. Having enough money to buy a goat or a sheep for the sacrifice constitutes a major undertaking, and is not something that the common person would be able to do. The desire to be able to make such a sacrifice actually represents the basic desire to be
financially independent and able to provide the basic necessities for one’s family. The author’s sensitivity to this short-coming and his prayer that the audience might have those material blessings create a favorable impression on the audience and provide a motivation for them to adhere to the exhortations made.

**Social environment**

As already discussed, the major theme of the *Xutuba* revolves around the whole issue of social unity and goodwill between members of the society. There tends to be a lot of social strife in the Susu context, namely because the material environment creates a difficult context for everyone to make a living. People live under a burden of stress as they try to provide for their family and deal with their material environment.

From this frame of reference the Susu easily understand the benefits of a “peaceful culture” where people help each other instead of hurting them. The image of the *hajj* where people enjoy an equal status and where social injustices are unacceptable provides an idyllic image that all Susu would agree to be a worthy ideal. The exhortation to make such an ideal reality appeals to the Susu world where strife dominates.

**Religious environment**

While Islam dominates the Susu context, many of their religious practices stray from Islamic orthodoxy. Some of these practices revolve around the perceived presence of evil spirits and the practice of sorcery. A quest for protection against these unseen powers constitutes one of the most basic motivations for religious behavior.

This quest lies at the heart of the development of unorthodox practices. People seek extra power or protection through physical gestures that they perceive as beneficial, such as receiving some of the blood of the sacrifice on their neck, or being physically in contact with someone who is touching the sacrifice at the time of immolation.

As religious leaders declare themselves unfavorable toward such practices, a secondary source of power comes into play. The leader affirms his authority through his special knowledge (names, terms, etc.), and thus presents his view as the more valid source of spiritual power. Adherence to his exhortation presented in the *xutuba*, a formal and authoritative religious discourse, becomes a viable alternative to the unorthodox practices known among the masses.
5 – Contextual frames of reference in the textual structure of a Susu Xutuba

Having examined the rhetorical structure of the Xutuba in the context of the Susu worldview, this chapter delves into the linguistic techniques used by the author to articulate and enhance his message. As already discussed, these techniques are language-specific. They provide a non-exhaustive repertoire of discourse techniques for the hortatory genre available in the Susu language. Understanding this textual frame of reference provides deep insights into communication among the Susu.

5.1 Introduction to the context of Susu discourse

*The history of Susu discourse*

The earliest recorded examples of literature in Susu date to the 1800’s and consist of portions of Bible translations done by English Anglican missionaries. While these cannot be correctly labeled as “Susu discourse” because they are “translations, they should not be forgotten in a historical overview of Susu literature.

The first president of the Republic of Guinea, Sekou Touré, began a massive effort to valorize Guinean languages in 1960 as a part of his anti-colonial stance. He instituted the use of eight national languages in all formal educational institutes from primary school to university. Many people who lived in the “basse côte” of the country learned to read and write Susu during that time, and many university *memoires* were composed in the Susu language.

Unfortunately these efforts ceased with the death of Sekou Touré and the new government reinstituted the use of French as the official language for education. People continued to use Susu in a written form, mainly for personal correspondence, but sometimes even for official documents. One such document articulated a religious-moral reform by the League Islamique. 104

Over the past twenty years many religious missions and Non-Governmental Organizations have collaborated with the Susu to produce various translations of Biblical literature 105 and a variety of literacy and post-literacy materials. These efforts have played an important role in Susu literature development, but much remains to be done before one can talk about genuine “Susu literature.”

However “discourse” reaches beyond the bounds of literary text. Discourse accompanies language as humans interact and articulate their thoughts and ideas. While Susu discourse has existed ever since there were Susu speaking to one another, capturing those discourses in a form that they can be studied, documented, and archived, has mainly been an activity of the recent past. The Susu Xutuba in this study was an oral discourse given by an Imam in the main mosque of Conakry. The transcription of that recording provides the object for this present study.

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105 www.sosokitaabui.com
The Susu language

The Susu language belongs to the Mande family found in the Niger-Congo phylum. (Grimes 2000:134) It is spoken along the coast of Guinea, notably in the préfectures of Boke, Boffa, Dubreka, Conakry, Coyah, Forecariah, and Kindia, as well as in the northwestern corner of Sierra Leone.

The phonetic inventory of the language is represented by 22 phonemes. The 15 consonants can be divided into stops (p, t, k, b, d, g), double stops (gb), fricatives (f, x, h), nasals (m, n, ŋ), and approximants (l, r, y, w). The 7 vowels can be divided into front vowels (i, e, è), mid vowels (a), and back (u, o, ò). They can be nasalized and lengthened. Nasalization is represented by adding a “n” after the vowel, and lengthening by doubling the vowel. The language also has two tones, low and high, but they are usually not marked in the orthography.

The syllabic structure consists of V and CV, the latter being the more dominant. There is a limited set of emphatic adverbs that have a CVC structure found only at the end of a phrase. At times these can be written as CVCV even though they are pronounced as CVC structures.

The non-derivative noun morphology includes one suffix -e, and it marks plurality. A definite marker -i can also be posited, but phonological assimilation makes it difficult to notice except in nouns ending in a nasal where it is realized as -yi, and some other cases where it produces a diphthong. The verbal morphology has 4 affixes -ma, -xi, ñe, -0 and 6 pre-object markers (bara, naxaa, xa, naxab, nu, na) indicating a combination of tense and aspect.

The syntax follows a subject-object-verb word order. Expansions consisting of adverbs or post-positional phrases are phrase initial or phrase final. Subordinate conjunctions introduce subordinate clauses, which can either precede or follow the independent clauses. Relative phrases are introduced by a relative pronoun that follows the qualified noun.

A proposed methodology

The present study proposes to analyze Susu discourse grammar in the specific context of a xutuba. Four different sermons were transcribed and one was chosen as the most complete and representative. The text of this sermon will be presented in such a way as to give the reader the opportunity to see the original grammar and an English translation at the same time. The layout will consist of two columns. The column on the left provides the reader with the Susu text, indented according to phrase subordination. The column on the right will offer the reader a semi-literal translation, which is understandable, yet formal enough to display key grammatical elements of the original.

The text has been divided according to the development of the theme of the sermon. Each unit has a reference number, followed by a discourse component type. This particular sermon is composed of such types as values, exhortations, narratives, and blessings. In each stanza title the semantic content summary follows the

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106 For a more elaborate description of the grammar see Houis, Maurice. Etude Descriptive de la langue Susu. Dakara: IFAN, 19963.
component type label. Each unit is then analyzed from a linguistic perspective with special attention to discourse features based on the surface grammar.  

Since the sermon used in this research has been divided into stanzas and strophes, the reference system indicates the unit in question. The reference X3.4.2, for example, indicates the xutuba number 3 (X3), stanza 4, strophe 2. The sub-strophes are divided from each other with blank lines and begin with a number to identify them.

5.2 Grammatical description of a Xutuba

**Foundation of discourse**

**X3.1.1 – Value: God is our providing Lord.**

| Wo bara Ala tantu,          | You thank Allah, who is the one who nourishes us.  |
| mane naxan nemexi won ma. |                                         |
| A mu won kixi sese ra,     | He has not given us anything greater than the Islamic religion. |
| naxan xungbo l'Isilamu dine be. |                                            |
| Wo bara seede na Ala ma.   | You testify that to Allah.                |
| A mu won kixi sese ra,     | He has not given us anything greater than the Islamic religion. |
| naxan xungbo l'Isilamu dine be. |                                            |
| Won bara seede na Ala ma.  | We testify that to Allah.                 |
| Won Marigi na a tan nan na. | He is our Lord.                          |

The first two strophes of this sermon provide a strong doctrinal base for the discussion that will follow. The belief that God is Lord and that Mohammed is his servant and messenger lies at the heart of Islam, attested in this first stand as the greatest gift of God to mankind.

Given the importance of this ideological foundation, the Imam immediately employs a structural device to underline this message. Two parallel couplets envelop a single line which clearly underlines the certainty of the believer’s testimony. Both couplets marked A and A’ in the table below elevate God by claiming that he is provider and Lord. The identical couplets B and B’ state that God’s greatest gift is Islam. The single line C remains at the heart of the A-B-C-B-A structure, affirming that Muslims testify to that truth before God.

**Table 51 – A-B-C-B-A structure in X3.1.1**

| A   | You thank God, who is the one who nourishes us.  |
| B   | He has not given us anything greater than the Islamic religion. |
| C   | You testify that to God. |
| B’  | He has not given us anything greater than the Islamic religion. |
| A’  | We testify that to God. He is our Lord. |

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107 Chapter 3 analyzes these various stanzas from a rhetorical perspective with a focus on the semantic content and organization.
Another interpretation of this structure identifies two parallel couplets surrounded by an *inclusio*. This interpretation has merit, namely that it recognizes the identical nature of the two couplets. On the other hand, the *inclusio* is incomplete in that the first half has two lines while the second only has one. This interpretation has merit, but a weakness lies in the fact that the final line, “He is our Lord,” does not seem to have a symmetrical counterpart.

Table 52 – Synonymous parallelism with *inclusio* in X3.1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusio a</th>
<th>You thank God, who is the one who nourishes us.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>He has not given us anything greater than the Islamic religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>You testify that to God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>He has not given us anything greater than the Islamic religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>We testify that to God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusio b</td>
<td>He is our Lord.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**X3.1.2 – Value: Mohammed is God’s slave and messenger**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Won bara seedepa Nkila Mohamedi ma.</th>
<th>We testify to Beloved Mohammed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ala xa konyi na a ra.</td>
<td>He is Allah’s slave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ala xa xëera na a ra,</td>
<td>He is Allah’s messenger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ala xa konyi.</td>
<td>Allah’s slave.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same verb *seedepa* is used in this strophe with reference to Mohammed. The repetition in grammatical form and lexical choice provides cohesion between the two units.

The copula verb construction *na a ra* identifies Mohammed both as God’s slave and his messenger. The expression “God’s slave” without a verb concludes the ABA triplet.

**Introduction of discourse**

**X3.2.1 – Value: “Donkin Sali” is a happy occasion for Muslims.**

| La Gine die, wo xa a kolon, a donkin sali naxan ya, Ala nan yi fëndixi xulunyi ra, a fëndi sara ti ra Misilimie be. E xa naxalinyi masen. E palaxalinyi masen na munfera? | Children of Guinea, you should know that this Eid al-Adha before us, Allah made it a happy occasion, it is made into a trumpet blowing for Muslims. They should show happiness. Why should they show happiness? |

In this strophe the Imam expresses the joyfulness of the Eid al-Adha celebrations with two couplets, both of which use grammatical and lexical parallelism. The first couplet uses the same verb *fëndi* (“make into” or “become”), while the second uses the same object-verb combination, *naxalinyi masen* (“show happiness”).
X3.2.2 – Exposition: These are the 5 pillars of Islam.

A Misimiliya daxxi piliiy suuli nan fari: Islam sits on five pillars:
Layilaha, ilanlahu, ilanlahu, Mohamedu rasurulahi. “There is no Allah but Allah,
and Mohammed is his prophet.”

Piliye keren nan na ki. That is the first pillar.
A firin nde, wayiximu salatu. The second, ritual prayers.
A saxan nde, wayutuyakati. The third, required alms.
A naani nde, sanli ramadane The fourth, fasting during Ramadan.
A suuli nde, waxati bayitilahi Haramu. The fifth, the pilgrimage.
Alahutala, a diine naxan fixi won ma, Allah, the religion he gave us,
na piliye suuli nan na a bun ma. those five pillars are under it.

The Imam provides a straightforward list of the five pillars of Islam. He uses the French loan word piliye (French: “pillier” English: “pillar”) to introduce the list in
the first line, and to conclude the list in the last line. This lexical repetition forms an inclusio that clearly marks the strophe boundaries.

X3.2.3 – Value: This month is important because of the pilgrimage.

Na piliye suuli, Those five pillars,
Alhamudulinlahi rabilialamina, Thanks be to the compassionate Allah
je kui, within the year,
na xundusuma yi kike nan na. They culminate this month.
Misimilie xa mixie keli bxxi birin ma, Muslim people come from all lands,
e sa naralan na bxxi seniyenxi ma, they meet in that holy land.
Maaka tan mu kanama, Ala xa banxi rabilinyi. Mecca does not end,
Hyiylae e na naralan menni, When the pilgrims meet there,
e maponxi ne na. they wash there.

In this strophe the Imam connects the preceding doctrinal statement to the audience’s present situation, the feast of Eid al-Adha. During this month Muslims from all over the world make the required pilgrimage to Mecca. The speaker uses lexical repetition in lines 5 and 6, as well as in lines 6 and 8, to emphasize this “meeting” of pilgrims from all “lands” in the holy “land.” A looser form of lexical repetition links lines 6 and 9 with the semantic concept of cleanliness. They are meeting in a seniyenxi land (“holy, pure, clean”) where the pilgrims will mapon (“wash”). This lexical repetition provides internal cohesion to the strophe, while the lexical repetition in the first line (“five pillars”) provides cohesion between the strophes.

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108 This expression is used to denote any type of destruction, cessation, or ruining, be it in a physical sense, be it in a more figurative sense. The sense here is, “Doing the hajj to Mecca does not consist in just circling around God’s house.”

109 This name varies from region to region (e.g. Eid al-Adha, Eid el-Kbir/Kebir, Tabaski, Eid ul-Azha, etc.).
The pilgrimage shows that Islam is a religion of peace

X3.3.1 – Value: The pilgrimage presents to the world that Islam is a peaceful religion.

Misimilimie a yatagi gbete masen
dunuye mixi danxex be;
naxee mu Misimilimia.
Yatagi mundun?
Misimilimie, e ngaxakeren nan e boore ra,
barenma nan e ra.
Misimilimie, i na lu e longori ra,
i boole bara sa.
I xa nafiuli, i ni, i wuli, i xa yuge kobie,
e birin bara kisi,
ba i na Misilimie nan longori ra.
Na Misilimia,
Misilimie sigama na nan masende
dinela gbete be a nun mixie be,
naxee mu danxanxiyaxi dine yo ma,
a fasamaxili Musimilimia bonya daa diine na a ra.
Lanyi daa na a ra.
Bgone rafan dine na a ra.
Diye birin nalanxi i boore ma.
A na fà kana i ma,
i dyè a ma.
I sanxone iso a ya ra,
i ya fà a be.
Yi dii be a kolomma na nan ma.

Islam shows another forehead
to the other people of the world
that are not in Islam.
Which forehead?
Muslims, they are brothers to each other,
they are relatives.
Muslims, when you are among them
you are at peace.
Your riches, your life, your blood, your bad
habits,
all is saved,
because you are among Muslims.
That Islam,
Muslims go to show it
to other religions and people,
who do not believe in any religion,
because clearly Islam is a peaceful religion.

It is a unity religion.
It is a loving religion.
Forgiveness is given to each other.
When someone hurts you,
you forgive him.
Pull your outstretched hurt foot back,
you let him pass.

This religion is known precisely by that.

Lexical repetition plays an important role in this strophe as well. Two words from the same root, Misilimia (“Islam”) and Misimilimie (“Muslims”) are used 8 times in the first 6 sentences. The first sentence uses the word Misilimia (“Islam”) as the first and last word of the sentence. Apparently, the speaker does this on purpose because he sacrifices grammatical accuracy (i.e. the sentence should end with a post-position) to use the word in the second instance. The second sentence is a rhetorical question that also repeats a key word used in the first sentence. The next four sentences use the term Misimilimie (“Muslims”). The sixth sentence uses the word Misilimia (“Islam”) at the beginning and end just like the first one did, though this time it does not sacrifice grammatical accuracy. These sentences are parallel not only by the use of this technique, but also in overall meaning. In fact, this resemblance could justify a strophe break with the rationale that both strophes begin in the same manner. In either analysis, the speaker is clearly weaving the various parts of his discourse together creating obvious cohesion, be it strophe internal or between strophes.

This sixth sentence uses an interesting word which proves to be somewhat difficult to translate. This research has chosen to translate fasamaxili as “clearly,” but the value of the term lies at the discourse level rather than the sentence level. With this word the speaker calls attention to this proposition and affirms its importance.

Here, the speaker clearly states the message of the entire strophe, that Islam is a peaceful religion. Everything in the first half of the strophe leads up to this summary statement, and everything in the second half seems to restate it in various ways.
The strophe’s final sentence plays a similar role. The first and sixth sentences stated that the Muslim pilgrimage shows the world the peaceful nature of Islam. The final sentence uses the demonstrative pronoun na (“that”) along with an emphatic marker (nan) to summarize that peaceful nature, and affirms that yi diin/uni025B (“this religion”, i.e. Islam) is characterized by that behavior. The strophe begins by stating that Islam portrays a peaceful image, and it ends by stating that Islam can be recognized by that image.

X3.3.2 – Narrative/Value: During the pilgrimage all different kinds of people gather in peace.

1 - Xa [e] mini e xənyie,  
e naxa fa naralan Maaka,  
e xuie keren mara,  
e mayingixie keren mara,  
e yugue keren mara,  
e xa namunye keren mara.

If they leave their homes,  
and they meet in Mecca,  
their languages are not the same,  
their colors are not the same,  
their personalities are not the same,  
their customs are not the same.

2 - K/uni0254n/uni0254 Ala na e xili,  
e naxa naralan na,  
a toma ne birin sabatixi,  
e díñexi,  
e sese mu tinma e boore xa mantxarxi ra.

But when Allah calls them,  
and they meet there  
one sees they are all settled,  
they are forgiving,  
they don’t want any trouble for each other.

This strophe begins to describe the behavior of the pilgrims with two parallel sub-strophes. After two lines referring to the gathering together at Mecca, both end with multiple lines describing the behavior of the pilgrims. The second lines in both sub-strophes are identical except that the second instance uses the demonstrative pronoun instead of the proper name “Mecca.”

The four lines in the first sub-strophe that describe the behavior of the pilgrims all end with the same word. The three parallel lines in the second sub-strophe do not employ this lexical repetition, but they do form a type of antithetical parallelism with the first sub-strophe. They do this by giving a description that is contrary to the expectations one could form based on the parallel lines in the first sub-strophe. For example, in the first sub-strophe one learns that they do not speak the same languages or have the same customs; yet contrary to what would be expected in a similar situation, the second sub-strophe informs the audience that the pilgrims settle together without any conflict.

X3.3.3 – Narrative/Value: During the day of ‘Arafā different kinds of people unite.

Na waxati, xa e bara malan menni,  
exa malan xungbe lxex,  
naxan xungbo a birin be,  
nan lanxixi ‘Arafā110 lxex ma,  
naxan lanxix arabe ma.  
Xa e bara malan,  
e naxa ti ‘Arafā kene ma,

At that time, if they are gathered there,  
on their big meeting day,  
which is bigger than all the others,  
that is the “‘Arafā” day,  
which is Wednesday.  
If they gather together,  
they gather at the open place of ‘Arafā;

110 ‘Arafā is an important day in the Hajj when pilgrims gather near a hill called Mount Arafah.
This unit also begins with two lines with parallel verb phrases malan ("gathered"). The first line refers to the time of gathering, while the second refers to the place of gathering. Lexical repetition and analogous concerns with setting link these two lines together.

The third strophe also uses lexical repetition by ending the first six lines with the same post-positional phrase e ya ma ("among them"). These six lines can be divided into three couplets, the first of which describes analogous types of people in both lines (i.e. the rich and the rulers), while the last two refers to contrastive types of people in their lines (i.e. the health and the sick, the slaves and the freemen).

The final lines employ a chiasm and a case of amplified parallelism to conclude the description of the pilgrims. In the chiasm three elements are rearranged: the clothing (dugi mɔɔli keren "one type of cloth", sose keren "one type of dress"), the people (e birin "all of them"), and the action of dressing (maxiri "to dress" xiri "to tie/dress"). In the final two lines there is an amplification of this concept with the use of the more specific term mafelen ("Muslim headcovering"), which is "laid" on top of someone’s head as opposed to "tieing" it. Despite these changes, the parallelism is obvious as illustrated in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E birin</td>
<td>ma-xiri</td>
<td>sose keren na.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they all</td>
<td>dress</td>
<td>with one dress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dugi mɔɔli keren nan</td>
<td>xiri-xi</td>
<td>e birin na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one type of cloth</td>
<td>ties/dresses</td>
<td>with all of them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(3+)</th>
<th>(2+)</th>
<th>(1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mafelen mɔɔli keren nan</td>
<td>saxi</td>
<td>e birin kɔn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one type of headdress</td>
<td>lays</td>
<td>on all of them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

111 Both of these words are from the same root verb xiri ("tie"). The first is prefixed by a derivative marker ma- (repetitive action), and the second is suffixed by a verb aspect marker –xi (completed action).
E birin xa masen Ala be,  
"Konyi na n na i be. 
I mato, 
n to faxi be, 
galanbu mu na, 
gere mu na."

Nde nde mu tinma a xa fè xon nìyi a boore ra. Some people do not want to hurt others.

I ne tima i boore ma Maaka, 
i ne a falama a be, "I haake to," 
a fan a falama i be, "I haake to." 
I tan naxan tixi a ma, 
i ne a falama a be, "I haake to." 
I tixi a tan naxan fan ma, 
a fan a falama i be, "I haake to."

If you step on someone in Mecca, 
you say to them, “Forgive me,” 
he also says to you, “Forgive me.”

You who stood on him, 
you say to him, “Forgive me.” 
The one you stood on also, 
he says to you, “Forgive me.”

The first strophe indicates that the pilgrims in Mecca sojourn together peacefully. The second illustrates this peaceful state with a specific example, which is described in seven lines constituting two chiastic structure. The speaker creates symmetrical structure in the unit by playing with the interaction between the “agent” (i.e. the person who stands on top of someone else) and the “experiencer” (i.e. the person who is stood upon). Subordinates clauses are used to identify these two actors. In the first case the identification is generic, but in the second case the subordinate clauses specify which actor is the agent. The following table illustrates the way the author rearranges the syntax to develop cohesion, and to maintain cognitive participation of his audience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 54 - Chiasms in X3.3.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First chiasm:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(identification of the two actors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>i ne tima i boore ma Mecca,</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you stand on your neighbor in Mecca,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(agent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>i ne a falama</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(experiencer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a be, “I haake to,”</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to him, “Forgive me,”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Second chiasm:               |
| (identification of the agent) |
| (agent ex-experiencer)       |
| *a fan a falama*             |
| he also says                 |
| (experiencer ex-agent)       |
| *i be, “I haake to.”*        |
| to you, “Forgive me,”        |

---

112 This identification is based on Longacre’s definitions of semantic roles. He defines the experiencer as, “An animate entity whose registering nervous system is relevant to the predication.” He goes on to define the agent as, “The animate entity which intentionally either instigates a process or acts.”

(Longacre 1983:155-156)
I tan naxan tixi a ma,
You who stood on him,

(agent)
i ne a falama
you say

(experiencer)
a be, “I haake to,”
to him, “Forgive me,”

(identification of the agent ex-experiencer)
i tixi a tan naxan fan ma,
the one you stood on

(identify of the agent ex-experiencer)
a fan a falama
he also says

(experiencer ex-agent)
i be, “I haake to.”
to you, “Forgive me.”

X3.3.5 – Value: Islam is a peaceful religion and God forgives those who are peaceful.

Na na a ra, na yatagi naxa sa na ki Maaka,
Therefore, that “forehead has been laid”
a masenfe na ra mixie be,
like that at Mecca,
xa naxan mu Musliminjira faxamuxi,
showing to people,
a Musulminjira byesu dîne na ra,
that do not understand Islam,
boore maxanu dîne na ra,
it is a peaceful religion,
lanyi dîne na ra.
it is a unity religion.

Kan wone to mu luma,
But since we do not last
mixi mu fe kobi raba a boore ra,
without people harming each other,
kan a fa lu ki yo ki,
but at one point in time,
fo wone ya dje ne wone boore be.
we must forgive each other.
Na dinne na a niyama Ala fan dinne won ma.
That forgiveness makes Allah forgive us.
Nampanne naxe, “Sanlanlalu Alihi wasalama.”
The prophet says, “Great is the name of Allah.”
Mixi naxee kininini dunge be,
People who are compassionate to the world,
e naxa hinni mixie ra,
they do good to other people,
e naxa mixie haaka matanga,
they protect themselves from hurting people,
Ala fan hinni nee nan na.
Allah will do good to them.
Aligiyama, Ala xa hinni won na.
In the other world\(^\text{113}\), may Allah do good to us.

This final strophe forms a perfect inclusio with X3.3.1 using two techniques. The first is that of lexical repetition. The speaker utilizes the same metaphor yatagi (“forehead”) with which he began the stanza to speak of Islam’s image to the world. He also repeats three descriptive titles of Islam (i.e. “a peaceful religion,” “a loving religion,” “a unity religion”), that constitute an important point of the whole sermon. The second technique used is a summary formula. He introduces this strophe with the phrase na na a ra (“that is”), which has the role of introducing a summary.

\(^{113}\) This word indicates man’s state after life on this earth. It includes heaven, hell, and a general description of whatever man will find on the other side of death.
This phrase consists of a copula structure where the demonstrative pronoun represents the content of the discourse.

The second sub-strophe of this summary strophe mentions the inevitable human tendency to not live at peace with each other. The antidote for this is forgiveness, which eventually causes God to forgive us. The Imam concludes this strophe with a citation from the prophet (line 12), and a formal blessing (line 17) in which he asks God to do good for us in the afterlife. While this is the only instance of a strophe being concluded with a citation from a religious authority, the Imam concludes other strophes in this sermon with formal blessings.

**The pilgrimage and fasting result in forgiveness of sins**

**X3.4.1 – Narrative: The pilgrimage and the fasting started yesterday.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Susu</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiyila ne na mënne xɔŋ.</td>
<td>The pilgrim is there tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musilimi dɔŋɓee fën na bɔnx gbeete kui, nee fën na sunyi.</td>
<td>All other Muslims in other lands, they also are fasting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wo sun mʊnfɛra?</td>
<td>Why do you fast?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mʊnfɛra xɔŋ xɔŋ won naxa sun?</td>
<td>Why did you fast yesterday?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won sunxi xɔŋ xɔŋ nan be mʊnfɛra?</td>
<td>Why did you fast exactly yesterday?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Imam begins this new stanza with a narrative statement followed by three rhetorical questions that introduce the subject of fasting during the month of Donkinyi. The content of these questions is identical, asking why Muslims fast during this time. The author draws attention to this important question not only by repeating the question three times, but also by forming a crescendo in which every formulation is amplified. The first question asks simply, “Why do you fast?” The second question adds the temporal concept by asking, “Why did you fast yesterday?” And the final formulation adds the emphatic marker *nan* to say, “Why did you fast exactly yesterday?” The audience easily can connect the introductory statement that tells what happened yesterday, to the rhetorical questions that culminate with “exactly yesterday.”

Another interesting aspect of these rhetorical questions can be seen in the way that the author uses grammatical variety in formulating the questions. In each of the three lines he uses a different verb aspect marker (i.e. “sun,” “naxa sun,” “sunxi”), probably not to indicate some peculiar difference in nuance, but rather simply to use the legitimate grammatical free variation available in Susu to enable him to ask the same question without being monotonous.

Still another use of legitimate grammatical free variation revolves around the word order of these three questions. The SOV structure of the language is relatively rigid, but some adverbial expansions can be placed either at the beginning or the end of the sentence. The speaker uses this grammatical freedom to add movement to the three lines. He begins by placing *munfɛra* (“why?”) at the end, and then at the beginning, and finally at the end again.

**X3.4.2 – Narrative: The angels ask God why he is creating man and putting him on the earth.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Susu</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ba, xɔŋ Alahutala won gbe wɔyęnyi ɲɔxɔmə malekèe be xɔŋ ʃe.</td>
<td>Because, yesterday Allah presented our words to the angels, yesterday.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ala to won daafe,  
binye ragbilen malekee ma.

Malekee a i ne Ala be,  
"I wama mixi nan daafe,  
e xa lu boxi?"

E e boore tyngegema ne,  
e boore wuli raminima ne,  
e boxi xunankanana ne.

Muxu tan nan bere na ra nu,  
i na muxu tan lu na,  
muxu ‘Subuhan Alahi’
masenna ne i be.
Muxu ‘Alahu Akibar’ masen i be,  
muxu kinikin muxu boore ma,  
muxu muxu belexe sa muxu boore kzn.
Kɔnɔ i naxee daafe yi ki,  
yee tan, e boore tyngegema ne de.”

When Allah created us,  
the honorable presentation  
was made to the angels.

The angels said to Allah,  
“You want to create people  
so they can stay on the earth?
They falsely accuse each other,  
they shed each other’s blood,  
they ruin the earth.

We are agreed that if  
you leave us there,  
we will present to you ‘Glory to Allah,’

We will say ‘Allah is great’ to you,  
we will have compassion on each other,  
we will not hurt each other.

But those that you have created,  
those ones, they will falsely accuse each other.”

The speaker connects this strophe to the previous one by highlighting the word xɔnɔ ("yesterday"), which he interestingly places at the beginning and at the end of the sentence. This anomalous usage no doubt intends to call attention not only to the link between the two strophes, but also to the importance of this historical reason behind the fasting in question.

The historical incident consists of a conversation between God and his angels at the creation of man. The angels’ quotation covers three strophes in which the personal pronouns referring to the angels and referring to the humans are contrasted. In the first strophe of the quotation e (“they”) is used four times with reference to the mixi nan (“people!”). The first person plural exclusive pronoun muxu (“we”) is then used six times with reference to the angels. When the author uses this pronoun, he couples it with tan nan (contrastive emphatic marker and a non-contrastive emphatic marker) to underline the contrast between the angels and the humans. The final shift between the two pronouns occurs with the contrastive conjunction kɔnɔ (“but”), the demonstrative pronoun referring to the people, and the contrastive emphatic marker.

Table 55 – Contrastive pronoun shift in X3.4.1.17-18

Kɔnɔ i naxee daafe yi ki,  
yee tan, e boore tyngegema ne de.

But those that you have created,  
those ones, they will falsely accuse each other.

All of these techniques demonstrate the numerous ways in which Susu speakers can manipulate their text to emphasize their point.

X3.4.3 – Narrative: God shows the angels the pilgrims in peace and unity.

Ala naxe, "Awayire, wo naxan tan masenxi na ki,  
Allah said, “OK, that which you have said,

114 An Arabic salutation or honorific term for God.
115 Qur’an 37:180
116 The emphatic marker nan is used with the noun for people.
menni tan wo nandi.
Kɔnɔ n fe kolon e xa fe,
wɔ nu na tan kolon."
   Na na ra xɔŋ lɔxe na a li,117
dumŋe miŋi birin naxa naralan,
donna keren, mafelen keren,
na nan gbakuxi e birin ma.
Dugi keren nan xirixi e birin na.
Na leeri na yanyi ra,
Ala ama ne maleke ke, a naxe,
"Wɔ wo ya ragoro bɔxi."
E na e ya ragoro, a naxe,
"Wɔ nu naxee ma,
a n na e be,
wo nun nee nan man yire keren yi ki.
Wɔ nu naxee ma.
e e boore tŋŋeŋema,
wo wo ya ti e ra.
E tan nan narañrxi yi ki yire keren,
emu bari banxi keren,
emu xui keren ñalama,
e jingi keren mara.
   Kɔnɔ e tan nan wo yatagi yi ki,
birin diŋjexi a boore be,
birin wakilixi a boore ra.
E tan nan e boore xanuxi yi ki kira keren na.
E man gbilen kira keren na.
Gi ti mu na.
I ne tìma e boore ma,
i ne a fàlama a be, ‘Dجمه,’
a ñañ a fàlama i be, ‘Dجمه.’"

This part of the narrative consists in God’s response to the angels. The Imam ties God’s quotation to something that happened xɔŋ (“yesterday”) to link this episode to the previous strophes. Other elements of this narrative also link back to previous statements in the discourse: that the pilgrims have the same kind of clothes and head-dress, that the angels said they would falsely accuse each other, that the pilgrims are not from the same families or cultures, and that they ask each other for forgiveness. All of these elements link back to previous statements in the discourse. God’s words recall all of these things and provide cohesion to the sermon as a whole.

X3.4.4 – Narrative/Value: God will forgive the pilgrims of their sins.

A naxe, "A n ba, a tan nan ya,
a n ba, n bara wo findi seede ra to,
naxan birin na yi kene ma,
a nun naxan n xui suxuxi yi ki to,
n bara ya fæ e ma,
n bara e yunubi xafari,
e xa gbilen e xɔnyi n tan Ala diŋjexi ra."

He said, “Oh my father, that is it,
Oh my father, I have made you a witness today,
those here in this [prayer] place,
and those who obey my words today,
I have looked on them,
I have forgiven their sins,
so they can return to their homes with a forgiving Allah.”

117 Reference to the beginning of the Muslim pilgrimage, the “hajj.”
The final strophe of God’s speech to the angels proclaims that God will forgive the sins of those who are participating in the *Donkin Sali* (“Prayer of Id el Kibir”). The phrase *a tan nan ya* (lit. “it is before my eye” fig. “that is it”) presents the conclusion of God’s quotation. The use of this phrase is similar to that of *na na a ra* previously discussed. The conclusion of the matter is that he promises forgiveness for the pilgrims. Interestingly, he addresses the recipient of this great promise with a respect vocative “Oh my father,” which he repeats in two consecutive lines. This certainly provides an insight into the author’s view of the nature of God, who while enjoying absolute sovereignty, also demonstrates love and respect toward man.

**X3.4.5 - Value: We are fasting so we can be among the saved ones God talked to the angels about.**

```
Na na a to, won fan naxa sun xəŋə,
    alako na masenyi ne tima Ala yi temui naxe,
    a wasumma malekee be,
  "Wo nu naxe ma,
    e n matandima,
 i m'a to e xui suxuxi boxi fari?"
A xa li won fan na na ya ma.
Hali won mu fa sese kana,
kəŋə a xa li won fan na xui suxui kui,
    alako Ala na a fala
    a bara ya fa a xui suxumae xəŋə.
Won gbe xa lu na kui.
Ala xa na raba won be.
```

That is the reason we also fasted yesterday, so that when Allah gives his speech, he will boast to the angels, “Those who you said they will disobey me, do you not see how they obey on the earth?” It should happen that we also be among them. We should not ruin anything, but it should happen that we also be in obedience because Allah said he forgives the obedient ones yesterday. May we be among them. May Allah do that for us.

The Imam concludes this stanza by returning to the initial question raised in X3.4.1. He had asked why people fasted “yesterday,” and he had given a hint that the reason was connected in someway to something that had happened “yesterday.” After having narrated what had taken place between God and the angels (X3.4.2-X3.4.4), he concludes the stanza with a strophe that begins with the phrase *na na a to* (lit. “that is it see,” fig. “that is the reason”), which claims that this is the answer to his initial question. He also links this final strophe with the initial strophe of the stanza by using the term *xəŋə* (“yesterday”) as an *inclusio* for the stanza.

Another discourse tool that the speaker uses to mark the conclusion of this stanza consists of four blessings. The first two of these blessings have a peculiar form in that they do not mention the name of God and that the typical verb aspect marker used in blessings is not used in the “main” verb of the proposition. Both of these cases are analogous. The second one reads as follows:

**Table 56 – Atypical blessing in X3.4.5**

```
A xa li won fan na na ya ma.
3S DES arrive 1P also be that eye at “May it happen that we also be among that.”
```

The third blessing is also peculiar in that it does not mention the name of God, but it does use the typical verb aspect marker with the main verb.
Table 57 – Atypical blessing in X3.4.5.12

Won gbe xa lu na kui.
1P POS DES remain that in
“May ours be in that.”

The fourth blessing utilizes the standard blessing formula quite common in Susu.

Table 58 – Typical blessing in X3.4.5.13

Ala xa na raba won b/uni025B.
God DES DP do 1P for
“May God do that for us.”

All four of these blessings basically ask for the same thing, but the variety of forms seems to follow a crescendo which culminates in the standard format. As already seen in X3.3.6, the blessing formula typically serves as a conclusion marker. In this case the speaker concludes his discussion of the reason for the fast during Eid al-Adha.

Details about the pilgrimage compared to the non-pilgrim

X3.5.1 – Exposition: Clarifications about the pilgrimage (Pilgrims do not fast, but they do other things.)

Ngaxakerenyie, wasi nan na ki,
Brothers, that is enough,
Alahutala naxa[n] fixi won ma.
what Allah has given us.
Hiyila ne xa rafa,
At the pilgrims return,
won ne sunyi.
we will be fasting.
E tan mu sunma.
They do not fast.
E ne na to,
Today, they are there,
E wali na munse ra?
what is their work?
G/uni025B m/uni025B mawolife, tawafufe, xun bife,
Throw rocks, circle the k’abah, shave the head,
xuruse k/uni0254n naxabafe.
cut the throat of the animal.

The speaker introduces the next stanza by addressing the people as “brothers,” and telling them that they have discussed the preceding point enough. He goes on to contrast the pilgrims’ work and the non-pilgrim’s work. While the latter are to fast, the former are to do different activities. This clearly distinguishes between those that are on the pilgrimage and those who have stayed home.

X3.5.2 – Exposition: Clarifications about the pilgrimage (Pilgrims do not offer a "lagiyanyi.")

Kanx e tan mu lagiyanyi bama.
Brothers, that is enough,
Hiyila mu lagiyanyi bama.
The pilgrim does not offer the “lagiyanyi.”
Mixie nan tun m’a kolon hiyila lagiyanyi ba mara.
People just do not know that the pilgrim is not a “lagiyanyi” offerer.

But they do not offer the “lagiyanyi.”
The pilgrim does not offer the “lagiyanyi.”
People just do not know that the pilgrim is not a “lagiyanyi” offerer.

The last activity mentioned in the previous strophe, that of “cutting the throat of an animal,” triggers the speaker to insert a brief strophe to clarify that the pilgrims
do not offer the same sacrifice as the people back home. He uses three crescendo lines that continue to add specificity to the declaration. The three lines do not augment the information given, but simply emphasize the point. The second line provides the common noun hiyila ("pilgrim") which is represented by the pronoun in the first line. The first two lines use the same object-verb combination lagiyan yi bama ("offer the sacrifice"), while the final line changes the same two roots into a nominal construction indicating the "offerer of the sacrifice."

X3.5.3 – Exposition: Clarifications about the pilgrimage (Pilgrims should go on the Humura at a separate time from the Hiyi, but it is permissible.)

1 - I na siga hiyi,  
i naxa humura raba,  
i naxa hiyi raba.  
When you go on the hajj,  
you did the 'umurah,  
you did the hajj.

2 - Ala naxe, a tan nan a fala i be,  
konyidi na humura raba Ala be,  
a a niyafe i be  
i xa siga hiyi,  
i humura fan sa na fari.  
Allah says, he himself tells you,  
when a servant does the 'umurah for Allah,  
he makes it happen for you  
that you go on the hajj,  
you add the 'umurah to that.

3 - A naxe; "Awa, di hiyi bara siga na kui.  
Xa n bara tin biyasi keren,  
i lamna ne nu,  
i fan xa humura raba a xati ma,  
i gbilen i xanyi,  
I man fa hiyi fan naba a xati ma,  
i gbilen i xanyi,  
yi fe fa ba won tagi.  
Ko no i to bara tin,  
n to bara tin i be,  
i na hiyi sato,  
i xa humura sat o yi biyasi keren na.  
He says, “OK, the “hajj son” went on that.  
If I granted one trip,  
you should have,  
you also should do the ‘umurah by itself,  
you [then] return home.  
You also should do the hajj by itself,  
you [then] return home,  
[after] having completed this.  
But since you wanted,  
since I wanted for you,  
when you received the hajj  
you should also receive the ‘umurah  
in the same trip,  
you hit two birds with one stone.”

I bara xani firin go no genie keren na.”

In these sub-strophes the author addresses another detail regarding the activities done on the pilgrimage. It would appear that pilgrims have the habit of making a secondary journey (“humura”) during their pilgrimage to Mecca. In the second sub-strophe the Imam, through indirect speech attributed to God, says that God enables the pilgrim to do the pilgrimage, and then the pilgrim adds the “humura” to it. Finally in the third sub-strophe, the speaker, using direct speech attributed to God, reprimands the pilgrims for this. However in the final two sentences God condones this practice, with a proverb saying that the pilgrim has “hit two birds with one stone.”

From a discourse perspective one should note the juxtaposed usage of direct and indirect speech. The speaker repeats the same quotation formula in both cases, namely Ala naxe (“God says”), but the pronouns indicate that the first case is indirect speech while the second is direct speech. The technique of closing the section with a proverb undoubtedly adds an artistic flair to a unit that would otherwise be relatively bland. Wendland (2013:personal correspondence) notes that this constitutes a typical literary device of “end stress.” This final emphatic statement forces the audience to seriously consider the discourse at hand.
X3.5.4 – Exposition: Clarifications about the pilgrimage (Pilgrims should sacrifice the "habiyun" for the poor.)

1 - I lanma ne i xa kəbiri ba. You should set aside some money.
I lamani fima ne. You will give the “lamani”
naxan fima n ma yi jammame misikin wa, which will be given to me
E xa a don, through this poor foreign land.
i xuruse naxan kən naxabama. They should eat it,

2 - Na xili ne habiyun. That is called the “habiyun.”
Hadiya na a ra, It is the pilgrimage,
lagiyanyi mara. it is not a “lagiyanyi.”
Hiyila fe firin na na. There are two things the pilgrim must do.
A m’a xun. It is not one of them.
Lagiyanyi bafe m’a xun. Offer a “lagiyanyi” is not one of them.
Won tan naxan fan mu hiyi For us who are not pilgrims,
lagiyanyi bafe na won tan nan xun. offering a “lagiyanyi” is something we do.

This first sub-strophe continues the direct speech of God that was started in the previous strophe, but he deals with a different subject, that of making a special sacrifice during the pilgrimage for the poor. In the second sub-strophe the Imam contrasts this special sacrifice called the “habiyun” with the normal sacrifice called the “lagiyanyi” made during Donkin Sali. This contrast is highlighted in the last five lines where the speaker drops the concept of two separate types of sacrifice, and emphasizes the two different types of people making a sacrifice, the hiyila (the pilgrim”) and the naxan fan mu hiyi (“who is not in pilgrimage”).

Table 59 – Contrast between types of worshippers in X3.5.4

Hiyila fe firin na na.
pilgrim things two are there
“There are two things for the pilgrim [to do].”

A m’a xun.
3S NEG 3S head
“It is not [on his] head.” (i.e. “It is not his duty.”) (N.B. It = offering lagiyanyi)

Lagiyanyi bafe m’a xun.
lagiyanyi offering NEG 3S head
“Offering the lagiyanyi is not [on his] head. (i.e. “It is not his duty.”

Won tan naxan fan mu hiyi,
1P CONTRASTIVE who also NEG pilgrimage
“We however who are not in pilgrimage,”

lagiyanyi bafe na won tan nan xun.
lagiyanyi offering is 1P CONTRASTIVE EMPHATIC head
“Offering the lagiyanyi is [on] our head however.”
Looking at this contrast one notices the lexical repetition of the expression *xun* ("head") used figuratively to indicate responsibility, the expression *lagiyanyi bafe* ("offering a *lagiyanyi*"), and the term *hiyi* ("pilgrimage"). The distribution of this lexical repetition adds a component of aesthetic symmetry as seen in the following table:

**Table 60 – Symmetry of lexical repetition in X3.5.4.9-13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hiyila (&quot;pilgrim&quot;)</td>
<td><em>Lagiyanyi bafe...xun</em> (&quot;offering a <em>lagiyanyi</em>&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiyi (&quot;pilgrimage&quot;)</td>
<td><em>Lagiyanyi bafe...xun</em> (&quot;offering a <em>lagiyanyi</em>&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**X3.5.5 – Exposition: Non-pilgrims offer a "lagiyanyi."**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Won fan siga sali kene ma.</th>
<th>We also go to the prayer place.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>E ne na xun bife to.</em></td>
<td>They are there shaving heads today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>E ne na e xa xuruse faxafe to,</em></td>
<td>They are there killing their animal today,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e naxax sanbaxi Ala xa misikinee ra</td>
<td>that they send to Allah’s poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hiyi nun humura be.</em></td>
<td>for the hajj and the ‘umrah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won fän na sali kene ma.</td>
<td>We also are in the prayer place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won fän na sali,</td>
<td>We also, when we pray,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>won xuruse faxa.</td>
<td>we kill an animal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won tan gbe lagiyanyi na ra</td>
<td>Ours is a “lagiyanyi.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won benba Ibrahima xa “sunna”,</td>
<td>Our ancestor Abraham’s “tradition,”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>won tan na nan nakamalima.</td>
<td>we are fulfilling that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ala xa won nɔ na rabade.</em></td>
<td>May Allah enable us to do that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The speaker uses an interesting structure in this strophe to contrast the religious rites of the pilgrims and those who stayed home. He begins by saying that *won* ("we") go to the prayer place. He then shifts to the pilgrims’ actions of shaving their head and killing an animal for the special sacrifice of the pilgrims. In the fourth line, the Imam returns to the actions of the non-pilgrims indicating that they pray and kill an animal. He explains that the rationale behind their sacrifice, the *lagiyanyi*, is to fulfill their ancestor Abraham’s circumcision rite.

The symmetry in this presentation displays the differences and the similarities between the two groups of people. Much has been said during the sermon to differentiate the two groups, and yet at the same time various aspects show the unity between them. In this particular strophe the pilgrims are not said to be praying (even though they do pray during the pilgrimage), while those at home are praying at the prayer place. The pilgrims shave their heads, but the non-pilgrims do not (at least as a formal part of *Donkin Sali*). The action they both perform is a sacrifice, but the two sacrifices have different purposes.

The structure of this section puts these differences and similarities in a parallel construction that facilitates the audience’s understanding of the phenomenon. The table below highlights this structure by noting the parallel elements. The elements A and A’ use similar vocabulary. Both lines of B use the same verb aspect, and both lines B’ use the same verb aspect. The information about the sacrifices given in the C lines does not use parallel grammatical structures; their resemblance is only in their analogous meanings.
Table 61 – Similarities and differences presented in X3.5.5

A - Won fan siga sali k/uni Bn/uni Bn ma. We also go to the prayer place.
B - E ne na xun bife to. They are there shaving heads today.
B - E ne na e xa xuruse faxafe to, They are there killing their animal today,
C - e naxan sanbaxi Ala xa misikinee ra that they send to Allah’s poor
hiyi nun humura be. for the hajj and the ‘umurah.

A’ - Won fan na sali k/uni Bn/uni Bn ma. We also are in the prayer place.
B’ - Won fan na sali, We also, when we pray,
B’ - won xuruse faxa. we kill an animal.
C’ - Won tan gbe lagiyanyi na ra Our ancestor Abraham’s circumcision,
Won benba Ibrahima xa sunna, we are fulfilling that.
won tan na nan nakamalima.

The speaker concludes this strophe with a formal blessing. He asks God to enable the worshippers to offer a lagiyanyi. This prayer stems from the fact that most Susu do not have the financial means to purchase an animal for this sacrifice. It is in this light that the Imam prays for God’s assistance.

X3.5.6 – Value: Donkin Sali is a happy day for good deeds, not bad ones.

1 - Ngaxakerenyie, see we na Musulumue nan b/uni to. Brothers, joy is for the Muslims today.
Nalaxinyi na e tan nan be to, Happiness is for them today,
naexe Ala xui suxuxi. those who obey Allah’s voice.
Nem na e tan nan be to, Nourishment is for them today,
ba e tan, because they,
e mu to lxex findima Ala matandi lxex xa ra. they do not make today

2 - E bere min lxex mara, a day to disobey Allah.
It is not their drinking day,
e fare boron lxex mara,
it is not their dancing day,
e boore ranaaxu lxex mara,
it is not their hating day,
e gbe lxex lxex mara. it is not their vengeance day.

3 - E sabarixi na ra to, They are calm today,
e e boore xexebu. they greet each other.
E e boore ki. They give to each other.
Ala xa won findi na mixie ra. May Allah make us that kind of people.

The author provides two sub-strophes here that each use a form of lexical/grammatical repetition. The first sub-strophe mentions three things (joy, happiness, and nourishment) that are available nan be to (“for them today”). Each main proposition terminates in the same manner. The second sub-strophe uses four lines that end in lxex mara (“day” “it is not”). The four evil practices of drinking, dancing, hating, and taking vengeance are contrasted with the next three lines that say that Muslims are calm, they greet each other, and they give to each other. The first line of this third sub-strophe connects back to the first sub-strophe with the use of the word to (“today”). The three actions mentioned in both sub-strophes seem to be parallel as well (i.e. being calm – joy, greeting each other – happiness, giving to each other – nourishment).
The author concludes this strophe with another blessing. He asks God to help them be na mixie ("that people"), referring to the kind of good Muslims that he has described.

**Exhortations to non-pilgrims in Guinea**

**X3.6.1 – Exhortation: Obey God's will on this happy day (do not disobey God, have mercy on others, offer sacrifices, help others).**

1 - Ala xa konie, won ma xutube kui, wo nde nan ya?
    Won naxan masenma won boore be, Ala matandi lxæ mu to ra.
    Won tan nan sëewa lxæ a ra.
    Allah’s servants, in our sermon, who are you?
    That which we tell each other, this is not a day to disobey Allah.
    We are in a day of joy.

2 - Kona yi na seriye kui:
    I naxa Ala matandi, i kinikini, i serex i halate ra.
    Ala matandie tan, won nu nee keren mara.
    Nee tan, Ala ne lxæ naxe Misimilie xa sëewa, We are not the same as disobedient of Allah.
    They, [when] Allah says day that Muslims should rejoice,
    We should be good to each other.
    We should be good to each other here.

**X3.6.2 – Exhortation (via rhetorical questions): We should be united like pilgrims.**

1 - Munfera Ala dunyæ Misimilie birin kixi,
    e sa fa ya, e boore man yire,
    e sese xnyi mu dendexen na,
    e xan e boore,
    e wakili e boore ra?
    Why does Allah give to Muslims from all over the world, they come together from their respective places, to a place that is not home for any of them, they care for each other, they help each other?

2 - Munfera won tan naxee kelixi hëxi keren ma,
    munfera wo tan naxee xui keren falama,
    munfera won tan naxee kelixi pamane keren ma,
    munfera wo tan mu lana xui keren,
    wo tan mu lanma fe keren ma?
    Why do you who come from the same land, why do you who speak one language, why do you who come from the same country, why do you not agree in speech, [why] do you not be unified?
Having juxtaposed Mecca and “here” in the last strophe, the now speaker returns to the pilgrim motif. With two elaborate rhetorical questions, he contrasts the behavior of the pilgrims in Mecca with that of the Muslims at home. The pilgrims are obviously presented as the model to follow, since they are the ones who are “working for each other.” The Muslims at home, on the other hand, receive criticism via a rhetorical question because they are not united.

From a discourse perspective, the author balances these two rhetorical questions very nicely. The first line in both sub-strophes begins with the word munfīra (“why”) which forms the question proper. The first sub-strophe refers to the Muslims of the whole world, while the second refers to those of one country, understood as the “here” in the preceding sub-strophe. Each sub-strophe is balanced with the same number of lines. The first three lines in each sub-strophe deal with the origin of those being addressed. The pilgrims are from other places, while those at home are from the same land and language group. The last two lines of the each sub-strophe point to the desired or undesired behavior that is being addressed. The pilgrims are helping other, and the Muslims at home are not being of one accord.

X3.6.3 – Hypothetical: If Guinean Muslims obeyed Islam, their land would have well-being and peace.

1 - Wo tan, i na wo k/uni0254nti, You, if you count yourselves,  
mixi k/uni0254nti yo k/uni025Bm/uni025B yo k/uni025Bm/uni025B, each hundred people  
tongo solomanaani, a nun solomanaani, ninety and nine,  
nun solomasaxan, [or ninety] and eight,  
xa na mu a nun suuli, or [ninety] and five,  
a birin a fālamā ne, they all say,  
“Layila hayilanla Mohamodu rasulahi.”

2 - Xa Lagin/uni025B Musulumie Misilimija faxamu, If Guinean Muslims understood Islam,  
 e naxa sabari, they calmed down,  
 e naxa ghesenxɔɔnanteyu lu, they quit bothering each other,  
 ‘wanlahi,’ a lima ne, they abandoned gossip,  
boxi bara findi heeri boxi ra, the land would become a productive land,  
a bara findi bɔnɛsa boxi ra. it would become a peaceful land.

3 - Ba, won tan nan wuya ha, Because, we are very numerous,  
 won findi fe kane ra be, [who among us] are ruining things here,  
fɛ bara kana na. things are ruined there.

4 - Xa won findi fe yailanyi ra be, If we become people who fix things here,  
fɛ bara yailan be. things would be fixed here.  
Ala naxa won wuya fû ra. May Allah not multiply us in vain.  
Ala xa won findi seriɛ rakamali ra. May Allah make us fulfill the law.  
Ala xa won inkinki won yete ma. May Allah make us have compassion on ourselves.

The Imam continues his direct appeal to the people to reflect on their behavior. In this hypothetical strophe he challenges them to consider the result of good Muslim conduct; it would make the land a productive peaceful place.

The author of the sermon brings out this concept in two parallel structures (X3.6.3.8-14 and 18-19). Both begin with xa (“if”) sentence/s, and end in result sentence/s that use bara, the inchoative verb aspect marker. To add intensity to these
hypothetical structures, the speaker precedes both of them with a sub-strophe that focuses on the numerical force of the people in question.

The first of the three blessings that conclude the A-B-A-B strophe utilizes the numerical motif and prays that God will not make the people numerous in vain, or without obtaining the desired result. The last two blessings refer back to principles of good behavior referenced in the strophe.

X3.6.4 – Value: The way to salvation is to be religious and not hurt others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muxu ne a falama wo be,</th>
<th>We say to you,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>muxu a falama wo be fe fìxe nan fari,</td>
<td>we say to you with sincerity,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanlahi, kisi kira yo mu na,</td>
<td>I swear, there is no other salvation road,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fò won xuru diine ma,</td>
<td>except disciplining ourselves with religion,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>won won boore haake matanga.</td>
<td>keeping ourselves from hurting each other.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the Imam continues to speak of the value of good conduct, he structures this strophe with lexical and grammatical symmetry. In the first two lines he utilizes *muxu*, the first person plural exclusive pronoun, as the subject, and in the last two lines he utilizes *won*, the first person plural inclusive pronoun, as subject. The third line, emphasized with an Arabic oath, utilizes a common noun as subject.

The second couplet has two lines no doubt because the author wants to express two ideal behaviors, that of following Islam and that of brotherly kindness. The first couplet could be reduced to a single line with regards to the semantic content, but the aesthetic value of the structural symmetry seems to lie behind the formation of a couplet with the second line simply expanding on the first with a generic-specific relationship. With two couplets at both ends of the strophe, the author has the opportunity to emphasize the eternal importance of the statement with the words *Wanlahi, kisi kira yo mu na*, (“I swear, there is no other salvation road.”)

X3.6.5 – Exposition: Two evil things among the Susu are a) those who gossip, b) those who hate and hurt others out of envy.

1 - Hali muxu tan, Sosoe to mu munafagi kolon. Even us, Susus do not know gossip.
   I ne Sosoe be munafagi, If you say “gossip” to Susus,
   a ṭαnxɔ a ma, he thinks that it means,
   a mixi naxan sa mixi magima mixi xɔn. someone who runs to someone else.

2 - Sosoe man mu xɔnnante kolon. Susus also do not know hate.
   I ne xɔnnante, You say hate,
   e gere giri naxan ma the way they fight
   a mu dîpe, he does not forgive,
   a tan ana na nan na a xɔnnante. he says that is a hater.

3 - Ala tan xɔnyi, xɔnnante mu na xa ra. At Allah’s place, that is not a hater.
   Munafagi mu na boore fɔn xa mu ra. That other one is not a gossiper.

4 - Xɔnnante na nde ra Ala xɔnyi? Who is a hater in Allah’s place?118
   Mixi xa heeri xɔnɔna mixi naxan ma, Someone who is angry at someone else’s well-being.

---

118 i.e. from God’s perception.
mixi naxan yele a boore xa heeri ra,  
the person that laughs at his friend’s well-being,

mixi naxan yele a boore tide,  
the person that laughs at his friend’s importance,

mixi naxan yele a ra.  
the person that laughs at him.

E xa a fala a boore be “inuwali.”  
They should tell each other “thank-you.”

Mixi naxan yele a ra,  
The person who laughs at him,
e xa a fala a boore be “soboti.”  
they should say to the other “that’s right.”

5 - Munafagie, b/uni025B/s/uni0254nx/uni0254nante na nde ra?  
Who is a gossiper and trouble-maker?

Munafagie a panigexi,  
The person who decides,
a xa a boore xa naafuli kana,

Muxi to xirixi a ra na ki,  
the person who was removed,
f la lu alo mu xun tan.
a na xan baxi,  
the one who was removed,
na fan mu findi a ra.

X/uni0254nnante s/uni0254nyi nan na ki,  
That is a hater’s personality,
ayele a ra.

N to xirixi a ra na ki,  
Since people are tied-up like that,
a x a Imamu,  
hal a mu a tan yi.

Fo n na a ba na teku.  
It is necessary that I take that away from him.

Muxi birin gbilen xanbi,  
Since I am tied-up like that,
halt a fan mu findi Imamu ra,

Na fan mu findi a ra.  
even if it does not become his own.

X/uni0254nnante s/uni0254nyi nan na ki,  
That is why the money should be taken away
ayele a ra.

6 - Ala xa n/uni025Bm/uni025B mixi ra a ya x/uni0254ri.  
May Allah help people in front of him.

A na n/uni025Bm/uni025B to mixi ma,  
When he sees that person being helped,
a luxi ne alo e na te sa a tan ma.  
it is like fire is being put on him.

Ala naxa won findi x/uni0254nnante ra.  
May Allah keep us from becoming a hater.

This long strophe consists of a symmetrical presentation of two types of undesired behavior, munafagie (“gossipers”) and x/uni0254nnante (“haters”). The first sub-strophe introduces the concept of gossip and leaves the audience to believe that gossip is more than simply talking bad about someone to someone else. The speaker does not explain the deeper sense of gossip till later in the stanza.

The second sub-strophe introduces the image of the “haters” and states that Susus minimize this behavior as superficial quarelling. Again he leaves the impression that there is a deeper meaning yet to be explored. Both of these sub-strophes begin with the same subject and verb in the first line, and continue with an analogous grammatical and lexical structure in the second line.

The third sub-strophe employs two rhetorical questions regarding the two categories of people in discussion, and clearly states that God’s perspective differs from the common view of these two behaviors.

Both the fourth and fifth sub-strophes begin with questions which invite the audience to reflect on a deeper definition of munafagie (“those who gossip”) and x/uni0254nnante (“those who hate.” These introductory questions link back to the third sub-strophe where they were asked the first time. The definition of a “hater” goes beyond someone who quarrels with others; it is someone who does not respect others or care for their well-being. The definition of a “gossiper” also goes beyond someone who simply talks bad about something; the very fact that someone desires to lower someone else to their own standing qualifies them as a “gossiper.”
The strophe concludes with two blessings. A statement after the first blessing explains its punitive motivation. The speaker requests a divine action that will torment those who misbehave in the manner previously described. The second blessing, on the other hand, requests God to help the audience not to follow the undesirable behavior in question.

Part II – Exhortation to live in peace

X3.7.1 – Introduction to second part of Xutuba.

Won ma xutuba raŋayi,
muxu munse yo xaranma won be?

In the conclusion of our “xutuba”
what will we read to ourselves?

The xutuba typically consists of two distinct communication episodes. The Imam delivers the first part, and then sits down for a few minutes before continuing with the second part. During this time the Imam can reiterate themes already presented, or he can introduce new issues. In this particular xutuba the second part employs multiple exhortation strophes which refer back to issues discussed in the first half.

X3.7.2 – Exhortation: Fear God and love your neighbor as yourself.

Won xa gaaxu Ala ya ra.
Won xa findi mixi gundi keren na.
Aliyama mu sæma,
fo won tin Ala be.
I boore xa heeri xa rafan i ma.
I na t̲x̲o r̲e̲ to a ma,
a nimise lu i ma,
alo t̲x̲o r̲e̲ na i tan sæma,
i nimisama ki naxe.
I boore naxa fura,
i jalaaxin.
I boore naxa kaame,
i jalaaxin.
I boore naxa t̲x̲o r̲e̲,
i s̲e̲e̲w̲a.
I wama heeri naxan xan ma i yete be,
i na nan xanuma i ngaxakerenyi fan be.

We should fear Allah.
We should become one people.
The afterlife can not be obtained,
except that we accept \(^{119}\) Allah here.
Your fellow man’s prosperity should please you.
If you see him suffer,
his sadness should rest in you,
like when you obtain suffering,
and you are sad.
When your fellow man is sick,
do not be happy.
When your fellow man is hungry,
Do not be happy.
When your fellow man is suffering,
Do not be content.
The good you want for yourself,
you should love that for your relatives\(^{120}\) as well.

This strophe consists of a series of exhortations to love one’s fellow-man as yourself. The exhortations begins with first person plural form won (“we”), and end with the second person singular form i (“you”). This use of person and number shift constitutes a clear attempt to make the application of the message more personal. Two intermediate lines put the subject of the exhortation in the third person.

In the middle of these exhortations using the positive subjunctive\(^{121}\) form xa (Subjunctive), there is a triplet which uses a rare negative imperative form. A

\(^{119}\) i.e. be willing to follow God.

\(^{120}\) Lit. “from the same mother”, Fig. “those with whom you have a relationship”.

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subordinate clause referring to some type of suffering of the boore (“fellow man”) is followed by a negative imperative, two of which use the same verb palaxin (“to be happy”), while the third uses a synonym seewa (“to be joyful”). Positive imperatives are marked by the omission of the subject, but this negative imperative has the subject. This form could be confused with the second person aorist form that has the same surface structure, but the context clearly indicates that it is a negative imperative.

The final exhortation in the last two lines resembles a proverb. Instead of using the positive subjunctive to express the desired behavior as he did elsewhere in the strophe, the speaker employs the habitual verb with this concluding exhortation. An overview of the forms used in this stanza demonstrates how the speaker uses the grammar to create a variety and flow in the discourse. The following table makes this flow clear to the reader.

**Table 62 – Grammatical forms used in exhortations in X3.7.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub</th>
<th>Verb form</th>
<th>Free Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1P</td>
<td>positive subjunctive</td>
<td>“We should fear God.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1P</td>
<td>positive subjunctive</td>
<td>“We should become one people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3S</td>
<td>positive subjunctive</td>
<td>“Your fellow man’s prosperity should please you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3S</td>
<td>positive imperative</td>
<td>“His sadness should rest on you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2S</td>
<td>negative imperative</td>
<td>“Do not be happy…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2S</td>
<td>negative imperative</td>
<td>“Do not be happy…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2S</td>
<td>negative imperative</td>
<td>“Do not be joyful…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2S</td>
<td>habitual verb</td>
<td>“You should love that for your relatives.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**X3.7.3 – Exhortation: Do not do anything to make your neighbor angry.**

1 - Ala xa xeera naxe, Allah’s messenger says,
“Wo naxa wo boore xan de. “You should not hate each other.
Wo nama gere de. You should not fight.
Wo naxa wo boore ranaaxu de.” You should not make each other upset.”

---

121 The positive subjunctive verb in Susu is marked with the pre-object pre-verb particle xə, and indicates the desirous nature of an action. The negative subjunctive marker is naxa.

122 The aorist verb in Susu has a zero marker and indicates the action in question independent of manner and/or time.

123 The habitual verb in Susu is marked with a –ma suffix and indicates an action that takes place habitually. It can also be used to indicate an action that takes places in the future.
2 - Na na a ra, a naxa tonyi dɔxɔ saabui birin na, saabui naxan a niyama
Misinili firin xa ranaaaxu a boore ma.
A mu lan muku,
won nde xa sare mati i boore xa sare mati kui.

That means, he prohibited anything, anything which would make
two Muslims be upset with each other.
It is not right at all that one of us should try to sell something [to someone] while your fellow man is selling something to that same person.

Xa wo nu[n] i boore yule na makiti,
saresoe bara ti a ya i,
a se nde maxrinma a ma,
i naxa a fala de, "Fa be, sare fanyi nan fa ya."

If you and your fellow merchant are at the market,
a purchase is going on before you,
he asks something of him,
you should not say, “Come here, this is a good deal.”

3 - I na na raba,
i bara xɔnnanteŋa sa wo tagi,
i bara gere sa wo tagi.
Wo nama na niya wo boore ra.
Wo xa findi ngaxakerenmae ra Misilimiŋa kui.

When you do that,
you have put hate between you,
you have put fighting between you.
You should not do that to each other.
You should become “relatives” in Islam.

4 - Ala xa won no na ra.

May Allah help us to be able to do that.

This exhortation strophe uses all three forms of the mitigated imperative. The two negative forms, naxa and nama, are typically considered to be synonymous, the latter being the preferred form for older speakers of the language. In this passage the Imam seems to use this free variation for aesthetic purposes. In the first sub-strophe he cites three commands of the prophet Mohammed using naxa first, nama second, and finally naxa again. In the final sub-strophe of the strophe he repeats a slightly modified form of the same structure. He uses naxa followed by nama, and then in the final command, which happens to be a positive one, he employs the xa form, i.e. the positive mitigated imperative.

In the middle of these two triplets the speaker chooses to use another type of imperative. This form consists of the verb lan preceded by the negative marker mu and followed by another verb using the positive mitigated imperative marker xa. The line in question reads: A mu lan muku, won nde xa sare mati i boore xa sare mati kui. (“It is not right at all, that one of us should try to sell something to someone while your fellow-man is trying to sell something to the same person.”) This lexical form may be seen in the context of this unit as an attempt to emphasize the negative nature of this type of action.

The speaker organizes this strophe with a symmetrical usage of various types of mitigated commands. The following table helps to visualize this structure:

Table 63 – Symmetry of mitigated commands in X3.7.3

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>naxa</td>
<td>Negative subjunctive A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nama</td>
<td>Negative subjunctive B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naxa</td>
<td>Negative subjunctive A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a mu lan...xa...</td>
<td>Negative verb + positive subjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naxa</td>
<td>Negative subjunctive A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nama</td>
<td>Negative subjunctive B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xa</td>
<td>Positive subjunctive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Part II – Exhortations regarding the sacrifice**

**X3.8.1 – Blessings: May God help us all to be able to offer a "lagiyanyi."**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Won man xa a kolon} & \quad \text{We should also know} \\
\text{lagiyanyi faxafe naxan won xun to,} & \quad \text{the killing of the lagiyanyi} \\
\text{won naxan masen,} & \quad \text{that is upon us today,} \\
\text{xa Ala m'a fixi naxce ma,} & \quad \text{that we present,} \\
\text{Ala xa pe gbete fi e ma,} & \quad \text{if Allah has not given it to certain ones,} \\
\text{e xa a sot.} & \quad \text{may Allah give them another year,} \\
\text{Ala xa won birin findi lagiyan ba ra.} & \quad \text{that they may obtain it.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

This concluding stanza begins and ends with semantically related blessings that form an *inclusio* around five exhortations or commands. The blessing formula in Susu consists of the name of God *Ala* in the subject slot, the subjunctive verb marker *xa*, a direct object, the main verb, and an optional expansion of the phrase. The interlinearization of the first blessing in this stanza exemplifies the syntactical structure of the blessing formula in Susu.

**Table 64 – The blessing formula in Susu**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Susu</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Free</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ala xa pe gbete fi e ma.</td>
<td>God SUBJ year other give them to.</td>
<td>SUBJECT SUBJ OBJECT VERB EXPANSION</td>
<td>“May God give them another year.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this particular blessing a resulting condition follows the blessing formula. The speaker pronounces the blessing that God give them another year, and then adds the result of that blessing, namely that “they might obtain it.”

A characteristic of this blessing, as well as the blessing found at the end of the *inclusio* in X3.8.7, is the presence of an introductory conditional statement that sets the background for the blessing. In the first four lines of this stanza the speaker introduces the hypothetical condition that perhaps some people present do not have the means to offer the lagiyanyi sacrifice. He then directs the blessing specifically to those people.

**X3.8.2 – Exhortation: The one offering the "lagiyanyi" should kill the sacrifice.**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Lagiyanyi bama ne,} & \quad \text{The sacrificer of the lagiyanyi,} \\
\text{i tan naxan a baxi,} & \quad \text{you who sacrifice it,} \\
\text{a kən naxaba.} & \quad \text{cut its throat.} \\
\text{Xa i nu nəma,} & \quad \text{If you can not,} \\
\text{i mixie yamari,} & \quad \text{order others,} \\
\text{e kən naxaba i be.} & \quad \text{they cut the throat for you.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

This first command provides specific instruction regarding who should actually kill the sacrifice. The first imperative clearly indicates that the person offering the sacrifice should cut the throat (*a kən naxaba*) of the lagiyanyi sheep. In the hypothetical situation that this person can not perform this act, perhaps because of sickness or old age, he can delegate others to do so in his place. This delegation forms the second imperative of the stanza (*i mixie yamari*). Following this direct
command, the speaker indicates the result of this delegation, namely that they cut the throat for the sacrificer. In doing this he uses the same words of the first imperative, (*ekon naxaba*).

**X3.8.3 – Exhortation: Do not put the blood of the sacrifice on your neck.**

\[
\text{K\text{n}a n i naxa a wulu so i k\text{n}yi ma.} \quad \text{But you should not put its blood on your neck.}
\]

\[
\text{Lagiyan wul\text{i} mu soma k\text{n}yi ma.} \quad \text{The blood of the lagiyanyi is not put on the neck.}
\]

The second command of this stanza consists of two lines, the first of which is a negative command using the negative imperative marker *naxa*, and the second of which is a negative statement regarding the habitual action in question, namely that of putting the blood on one’s neck. In both lines the speaker uses the same verb (*so*) but with two different verb markers. Combined these two structures seem to reinforce each other to make the same negative command.

**X3.8.4 – Exhortation: Do not hold on to someone who is touching the sacrifice when it is killed.**

\[
\text{A firin nde mixi naxa i xa donma suxu.} \quad \text{Secondly people should not hold your shirt.}
\]

\[
\text{Lagiyan faxe,} \quad \text{At the death of the lagiyanyi sacrifice,}
\]

\[
\text{won mu tima tunbusu ra xa mu ra de.} \quad \text{we do not stand in a row at all.}
\]

\[
\text{Boore donma suxu keren a kon naxaba,} \quad \text{Others holding the shirt of the one cutting the throat,}
\]

\[
\text{na m'a ya ma.} \quad \text{that is not to be done (lit. is not among it).}
\]

\[
\text{I tan nan a falama i xa denbaya be,} \quad \text{You say to your family,}
\]

\[
\text{e mu donma xa mu suxuma,} \quad \text{they do not hold his shirt at all,}
\]

\[
\text{wul\text{i} mu soma k\text{n}yi ma.} \quad \text{the blood is not put on the neck.}
\]

This command uses the same dual structure used in the previous command, namely that of a negative imperative followed by a negative statement using a habitual verb marker. Following these two reiterations of the command, a third statement uses a stative structure to emphasize the same thing. The action is described in a simple statement, and then a demonstrative pronoun representing the action is used in a negative stative statement: *Na m’a ya ma.* (“That (is) not among it.”) The three distinct grammatical structures are used in conjunction with each other to emphasize the same negative command.

**Table 65 – One command using three grammatical structures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mixi naxa i xa donma suxu</th>
<th>Negative imperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“People should not hold your shirt.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Won mu tima tunbusu ra</td>
<td>Negative + habitual verb (-ma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We do not stand in a row.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na m’a ya ma</td>
<td>Pronoun + negative + implied copula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“That is not among it.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this command constitutes the third command of the stanza (see X3.8.2 and X3.8.3), the speaker introduces it with the adverbial phrase *a firin nde* (“secondly”). This can be explained by underlining the couplet structure employed in
the stanza. Of the five exhortations, the speaker presents the first in a positive structure, but the next four are stated using a negative structure. Furthermore, the last four are divided into two couplets. The second negative command of these two couplets is marked. X3.8.4 uses the adverbial phrase *a firin nde* ("secondly"), and X3.8.6 uses the adverb *man* ("also").

Another indication that the four negative commands are divided into two couplets can be seen in the fact that the first couplet concludes with a summary of the first two negative commands. Both of these commands are presented using the negative habitual verb structure.

**X3.8.5 – Exhortation: Do not save the head and feet as a holy part of the sacrifice.**

| A falafe ba, | The saying that, |
| a xunyi nun a sanyie a mu donna muku, | his head and his feet should not be ate at all, |
| fo Youbente; | except on Youbente\(^{124}\), |
| nɔndi mara. | that is not true. |
| Xa lagiyanyi ge faxade, | If the lagiyanyi sacrifice has been killed, |
| naxan na i kenen, | that which you like, |
| na don. | eat it. |
| Xa a nde nan /uni0254 /uni025B faxade, | If some is to be cooked in the evening, |
| na /uni025B /uni025B naxan na a ra, | cook it, |
| a /uni0254, | eat it. |
| a don. | May Allah enable us to do that. |
| Aa xa won no na ra. | Do not put anything aside. |
| I naxa fefe sa ne. | There is nothing special in that. |
| Sese m’a ya ma. | His throat is to be cut, |
| A a kɔn nan naxabama, | it is a sacrifice. |
| serexe na a ra. | |

The essence of this command is that no part of the sacrifice should be set aside as special to be eaten at a latter date. The speaker begins his argument by saying that the statement that such a practice should be followed is false. He counteracts that false idea with two positive imperatives saying that one should eat whatever part of the sacrifice desired. In both cases these imperatives are preceded with a conditional subordinate phrase. These two statements are then followed by a blessing wishing that the audience will be able to partake of such a sacrifice. The unit concludes with a strong negative imperative saying that no part of the sacrifice should be put aside. The speaker then repeats the same point with an affirmation using the negative stative structure *Sese m’a ya ma.* ("There is nothing among it."), followed by another affirmation using the positive stative structure *Serexe na a ra.* ("It is a sacrifice.")

In making this point the speaker uses a complex yet balanced variety of structures. The structures seem to go back and forth from a positive to a negative perspective in a balanced and symmetrical fashion. Negative and positive statives, as well as negative and positive imperatives are put in juxtaposition, while a blessing seems to mark the middle of the unit. The following table illustrates this balance of grammatical structures.

| Table 66 – Grammatical symmetry between positive and negative structures |

\(^{124}\) The first month of the year in the Susu calendar.
**X3.8.6 – Exhortation: Do not distribute small pieces of the meat to others unless you give them enough for a meal along with sauce.**

1 - Wo man naxa a dxx segere ma,  
   i mixi fu ki lagyanyi  
   e mu bore soto.  
   A wo xa xuruse faxa,  
   wo xa kaametæ ki.  
   I na i xa lagyanyi sube fi naxan ma,  
   a fan xa bore soto.

2 - Fɔmɛ xa mara,  
   donse na a ra.  
   Mixi anna ne,  
   a hɔme se na a ra.  
   Hɔme se mara de,  
   lagase na a ra.  
   A barayi na a faxama be,  
   luge na a donma be.  
   I na a fi naxan ma,  
   a xa bore soto.

This unit also uses an interplay between negative and positive imperatives to exhort sacrificers to share their sacrifice in such a way that others can be fed adequately. The unit begins with a complex negative command where the real impact is not in the main proposition with the negative imperative (“You also should not put it in a basket,”), but in the final two propositions where the negative result is reported (“you give ten people lagiyanyi sacrifice meat, they do not obtain sauce.”)  The point of these propositions is that people should not give meat without adding the ingredients for a sauce.

The next two imperatives in the unit are positive.  They both begin with a subordinate clause that indicates the setting (i.e. “when you kill the animal” and “when you give lagiyanyi meat to people”).  They use the mitigated imperative form to specify exactly what should be done. The first imperative is more generic, (“You should give to the hungry”), while the second is more specific (“he/she should also get sauce”).

The second half of this unit can be interpreted as concluding with a summary of the two commands mentioned in the second couplet, as was the case at the end of the first couplet.  The speaker intertwines the two commands of not considering the meat something holy that should be treated ceremonially (X3.8.5), and using the feast to meet the needs of the hungry (X3.8.6).  He uses negative stative verbs indicating that the meat is not something holy, and positive stative verbs identifying the meat as something to eat physically.

The first part of the summary uses an ABAB parallel structure with two lines in the middle that either introduce the second couplet (cf. hɔmɛ), which give the
background reason for necessity of stating both the couplets, namely that people were saying that the meat was a holy object. The following table illustrates this parallel structure.

Table 67 – Parallel structure in X3.8.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“It is not a prayer,”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>it is food.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>“People say it is a spiritual thing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>“It is not a spiritual thing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>it is a something to fill one up.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second part of the summary continues to intertwine the two concepts by using two parallel lines denoting the beneficiary of the spiritual and the physical benefits of the sacrificial meat. Blessings are reserved for the person offering the sacrifice, and physical satisfaction for those who eat the sacrifice. On this note the speaker concludes the unit by noting in the final two lines that sauce should be given along with the meat to truly meet the needs of the hungry. The final line uses the phrase *bore soty* (“obtain sauce”) which is used two other times in the unit. This use of repetition denotes the centrality of the concept in this unit.

X3.8.7 – Blessings/Exhortation: May God enable us to be able to give to others.

| Ala xa won no na ra. | May Allah enable us to do that. |
| Mixi yo naxa a daxeg segere ma. | No one should put it in a basket. |
| I na a so mixi yi, a mu gan li, | When you give it to someone, |
| Ala xa won tanga na ma. | it is not enough to cook, |
| Ala xa temui gbete fi won ma. | may Allah protect us from that. |
| Ala xa t/mb/mb/mb/ fi won ma. | May Allah give us another time. |

This concluding blessing of the entire unit, which closes the *inclusio* opened in X3.8.1, repeats a phrase used in X3.8.6 (“No one should put it in a basket”) and thus undepins the coherency of this conclusion with the preceding exhortation. Three blessings, all using the same formula, are employed in this blessing stanza. Each blessing links to other parts of the unit. The first blessing, *Ala xa won no na ra* (“May God enable us to do that”), is found in strophe X3.8.5. The second blessing, *Ala xa won tanga na ma* (“May God protect us from that”), links directly to the preceding subordinate clauses which constitute the antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun. The third blessing, *Ala xa temui gbete fi won ma* (“May God give us another time”), repeats the concept in the first blessing of X3.8.1 which in the same vein asks God for another “year.”

The whole stanza X3.8 demonstrates a balanced grammatical symmetry that presents a clear and coherent discourse. The following table attempts to capture this symmetry.

Table 68 - Grammatical structure of X3.8

| Inclusio (opening) | X3.8.1 – Blessing (“May God give them another year.”) |
| Positive Exhortation | X3.8.2 – “The sacrificer should kill the sacrifice.” |
(First couplet)
Negative Exhortation   X3.8.3 – “Do not put the blood on your neck.”
Negative Exhortation   X3.8.4 – “Do not hold on to the sacrificer.”

(Second couplet)
Negative Exhortation   X3.8.5 – “Do not save the head and feet as holy.”
Negative Exhortation   X3.8.6 – “Do not distribute meat without sauce.”

Inclusio (closing)  X3.8.7 – Blessing  (“May God give us another time.”)

Part II – Final Blessings

X3.9.1 – Introduction to blessings.

Won ma namipam ne a duba losi nan to. Our prophet says that today is a day of prayer.
Won xa duba won yete be a nun won ma boxi. Let us pray for each other and for our country.

These two lines clearly mark the beginning of a new stanza that the speaker defines as a duba (“prayer/blessing for someone”). The first line refers to the commandment from Mohammed that prayers be said on this holiday, and the second line is a simple invitation for the audience to pray for each other and for their country.

X3.9.2 – Value: We come to you God and we trust you.

Ala, muxu bara i makula, Allah, we have begged you,
muxu i makulama ne, we will beg you,
muxu xaxili tixi i ra. Our spirit depends on you.
Xaxili tide gb/uni025Bt/uni025B mu na muxu b/uni025B, fo i tan. We have no other dependence outside of you.

The prayer begins with a direct vocative address to Ala (“God”), and then a description of the speaker and audience’s state of mind before God. This unit consists of two couplets, both of which use the same verb in both lines but in a different grammatical form. The sole explanation seems to be aesthetic variety.

X3.9.3 – Blessings: Deliver us from our enemies and make us happy.

I xa muxu yaxuie ramini taa, May you cast our enemies out of town,
i xa muxu rasewa. may you make us happy.

An interesting grammatical feature of this prayer lies in the choice of the author to use the second person singular to address God. Typically the Susu blessing or prayer formula uses the third person singular with God as the subject, but this prayer seems to juxtapose the two grammatical forms as will be seen in X3.9.5 and X3.9.7.

X3.9.4 – Value: We have not done harm to others, and we are where you put us.

Muxu mu mixi yo xα, We have not hated anyone,
muxu mu mixi yo ratixi. we have not stopped anyone.
Muxu na muxu xαnyi, We are at our dwelling,
i dendexen fixi muxu ma, which you have given us.
Ala muxu lan be. Allah assembled us here.
This unit also uses the technique of person shift by referring to God in the second person in the first four lines, but in the final line the author switches to the third person singular, another example of person shift. Perhaps the speaker uses this rhetorical device as a “conclusion” of the second person section, or perhaps he does it as an “introduction” to the following section which begins with the third person singular. At any rate it serves as a deliberate transitional device between the sections.

**X3.9.5 – Blessings: Help us to be good and convert those who are evil.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ala xa muxu rafan,</td>
<td>May Allah make us love each other,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muxu xa muxu boore xanu be.</td>
<td>may we love each other here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixi jaaaxie naxee na muxu ya ma,</td>
<td>The evil people who are among us,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ala xa i findi nee dandanma ra.</td>
<td>may Allah make you their healer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xa naxan mu yalamma,</td>
<td>If someone does not heal,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ala xa won tanga na masiboe ma.</td>
<td>may Allah protect us from that harm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixi jaaaxi yuge jaaaxi, n Marigi i xa a ratanga,</td>
<td>An evil person with bad character,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>my Lord may you protect him,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a fan xa yalan,</td>
<td>may he also be healed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a fan yuge xa fan,</td>
<td>may his character also become good,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a fan xa findi mixi fan yi ra.</td>
<td>may he also become a good person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I xa na raba muxu be.</td>
<td>May you do that for us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This unit continues the juxtaposition of blessing formulas that refer to God using the third person singular and those using the second person singular. This grammatical variety does not appear to have a particular semantic function (e.g. summary, emphasis), but rather seems to be employed to enhance aesthetic quality by changing the “rythym” of the discourse.

Another switch in participant reference occurs in this section with reference to the audience. In lines 1, 2, 5, and 10 the first person plural is used in both the exclusive and inclusive forms to indicate the audience. The orator uses *muxu*, the exclusive form, when he speaks to God, and *won* when he speaks to the audience. However, in line 3 the orator uses a second person singular pronoun to refer to the audience. He does this not to limit his message to only one person, or to exclude himself from the exhortation, but to emphasize the personal nature of his exhortation.

**X3.9.6 – Value: Good people live in peace. God does not forgive trouble makers.**

**We are not trouble makers.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ba xa wo nun mixi fanyi daxo,</td>
<td>Because if you live with good people,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i bëüe bëüa sa.</td>
<td>your heart is at peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kɔnɔ n Marigi,</td>
<td>But my Lord,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xa naxan bara findi xunnapaaxi ra,</td>
<td>if someone becomes a troublemaker,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i xanxi i mu nana ya fâde a ma.</td>
<td>at your dwelling you cannot care for him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muxu tan nu fa danxaniyaxi i tan nan ma.</td>
<td>We have believed in you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fe paaxi naxan natexi,</td>
<td>The evil he planned,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muxu tan mu na natexi,</td>
<td>we did not plan it,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muxu xa a raba mixi ra.</td>
<td>that we should do it to people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The speaker uses grammatical parallelism in this unit consisting of two couplets. The first two sentences both begin with the subordinate conjunction *xa* ("if"), and are followed by the independent clause indicating the resulting action. The
second two sentences both use the same completed verb\textsuperscript{125} aspect marker –\textit{xi} (completed action/state) in their independent clauses. This parallelism binds the four sentences together as a coherent unit.

**X3.9.7 – Blessings: Protect us. Make us good. Give us more time on earth.**

\begin{align*}
I\ tan\ Ala,\ & xa\ f\i\ddot{\text{n}}\ddot{\text{d}}\ddot{\text{i}}\ddot{\text{s}}\ddot{\text{o}}\ddot{\text{r}}\ddot{\text{i}}\ ra, \\
&\ naxan\ t\i\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{m}}\ddot{\text{i}}\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{x}}\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{n}}\ nun\ nee\ tagi. \\
Muxu\ sutura\ k\ddot{\text{c}}\ddot{\text{e}}, \\
&i\ xa\ m\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{x}}\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{s}}\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{t}}\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{r}}\ddot{\text{a}}\ y\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{n}}\ddot{\text{y}}\ddot{\text{i}}. \\
Ala\ xa\ &\ won\ matin\ddot{x}\ddot{i}. \\
Ala\ xa\ temui\ &\ gb\ddot{e}\ddot{t}\ddot{e}\ fi\ won\ ma. \\
\end{align*}

Allah, may you become a soldier, who stands between us and them.

Protect us at night, may you protect us in the daytime.

May Allah make us straight.

May Allah give us another time.

This unit begins with a vocative address to God, a feature that can be seen three other times in this stanza (X3.9.2 – line 1, X3.9.5 – line 6, X3.9.6 – line 3), and which reminds the audience that this is indeed a prayer addressed to God. Grammatical parallelism characterises the two couplets of the unit juxtaposing the second person singular blessing formula with the third person blessing formula. The two sentences of the first couplet both use the \textit{i xa} (“may you”) structure, but the second sentence adds a parallel line using the non-mitigated imperative. They are closely related semantically employing the same verb with the contrastive adverbs “night” and “day.” The final line of the unit concludes the stanza with the same words used at the end of the previous stanza, \textit{Ala xa temui gbete fi won ma}. (“May God give us another time.”)

An overall picture of this entire stanza shows a repeated use of parallel couplets and parallel lines as a cohesion and organizing device at the discourse level. The author employs both semantic parallelism and grammatical parallelism to develop a balanced discourse. The following table indicates the type of parallelism used in each unit of the stanza.

**Table 69 – Parallelism used in stanza X3.9**

125 The completed verb in Susu is marked by the –\textit{xi} suffix and indicates an action or a state that is completed and fixed. It can also be used with nouns in an adjectival fashion.
5.3 A summary of grammatical devices used in the Xutuba

After having studied various grammatical devices in the specific context of a particular Susu Xutuba, it might be helpful to summarize these discourse techniques in two categories. The first category regards devices used to structure the text in a clear and aesthetically pleasing manner, and the second category deals with techniques that emphasize certain functional aspects of the text. In addition to these categories, it should prove helpful as well to give an overview of the different types of imperatives used in this Xutuba since imperatives form the backbone of hortatory speech. A typology of blessings has been included as well since they constitute an important in the context of religious discourse.

Discourse devices for text structure

Use of couplets

Couplets of parallel lines linked by a common feature constitute a common structural feature in this xutuba, which suggests a strong poetic component in Susu religious discourse. The sermon begins with a unit (X3.1.1) which can be analyzed in two different ways, both of which divide the unit into couplets. The final stanza (X3.9) of the sermon consists entirely of a series of seven couplets using semantic and grammatical parallelism. In one particular case (X3.8.4, X3.8.6) the couplets are marked with ordinal adverbs to highlight this structure.

Parallelism

Most of the couplets employ some form of parallelism. Two lines of the same couplet can be linked by lexical repetition (e.g. X3.2.1), or two couplets can be linked by repeating a lexical item (e.g. X3.5.4). The same phenomenon can occur with grammatical structures. In X3.9.6 for example, the first couplet uses the same grammatical structure in two lines, and the second couplet does the same thing with a different grammatical structure.

The speaker also uses another form of parallelism that is quite sophisticated, and requires a conscious elaboration of grammatical structures. A case of chiastic parallelism in X3.3.3 inverts the syntactical constituents of two lines to say the same thing in different ways. A similar case is found in X3.4.1. The presence of this type of chiasm in a rigid SOV language is remarkable.

Contrastive parallel elements

The speaker in this xutuba, favoring as he does the notion of couplets or pairs, contrasts at least five different kinds of structures. In X3.5.3 direct speech and indirect speech are juxtaposed. God speaks of the same issue both times, but the author puts the parallel elements in contrastive forms. Another example can be seen in the last two lines X3.8.5. The speaker says the same thing, first using a negative stative structure, and then with a positive stative structure. A similar technique appears in X3.6.2 with juxtaposed rhetorical questions. The first refers to the positive
behavior of the pilgrims in Mecca, and the second refers to the negative behavior of
the Muslims that did not do the pilgrimage.

A somewhat different use of contrasting parallel elements involves the use of
free variation. Two forms in free variation are contrastive in form even though they
have the same meaning. The negative imperative marker naxa, for example, is used
alongside of nama, another older form that means the same thing (X3.7.3). The
contrast in form serves only an aesthetic value. The speaker makes a similar choice in
X3.4.1 where he uses three different verb aspect markers with the same verb in three
consecutive lines. The variation of these aspect markers does not contribute to a
development of the thought; it is simply used as a discourse device to develop
cohesion and perhaps to emphasize the point.

Discourse unit markers
This Susu xutuba uses three different explicit unit markers. The first, an
inclusio, begins and ends a unit with an identical word, phrase, or concept. The unit
can be a small unit like the one found in X3.2.2, or it can span a wider portion of text
such as the one that opens at the beginning of X3.3.1 and closes at the beginning of
X3.3.5. The second device used to mark the end of units is the traditional blessing
formula as found at the conclusion of X3.4.5 and X3.5.5. A final device used only
once in this xutuba (X3.5.3), yet quite convincingly, consists in a proverb as a
conclusion marker.

Discourse devices for text emphasis
A smaller set of discourse devices attempt to emphasize particular points or
notions in the text.

Word order
Susu grammar allows for very little word order variation in that noun phrases are
marked as subject or direct object by position. Temporal adverbs are one exception
and can be placed before or after the verb. (Houis 1963, Willits 1992) The speaker in
this xutuba uses that option in the last two lines of X3.4.1. He puts the same adverb
\textit{xar}/\textit{uni0254} (“yesterday”) before the verb in one line and after the verb in the next line. In
X3.4.2 he puts the same adverb before and after the main verb, a quite unusual
construction in Susu which clearly underlines the importance of “yesterday” in his
discourse.

Foreign words
Another way that the Susu emphasize a concept is with the use of a foreign
word. This is particularly true with Arabic words in the Muslim context. The speaker
quotes a prophet using a short Arabic phrase (X3.3.5), and then goes on to explain the
citation. In X3.6.5 the speaker uses the Arabic word for “I swear” to emphasize his
point. The only non-Arabic foreign word used in the sermon is the French word for
“pillar” in reference to the five basic doctrines of Islam, which are identified in
Arabic. The reason why these words are used is not to enhance the transmission of
information, but to emphasize the importance of that information given that they
come from the Qur’an.

Person shift

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In the first few lines of X3.9.5 the speaker switches from first person plural to second person singular while his audience remains the same. With this technique he seeks to emphasize the personal nature of the application of the point in question.

Summary constructions

Two typical constructions are used in this sermon to mark a summary. The first construction, *na na a ra* (“that is it”), summarizes a short portion of text (X3.7.3), or a whole strophe (X3.3.5). Another construction, *a tan nan ya* (“it is before eyes”), is found in X3.4.3.

**Imperative typology in a Xutuba**

Careful analysis of this hortatory text demonstrates that the Susu have an impressive repertoire of grammatical techniques to express commands and/or exhortations. These can be divided into two categories, primary and secondary. The primary techniques feature verb aspect that are only used in imperatives, while the secondary techniques are typically used in non-imperative constructions.

**Primary imperatives**

The Susu imperative is marked by the absence of the second person singular in the subject slot, rather than an affix. To mark a second person plural imperative, the subject pronoun is present, but there is a nul affix on the verb. This marking can be ambiguous, but usually the context makes the imperative nature clear.

A second type of primary imperative is marked by the presence of a pre-verb, pre-object particle *xa*.\(^{126}\) This form functions as a mitigated imperative, useful in situations where the speaker is emphasizing the desirable nature of the action in question, or where he/she wants to be polite.

Negative imperatives or prohibitions are marked differently than the negative (*mu* “not”) that would be used in declarative sentences. The negative mitigated imperative is marked with the pre-verb, pre-object particle *naxa*.\(^{127}\) An older form that has the same meaning and use is *nama*.

Non-mitigated negative imperatives are rare, but this xutuba presents a clear example in X3.7.2. The context indicates the intent of the speaker to prohibit someone from being happy about his/her neighbor’s misfortune. Unlike the positive imperative counterpart, the second person singular subject pronoun is present in the negative imperative.

The following table uses the verb *siga* (“to go”) to show the Susu imperative verb paradigm. The second person singular pronoun is *i* (“you”) and the second person plural pronoun is *wo* (“you” Plural).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-mitigated: Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2(^{nd}) person singular</td>
<td><em>siga</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{126}\) The same morpheme is also used as a nominal possessive.

\(^{127}\) The same morpheme is also used as a narrative verbal aspect marker.
The habitual verb in Susu marked with a –ma (Habitual) suffix is quite useful in forming secondary imperatives. In certain contexts the habitual verb along with the standard negative marker mu, can serve as a prohibition. In X3.8.3 this form is used in a sentence that follows another sentence that has a primary imperative, but it is conceivable that this form could be used without the other sentence. Another way to clearly mark a negated habitual verb as a negative imperative is to add a negative adverb (e.g. dede, muku – see X3.8.5), or some other type of negative particle (e.g. xa – see X3.8.4).

The aorist verb in Susu also serves as a secondary imperative in certain structures. In X3.8.4, for example, the speaker makes a positive declarative statement using an aorist verb, and then adds a negative stative na m’a ya ma (“that is not among it”). The end result is a prohibition to do what was stated.

Another way to use the aorist verb to form an imperative is by coupling it with what on the surface seems to be a primary imperative, but which semantically does not express the actual command. The speaker provides a good example in X3.8.6 where he begins with a negative imperative stating that meat should not be put in a basket. Careful analysis reveals that the following sentence using an aorist verb communicates the real prohibition that meat should not be given without the necessary condiments to make it into a sauce. A final way that the speaker uses an aorist verb as a secondary imperative can be seen in X3.8.2 where he precedes the declarative statement with a negative condition.

The following table summarizes these structures and provides examples of each case.

**Table 71 – Secondary imperative structures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Habitual (context)</th>
<th>Lagiyan wuli mu soma konyi ma. The blood of the lagiyanyi is not put on the neck.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Habitual + Negative adverb</td>
<td>a xunyi nun a sanyie a mu donna muku. His head and his feet should not be ate at all,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative marker + “xa” + Negative Habitual</td>
<td>e mu donna xa mu suxuma. They do not hold his shirt at all,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Aorist + Negative Stative</td>
<td>Boore donna suxu keren a kon naxaba, Others holding the shirt of the one cutting the throat,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>na m’a ya ma. that is not to be done (lit. is not among it).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Imperative (secondary) + Negative Aorist</td>
<td>Wo man naxa a dxen segere ma, You (pl.) also should not put it in a basket,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i mixi fu ki lagiyanyi you give 10 people lagiyanyi sacrifice (meat),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e mu bole sxo. they do not obtain sauce.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Conditional + Positive Aorist (secondary) + Positive Aorist

*If you can not, order others, they cut the throat for you.*

**Blessing typology in a Xutuba**

Blessings serve an important function in Susu culture, much as they do in the discourse grammar. While a blessing can be used at any point during a conversation or during a sermon, the most prominent function of a blessing is to introduce and to conclude a discourse. With the exception of the first two introductory strophes in this *xutuba*, the speaker concludes each stanza with a blessing in the classic form (X3.3.5, X3.4.5, X3.5.6, X3.6.5, X3.7.3, X3.8.7, X3.9.7). Some stanzas use a blessing or blessings as a conclusion as well (X3.5.5, X3.6.3). Stanza X3.8 not only ends with a blessing, but it also begins with two blessings (X3.8.1). From the perspective of the entire discourse, stanza 9 concludes the whole with a long series of blessings.

**Third person formulas**

The Imam in this sermon constructs his blessings in multiple ways. The most typical blessing formula has God as the subject, followed by the predicate using the *xa* (Subjunctive) verb aspect marker.

\[
\text{Ala} \quad \text{xa} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{raba.} \\
\text{God} \quad \text{SUBJUNCTIVE} \quad \text{that} \quad \text{do.}
\]

“May God do that.”

At least in one occasion the negative subjunctive marker *naxa* (Negative Subjunctive) occurs in the same overall structure (X3.6.5).

A variation to this classical form adds another proposition using the positive subjunctive after the blessing formula. This second proposition does not reflect an ellipsis, but rather the result of the main verb in the blessing formula.

\[
\text{Ala} \quad \text{xa} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{mali,} \\
\text{God} \quad \text{SUBJUNCTIVE} \quad \text{him} \quad \text{help}
\]

“May God help him,”

\[
a \quad \text{xa} \quad \text{maale} \quad \text{soto.} \\
3S \quad \text{SUBJUNCTIVE} \quad \text{rice} \quad \text{obtain.}
\]

“That he may obtain rice.”

The strophe X3.9.5 contains an example of this structure. This form can be further modified by preceding it with a conditional statement as found in X3.8.1.

\[
\text{Xa} \quad \text{Ala} \quad \text{m’a} \quad \text{fixi} \quad \text{naxee} \quad \text{ma,} \\
\text{If} \quad \text{God} \quad \text{NEG-3S} \quad \text{gives} \quad \text{who} \quad \text{to}
\]

“If God has not given it to certain ones,”

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Second person formulas

In the final stanza of this xutuba, a stanza reserved for the concluding blessings of the religious event in question, the speaker uses a somewhat atypical blessing formula. He replaces the third person singular reference to God in the subject slot with the second person singular pronoun which the context clearly identifies with God. This more personal form appears 5 times in stanza 9 (see X3.9.3, X3.9.5) interchangeably with the third person blessing formula which also appear 5 times.

One interesting variation of this second person formula is the addition of a vocative address to God (X3.9.5, X3.9.7). Like the classic blessing formula, the speaker sometimes adds another proposition after the blessing using the positive third person subjunctive (X3.9.5). The most unusual variation consists of preceding the second person blessing formula with a direct imperative. This structure appears in X3.9.7.

One could postulate an ellipsis in the first proposition, or perhaps simply an usual usage of the imperative coupled with a second person blessing formula. Another possibility would be to consider this totally distinct from a “blessing”, perhaps with another appellative such as “prayer”. The speaker does not use this form or an analogous form anywhere else in the sermon with reference to God.
6 – A documentary translation of Zephaniah in Susu

Having examined two analogous messages coming from two distinct languages and cultures, the final step of this research seeks to provide a translation of the Hebrew Zephaniah for the Muslim Susu audience, taking into consideration the information learned in the two rhetorical and discourse analyses. This research will propose two different approaches to this task, along with their respective advantages and disadvantages.

The first approach proposed will be called a “documentary translation”. As Nord explains, this approach “gives the receiver an information about the way a particular source works or worked for its source-culture audience.”128 In this approach the translator translates the Hebrew text into the Susu language with minimal disruption of phrase order and little if any explication in the text. A paratextual apparatus provides the necessary background information to make the text understandable in the Susu cultural context. This approach focuses on providing the Susu reader with the Hebrew “document” in as much an unaltered form as possible.

Another advantage to this approach to translation lies in the fact that the target audience is introduced to the rhetorical and semantic modes of expression used in the source language and culture. This allows them to appreciate a new communicative form different from their own. The paratetual apparatus serves, in this case, to underline and explain features that would not be readily understandable.

6.1 Role of the organizational frame of reference

The contextual frame of reference model underlines the important role of the organizational entity and/or translator who undertakes a translation project. (Wendland 2008:77) Their core values, their translation theory, and their specific skopos of the translation in question determine in large part the direction of the translated text as well as how that translation will be presented to the audience.

One critical core value of the Susu translation project in question revolves around the theological presupposition that the text of Zephaniah constitutes a divinely inspired portion of the Judeo-Christian canon. This presupposition enforces certain limits as to how a translation can deviate from the actual Hebrew text. Clearly the language used in the communication can be altered, otherwise translation would not even be possible, but the alterations must respect the divine authorship and hence the illegitimacy of any form of human manipulation which would alter the original meaning. Perhaps any translator of any material should abide by a similar ethic, but in the case of literature which is recognized by the translator and his/her audience as “divinely inspired”, the issue becomes that much more important.

At the same time another critical core organizational value seriously impacts the translation theory adopted by this project. Not only do the stakeholders maintain that the original text was divinely inspired, they also maintain that the purpose of the original text was to provide to all cultures and generations a revelation of God’s will for mankind that can be readily understood across linguistic and cultural lines.

core value serves as the principal motivation behind the project. The impetus to make the text readily understandable to all cultures in essence defines in part the skopos of the project. To achieve this goal the translator also provides a paratextual apparatus in which the reader can find contextual information necessary to understand the text. Cognitive linguistics has demonstrated the importance of such information, and the organizational frame of reference has suggested the mode in which this information be provided.

In light of these considerations the skopos of the Susu documentary translation project could be stated as follows:

Provide a translation of the Jewish scriptures that could be understood by Susu Muslims with limited or no understanding of Jewish theology and history. The translation should accurately communicate, to the best of the translators’ ability, the meaning of the original phrases with minimal alteration of their original order. Any background information or explicative material deemed necessary for accurate understanding of the meaning of the text should be provided in a paratextual apparatus.

While this statement does not provide all the details of the project, the principles expressed should be a key element in the decision making process about those details. Some translation guidelines, for example, that this skopos would dictate are as follows:

- Lexical and grammatical choices should serve to translate the literal meaning of the text. Phrase order should only be altered when grammatically essential according to the norms of the Susu language.
- Figures of speech in the Hebrew text should be maintained in the text and explained in the footnote.
- Implied background information readily accessible to the original audience but inaccessible to the Susu audience, should be made explicit in the paratextual apparatus (i.e. footnotes, introduction, glossary) but not in the text of the translation. Other information should also be provided that would keep the reader from incorrect interpretations of the text that he might naturally formulate on the basis of his cultural perspective.
- When the original text is not fully understandable, this ambiguity should be maintained in the text and one or more exegetical interpretations of the passage can be provided in the paratextual apparatus with due notification that it is merely an interpretation.
- While Susu discourse considerations will not be reflected in the text, so as to highlight the original language discourse features, they will be noted in the paratextual apparatus.

6.2 Advantages and disadvantages of the documentary approach

The documentary approach to translation provides the linguistic stimulus of the original text in the most integral mode possible for speakers of another language. The use of minimal alteration of textual form constitutes the main advantage of this

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See Wilt (2003:48)
approach. The intent is to minimize interpretations by the translator that risk misrepresenting the communicative intentions of the author.

The disadvantage derives from the same condition that provides the advantage, namely that the translator’s provision of information that would make the text more understandable to the audience is more limited than it could be. Having exegeted the original, and presumably being fluent in the target language and culture, the translator could theoretically be able to formulate the message in a more effective communication. Unfortunately, avoiding the risk of skewing the message tends to also limit the effectiveness of the communication.

In order to minimize this disadvantage, a translator can provide useful cognitive information to the audience in a paratextual apparatus. In this way the translator makes a clear distinction to the audience between the original text as it was presented by the author and the presumed cognitive information shared between the author and the audience. The “problem” of interpretation of the text remains, but in this approach the audience assumes the bulk of the responsibility of providing an interpretation rather than the translator doing so directly in the text. Ideally the reader will integrate the paratextual information with his/her reading of the original text and thereby formulate an informed interpretation.

Conceding the case that the audience could interpret the data as well as the translator, the documentary approach requires much processing effort on the part of the audience as they integrate the paratextual information with the information they see directly in the text. For some societies with minimal literary sophistication, the effort to integrate cognitive information provided in a paratextual apparatus with a text that is likely to be perceived as “foreign” and unnatural, may constitute a significant barrier to understanding. Unless the audience perceives a deep need for the message of this text, they may find the task of processing the information daunting.

6.3 A documentary translation of the Hebrew book of Zephaniah for Susu Muslims

Methodology and presentation

The following translation of Zephaniah in Susu attempts to present the Hebrew text in an integral fashion to Susu speakers unable to read the text in the original language. The footnotes provide information which can help the reader understand the meaning of the text in his/her own linguistic/cultural context.

In order to present this translation, each line of the poetic message has been written in three forms. The first form is the actual Susu text written without indentation. The second form is a semi-literal rendering of the Susu text in English which allows the reader to clearly see the structure used in Susu. The third form is a semi-literal English rendering of the Hebrew original designed for those who do not read Hebrew to compare the source text with the translation. Both the second and the third forms have been enclosed in square brackets and have been indented. The English rendering of the Hebrew has also been italicized to clearly distinguish the role of the various lines.

The footnotes in the Susu text correspond to footnotes that constitute part of the paratextual apparatus in this translation. For ease of understanding, the Susu form of the footnote has not been given, only the English translation. An asterisk in the English translation of the Susu text indicates exactly where the footnote is found in
the Susu text. The footnotes provided are not exhaustive. They serve only to give an idea of what kind of information would be contained in this part of the paratextual apparatus. Many more could be added depending on the extent to which the stakeholders want to elaborate on the meaning of the text.

Besides the footnotes, a formal introduction to the actual message of Zephaniah has been provided as part of the paratextual apparatus. It provides clear background information pertinent to the text, as well as reflections about how the message might be applicable to the Susu Muslim audience. The decision to include such an introduction is clearly based on the model of contextual frames of reference in that it attempts to provide the Susu with an understanding of the Hebrew cognitive environment, as well as a link to his/her own culture.

In keeping with the basic rationale of the documentary approach, section or chapter titles have been omitted to insure that the reader not assume that they constitute part of the original text. Special formatting might be used to include them in such a way as to note their interpretive nature, but in this project the “safer” approach was followed. Maintaining the distinction between the introduction and the text was somewhat easier since one followed the other. The actual text was enclosed in a decorative border, while the paratextual apparatus, that is both the introduction and the footnotes, was not enclosed by the decorative border.

The documentary translation of Zephaniah in Susu

Text of the Introduction to the translation of Zephaniah

Masenyi Fɔe


Alatala to Annabi Iburahima sugandi a xa batula ra, a naxa laayidi tongo a be a a xa die fama wuyade han e findi si barakatɔ ra bɔxi fanyi nde kui. A naxa gbilen na laayidi fala ra Annabi Iburahima xa di Isiyaga be a nun a xa mamadi Annabi Yaxuba be. Annabi Munsa to te e fɔxa xanbi, a naxa e bɔnsɛ ramini Misira bɔxi ma sigafe ra bɔxi nde ma Ala naxan laayidixi e be. Na ɔna nu xili «Isirayila» barima e findixi Annabi Yaxuba xa di fu nun firin bɔnsɛe ra. Ala nu bara Annabi Yaxuba xili masara «Isirayila» ra beenu a xa fɔxa.

Annabi Munsu to Isirayila ramini Misira xa konyiŋa kui, a naxa e xanin gbengberen yire sigafe ra Kanan bɔxi ma. Kira xɔn ma Alatala naxa wɔyen e be Turusinina geya fari, a fa saate xiri a tan nun e tan tagi, a a xa seriye sebe gɔmɛ walaxeba ma, a e fi Annabi Munsa ma. Na kitaabui findixi Tawureta Munsu nan na. Namiŋnɔmee nun sɛrexeduwee nu na seriye masenma Isirayila ɔna be temui birin a falafe ra e Mərige Alu nu wama e malife duniniŋgirixi kui na seriye saabui ra. Kɔnɔ Ala nu bara a xanen e be, a a xa ɔna mu luma e xa xanuntey kui Alatala mabiri na seriye rabatufu ra.

Nɛ wuyaxi dangi xanbi, Ala xa masenyi naxa kamili. Isirayila ɔna naxa gbilen Alatala xa seriye fɔxɔ ra, e fa kuyee batu e naxeex lixi Kanan bɔxi ma. E xa
Translation of the Introduction to the translation of Zephaniah

Introduction

We praise the name of God Almighty for his wonderful words which were collected in Holy Books centuries ago. These books written in the language of the Hebrews and later in the language of the Greeks form the foundation of God’s written revelation to mankind. The early prophets spoke in their own language for their own people, but God intended for that message to also be read and understood by people of all times and all places. For this reason we have attempted to translate to the best of our ability those holy words in the Susu language so that they too may receive this beautiful revelation from God. The original text in Hebrew is provided alongside the translation.

When God Almighty selected Prophet Abraham to be his follower, he promised him that his descendants would multiply to the point they would become a...
blessed nation in a good land. He repeated that promise to Prophet Abraham’s son Isaac and to his grandchild Prophet Jacob. When Prophet Moses came up after they died, he led their people out of Egypt to the land that God had promised them. That people was called «Israel» because they were the tribes of the twelve sons of Prophet Jacob. God had changed Prophet Jacob’s name to «Israel» before he died.¹³²

When the Prophet Moses led Israel out of Egyptian slavery, he took them through the desert on the way to the land of Canaan. On the road God Almighty spoke to them from on top of the Sinai mountain making a formal covenant with the people. He wrote his law on stone tablets that he gave to the Prophet Moses. That holy book was the Torah of Moses¹³⁴. Prophets and priests presented that law to the people of Israel all the time as an expression of love to the Creator who wanted their best interest, but God had said to them that his people would not remain true to him and his law.

Years later God’s prediction became reality. The people of Israel abandoned God Almighty’s law and began to worship idols that they learned about in Canaan.¹³⁵ Some of their kings led them to follow those idols, but other of their kings tried to make them worship only God Almighty and follow his will. King Josiah was one of those good kings. He did everything possible so that his people would worship God Almighty.

It is likely that the Prophet Zephaniah also helped King Josiah in that work. He preached saying that their sins would cause God to punish them. He said that if they did not turn away from that road they would be killed like the pagan nations that were around them. He also told them that God wanted to save those who were willing to obey his voice. He said God wanted to help them because of his love, but that if they did not follow him, he would lead them to destruction.

This awesome message is important for God’s people even today. In our situation, our sins are ruining us. We have much suffering in our land, because

¹³¹ A vocative title for prophets is used in the Susu translation in keeping with their tradition of using honorific titles for all prophets.

¹³² The history of the people of Israel is related to historic prophets that Susu Muslims know well.

¹³³ The proper name used to translate Sinai is «Turusina,» an Islamic rendering of the proper noun that the Susu Muslims know well.

¹³⁴ This identifies one of the four holy books mentioned in the Koran and accepted by Susu Muslims.

¹³⁵ The gravity of this sin stands out to the Susu Muslim who live next to other people groups where idolatry is quite common. They consider this the gravest sin of all, so the message of Zephaniah against idols will resonate true to the Susu.
everyone is trying to get what they want, even if it means that others will suffer.\textsuperscript{136} Money that is supposed to be used for the whole people, one person does everything so that it will be for him alone. Riches have become people’s «god» and they are abandoning God’s will, and committing sin so that they can get rich.

The Prophet Zephaniah’s advice is good for us. If we return to God Almighty, if we put our trust in him, God will care for us, he will help us in our life, and will help us in the after-life.\textsuperscript{137} May God make the voice of his holy book enter our heart so that we can be saved. Amen.\textsuperscript{138}

Note: The writing of this Prophet has been translated into Susu very carefully so the Hebrew words used in the original can be understood today. However we must remember that this was written many years ago in a context very different from our own. For this reason notes have been included to help explain what the author meant by what he said. The small letter after a word indicates that the reader should read the note at the bottom of the page marked by the same letter. Reading this note will help explain the meaning of the Prophet’s words.

Text and translations of the documentary translation of Zephaniah

\textbf{Sora}\textsuperscript{139} 1

\begin{quote}
1 Alatala xa masenyi
\quad [God Almighty’s message]
  [\textit{Word of Yahweh}]

naxan na Sofoni be,\textsuperscript{140}
\quad [that was to Zephaniah*]
  [\textit{that was to Zephaniah}]

Kusi xa di, Gedaliya xa di, Amari xa di,\textsuperscript{141}
\quad [son of Cush, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah*]
  [\textit{son of Cush, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah,}]

Esekiya xa di,\textsuperscript{142}
\quad [son of Hezekiah*]
  [\textit{son of Hezekiah}]

Yosiya xa waxati, naxan findi Amon xa di ra, Yudaya mange.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{136} This evaluation is widely held by the Susu in Guinea today.

\textsuperscript{137} Well-being both in this life and the after-life is important to the Susu.

\textsuperscript{138} Concluding a discourse with a blessing and the response of «Amina» is a natural rhetoric that matches their expectations in this kind of a communication act.

\textsuperscript{139} This chapter tells about the punishment of God upon the whole world, but especially toward the people in Judah because of their rebellion against God. Judah was the province where Jerusalem was located.

\textsuperscript{140} Zephaniah was a prophet of God sent to the people of Judah with this message.

\textsuperscript{141} Zephaniah was the son of Cush, the grand-child of Gedaliah, and the great-grand child of Amariah.

\textsuperscript{142} Some believe that Zephaniah was the great-great-grandchild of Judah’s king Hezekiah who was a famous spiritual reformer.
In the days of Josiah, son of Amon, king of Judah*

I will end everything on the earth.

I collect I end everything from the face of the ground.

Message of God Almighty.*

Oracle of Yahweh

I will end human and animal.

I end human and animal

I will end birds in the sky.

I end bird of the heavens

I will end fish in the sea.

I will cause-to-mistake and evil people.

I will take away humans from the earth.

I cut man from the face of the ground.

4 N nan n belexe italama 145 n Yudaya xili ma,

I will stretch out my hand* against Judah,

I will stretch out my hand on Judah,

and all inhabitants of Jerusalem,

and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem,

---

143 Some believe that Zephaniah delivered his prophetic message during the reign of Judah’s king Josiah, who was the son of Amon. Josiah was also a spiritual reformer.

144 This line identifies the contents of both verses 2 and 3.

145 “Stretch out the hand” is a figure of speech to indicate God’s punishment.

146 Jerusalem was the capital city of the nation called Judah.
N Bali\textsuperscript{147} bama ne, naxee luxi yi yire,  
[I will take away the Baal*, which remain in this place.]  
[I will cut from this place the remnant of Baal]  
nun kuye sèrèxèdubèe xiliki nun sèrèxèdubèe\textsuperscript{148}  
[with name of idol priests and priests,*]  
[with the name of pagan priests with priests.]  
5 nun naxee koore pama batuma banxie fari,  
[with those who worship the heavenly host on roofs,*]  
[and the worshippers on the roof to the host of the heavens,]  
nun naxee batuma e kalife Alatala ra,  
[with those who swear by God Almighty.]  
[and the worshippers-swearers to Yahweh]  
nun naxee e kalife Moloko\textsuperscript{150} ra,  
[with those who swear by Molech.]  
[and the swearers to Molech.]  
6 nun naxee bara gbilen Alatala fɔxɔ ra,  
[with those who have returned from God Almighty’s traces,]  
[and the ones turning back from behind Yahweh.]  
nun naxee mu Alatala fenma,  
[and those who do not seek God Almighty.]  
[and those who do not seek Yahweh.]  
nun naxee mu a maxɔrinma.  
[and those who do not ask him.]  
[and not inquire of him.]  
7 Wo sabari wo Marigi Alatala ya ra,\textsuperscript{151}  
[Be quiet before your Lord God Almighty.]  
[Be quiet before the face of the Lord Yahweh.]  
barima Alatala xa lɔxɔ na makɔrophe,  
[because day of God Almighty is nearing]  
[for near is the day of Yahweh.]  
barima Alatala na sèrèxè rafalafe.  
[because God Almighty is preparing a sacrifice.]  
[for Yahweh established a sacrifice.]  
A mixie rasɛntiɛn a naxee xiliki.\textsuperscript{152}  
[He has sanctified* the ones he has called.]  

\textsuperscript{147} Baal was the name of an idol worshipped in Judah. When the prophet talks about “this place” he is referring to Judah.  

\textsuperscript{148} Both the idol priests and the Jewish religious priests are included in God’s condemnation.  

\textsuperscript{149} This probably refers to the religious practice of worshipping the stars.  

\textsuperscript{150} Moloko was an idol worshipped in ancient Israel.  

\textsuperscript{151} Probably this is still God speaking about himself. This type of convention is common in Hebrew Holy Books.  

\textsuperscript{152} Here the passage has a hidden meaning. The sacrifice is not a normal sacrifice, rather it refers to God’s punishment of the unrighteous. God has not truly made them “holy” or “set them apart for a special use;” rather, he has “prepared” them for this punishment which he ironically calls a “sacrifice.”
[He has consecrated his invited ones.]

8 Alatala xa serex ḫoxe na fa,
[When God Almighty’s sacrifice day arrives,]
[And it will be on the day of Yahweh’s sacrifice,]

n kuntigie nun mange xa die ḫaxankatama ne,
[I will punish important people and the king’s children,]
[I will visit-harshly the princes and the sons of the king] nun mixi naxee ḵane xe dungie ragoroma e ma.153
[and people who put on foreigners’ clothes.*]
[and those who dress with foreign clothes.]

9 N mixie ḫaxankatama naxee tuganma banxi sode de ra,154
[I will punish those who jump over the house door entrance,*]
[I will visit-harshly those who jump over the threshold.] naxee e marigi xa banxi rafema gere nun yanfanteya ra na ḫoxe.
[those who fill their lords’ house with war and betrayal in that day.]
[in that day those who fill their lords’ house with violence and deceit,]

10 Na ḫoxe,
[That day.]
[In that day.]

Alatala xa masenyi,
[God Almighty’s message,]
[Oracle of Yahweh]

gbelegbele xui minima ne kelife Yexe Naade,155
[a scream will come from the Fish Gate,*]
[And in that day a cry will cry out from the Fish Gate]

xane xui kelife taa neene,
[a howling from the new town,]
[and a howling from the new-second.]

se bira xui kelife geyae ma.
[things-falling-sound from the hills.]
[and a great crashing from the hills.]

11 Gbelebele makiti mixie,
[Wail market people,]
[wail inhabitants of the pounding place]

barima yulee fama radundude,
[because the merchants will be silenced,]
[for all people of Canaan/merchants will be silenced.]

naxee gbeti maniyama fama bade.
[those who weigh silver will be taken away.]
[all the weighers of silver will be cut.]

12 Na waxati n Darisalamu yire birin matoma ne lanpuie ra,
[In that time I will look in all the places of Jerusalem with lamps,]

153 The essence of this gesture was the desire to be like foreigners who did not worship God Almighty.

154 The practice of jumping over the threshold is condemned because pagans did it to honor their idol gods.

155 The fish gate was a city gate in Jerusalem probably where fish were sold.
[And it will be in that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps.]

[And I will visit-harshly the men]

[who are like wine sitting on its skins,*]

[who are thickening on their dregs,]

[they say in their heart,]

[they are saying in their hearts.]«Alatala mu fe fanyi rabama, a mu fe ṣaaxi rabama.»

[God Almighty does not do good things, he does not do bad things,]

[Yahweh does not do good and he does not do bad.]

13 E xa naafuli fama tongode,

[Their wealth will be taken.]

[Their wealth will be for plunder,]

[their houses will be destroyed.]

[and their houses for destruction.]E bara banxi ti, ƙoƙo e mu sabatima na kui.

[They have built houses, but they will not dwell in them.]

[They built their houses, but they will not inhabit them.]

E bara weni sansie si, ƙoƙo e mu na weni minma.¹⁵⁷

[They planted vineyards, but they will not drink that wine.]

[And they planted vineyards, but they will not drink their wine.]

14 Alatala xa ƙoxe bara makce, a xungbe bara makce,¹⁵⁸

[God Almighty’s day has neared, the great one is near]

[Near is the day of Yahweh, the great is near,]

a na xulunfe a gbe ra.

[it is hurrying a lot.]

[the hastening is great.]

Alatala xa ƙoxe xuu ƙona.

[The sound of God Almighty’s day is harsh.]

[noise of the day of Yahweh is bitter.]

Sęnbemac fama geblegbelede.

[The strongs ones will scream.]

[Crying be there from warrior.]

15 Xọné ƙoxe na a ra,

[It is a day of wrath,]

[day of wrath is that day,]

ƙọcé nú nulaki ƙoxe,

¹⁵⁶ This image refers to people are complacent. In the process of making wine, the grape skins deposit to the bottom of the wine. The wine must be removed from the skins so it will not ruin.

¹⁵⁷ Wine was the main beverage of the Hebrew people that they drank with their meals, typically without becoming intoxicated.

¹⁵⁸ This line refers to “God’s great day” of punishment being near.
[day of suffering and distress,
[day of distress and anguish,
gbaloe nun kasare économ,  
[day of destruction and desolation,
[day of trouble and desolation,
dimi nun gban  économ,  
[day of darkness and blackness,
[day of darkness and obscurity,
nuxui nun kuye  économ.  
[day of cloud and dark sky,
[day of cloud and dark cloud,
sara xui  économ  
[The sound of war comes out that day]  
[day of trumpet]  
taa sëbëmë xili ma,  
[against the strong towns/cities,
[and shout against fortified cities,]
e yire makantaxie xili ma,  
[against their protected places,]
[and against corner towers,]

17 N fama adamatie tóò ñëdë,  
[I will cause humans to suffer,]  
[And I will distress people,]  
e fama ñëdë a á dënxuie,  
[they will walk like blind people,]  
[they will walk as blind people,]  
barima e bara yunubi raba Alatala ra.  
[because they sinned against God Almighty,]  
[because they sinned against Yahweh,]  
E wuli fama filide áb xube,  
[their blood will be poured out like dust,]  
[and their blood be poured out like dust,]  
e furi áb gbi.  
[their intestines like dung,]  
[and their bowels as dung,]  
18 E xa xëëma nun gbeti mu nòma e ratangade  
[Their gold and silver can not save them]  
[Their gold and silver can not save them]  
Alatala xa xòmë  économ ma.  
[on the day of God Almighty’s wrath,]  
[in the day of Yahweh’s anger,]  
Duni’a birin gamna nè na  économ a  naaxi ra a xa xòmë xa fe ra,

159 The idea behind walking like blind people is that of someone stumbling along because they cannot see where they are going.

160 These two lines point to the terrible death of those who disobey God. The blood and the intestines of the unrighteous will not be considered valuable and will be poured out or dumped out like dust and dung. This indicates a tragic and disastrous destruction in which people are killed in a brutal manner.
[All the world will burn horribly on that day because of his wrath.]
[And in the fire of his passion all earth will be consumed.]
Na kui a fe magaaxuxi rabama dunja mixi birin na.
[In that he will do terrifying thing with all people of the earth.]  
[For he will do terrifying thing with all people of the earth.]

Sora 2
1 Wo xa wo malan, wo xa wo malan,
[Gather yourselves, gather yourselves,]
[si naxan mu xanuxi,161]
[the nation which is not loved,]
[...undesired nation...]
2 beenu waxati xa kamali,
[before the time is fulfilled]
[before it becomes the appointed time]
na ḷerox xanxari lagi,
[that day will pass as the plant chaff]
[as chaff-pass day]
beenu Alatala xa xone ḷerox xa wo li,
[before God Almighty’s harsh anger arrives,]
[before anger anger of Yahweh comes on you]
beenu Alatala xa xone ḷerox xa fa wo ma.
[before God Almighty’s day of anger comes on you]
[before the day of Yahweh’s anger comes on you.]
3 Yiboxi mixi magoroxie birin,162
[All this land’s humble people,]
[All the humble of the land/earth,]
wo xa Alatala fen,
[you should seek God Almighty,]
[seek God Almighty,]
wo tan naxee na a xa yaamarie rabatufe,
[you who are obeying his commandments,]
[that obey his judgments/commandments,]
wo xa a xa tinxinyi fen,
[you should seek his righteousness,]
[see righteousness,]
wo xa yete magore fen,
[you should seek humility.]
[seek humility.]

—

161 The small group of righteous people are not loved or wanted by their unrighteous compatriots.

162 This refers to the poor people who lived in the land of Judah that God had given them as an inheritance.

163 The idea here is not hiding from God Almighty, something that would be impossible, but rather “to escape” or “to be protected” from God’s day of wrath.
[Perhaps because of that you can hide yourselves]
[Perhaps you will be hid]
Alatala xa xανε lɔɔxα ma.
[on the day of God Almighty’s anger.]
[in the day of anger of Yahweh.]
4 Gasa bεnɪnma nε, 164
[Gaza will be abandoned.]
[For Gaza will be abandoned.]
Asikalɔn kanama nε,
[Ashkelon will be desolate.]
[and Ashkelon will be desolate.]
Asidodi kerima nα nα yαngi tαgι,
[Ashdod will be driven out at noon.]
[Ashdod, they will drive her out at noon.]
Ekiron talama nε. 165
[Ekron will be uprooted.]
[and Ekron will be uprooted.]
5 Naxankɛ na wɔ bɛ,
[Punishment is for you,]
[Woe…]
wo tαn nαxɛɛ sabatixi baa 166 dɛ rα,
[you who are settled along the sea coast,]
[inhabitants of coast of sea,]
wo tαn Kιrɛt mixie. 167
[you Crete people.]
[nation of Crete.]
Alatala xa masenyi na wɔ xili ma,
[God Almighty’s word is against you,]
[Word of Yahweh is against you,]
Kanaan, Filisita bɔxɪ ma, 168
[Canaanites who are in the land of Philistine.]
[Canaan land of Philistine.]
n wɔ xunnaakanama nɛ hαn mixi bɪrɪn nɔn wɔ yɪ.
[I will defeat you till you have no more people left.]
[I will destroy from you any inhabitant.]

164 This begins a description of what God will do to the enemies of Judah. He first deals with the Philistines, who lived mainly in the four cities to be mentioned.

165 These four proper names refer to the main cities of the Philistines who were the main enemies of Israel. They were called: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron. The prophet is declaring the divine punishment of the inhabitants of these four cities, and by extension the whole Philistine people.

166 The Philistines lived along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the West of the country of Israel.

167 The Philistines are called Cretans because they originally came from the island of Crete in the Mediterranean Sea to the west of their present location.

168 Canaan was the generic name of the entire region, while Philistia was the western area of Canaan where the Philistines lived.
6 Baa de ra findima xurusee xa fiili ma,\(^{169}\)
   [The sea coast will be the pasture of domesticated animals*,]
   [the sea coast will be pastures,]
a nun xuruse de madonie xa kolonye nun goore.
   [and wells for shepherds and sheep pens.]
   [wells of shepherds and sheep pens.]

7 Na boxi findima Yudayaka mixi donxace nan gbe ra,
   [That land will belong to the last inhabitants of Judah.]
   [The coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah.]
e fama e xa xurusee de madonde naa.
   [they will pasture their domesticated animals there.]
   [they will pasture on them.]
Nunmare temui e e malabuma ne Asikalon banxie kui,\(^{170}\)
   [In the evening they will rest in the houses of Ashelon,*]
   [in the houses of Ashelon they will lie down in the evening.]
barima e Marigi Alatala fama e malide,
   [because their Lord God Almighty will come to help them.]
   [for Yahweh their God will visit them,]
a e xa mixi suxuxie ragbilenma ne.\(^{171}\)
   [and he will return their people.*]
   [and return their exiles.]

8 N bara Mowabakae xa konbie me,\(^{172}\)
   [I have heard the insults of the Moabites.]
   [I have heard the taunt of Moab,]
a nun Amonikae xa woyen be旭die.
   [and the blasphemous words of the Amonites.]
   [and the reviling words of the sons of Amon.]
E bara n ma nama konbi,
   [They have insulted my people.]
   [They have taunted my people,]
e bara dangi e xa boxi naaninyi ra.
   [they have crossed their land border.]
   [and they rise up against their boundary.]

9 Na kui, n bara n kali,
   [Because of that, I swear.]
   [Therefore I swear.]
Alatala Nama Manga xa masenyi, Isirayila Marigi Ala,
   [God Almighty King of Hosts’ word, Lord God of Israel,]
   [Oracle of Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel,]
Mowaba boxi luma ne alo Sodoma,\(^{173}\)

\(^{169}\) The statement indicates that their land along the Mediterranean coast will become uninhabited by people and will serve only as pasture lands for animals.

\(^{170}\) These were the houses that they had appropriated from their enemies.

\(^{171}\) This indicates that God will return the people of Judah from their exile to their own land.

\(^{172}\) This section begins the description of what God will do to Judah’s enemies to the east in the lands of the Moabites and the Ammonites.
[the land of Moab will be like Sodom,]
[the land of Moab will be as Sodom,]
Amoni xa die xa bɔxi luma alo Gomora,
[Amon’s sons’ land will be like Gomorrah,
and sons of Amon as Gomorrah.]
ŋooge ŋaaxi nun fɔxe yili nun kasare abadan.
[nettles and salt holes and desolation forever.]  
[possession of grass and pit of salt and desolation forever.]
N ma ˈama naxa luksi, e harige bama ɲɛ e yĩ,  
[My people who remain, they will take away their possessions.]  
[The remnant of my people will pillage them,]
e xa bɔxi findima ɲɛ n ma si naxa luksi gbe ra.  
[their land will belong to the remnant of my nation,*]
[the remnant of my nation will possess them.]
10 E na sɔtɔma e yetɛ igboŋa nan ma,  
[They will receive that because of their arrogance,]
[This to them for their arrogance,]
barima E bara Alatala ˈNama Mangɛ xa ˈama konbi,  
[because they insulted God Almighty Hosts King’s people,]
[for they insulted the Yahweh of Hosts’ people,]
e bara te a xa ˈama xili ma.  
[They rose up against his people.]
[they rose up against his people.]  
11 E xa gaaxu Alatala ya ra,  
[They should fear God Almighty,]
[Fearing of Yahweh (be) to them,]
barima a alae birin kanama ɲɛ dunjo ma,  
[He will destroy all the gods of the earth,]
[He will destroy all the gods of the earth,]
si birin fa Alatala batu e xɔnyi.  
[and then all the nations will worship God Almighty in their place.]  
[and men in their own place will bow down to him, all the coasts of nations.]
12 Wo tan fan Kusikae.  

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173 The founding ancestor of the Moabites was conceived by Lot as he escaped Sodom. (Genesis 19:30-38) God burned Sodom with fire from heaven as a punishment for the people’s sins.

174 This remnant of God’s people were those who were saved from exile because of God’s mercy.

175 This single verse describes the divine punishment against Judah’s enemies to the south.
[You also Cushites.*]
[Also you Cushites.]

E sōntama në n ma sāntidegma ra.
[They will be killed with my sword.]
[they will be killed with my sword.]

13 A la a belexe italama në kəṣla ma, ¹⁷⁶
[God stretched out his hand to the north,*]
[He stretched out his hand against the north,]

a fa Asiriya sōnto.
[he then killed Assyria.] ¹⁷⁷
[and he destroyed Assyria.]

A Ninewe ¹⁷⁷ xunnakanama nê,
[He defeated Ninevah,]
[And he put Ninevah to destruction,]

a na findi gbengberen yire ra.
[he made it desert.]
[dry as desert.]

14 Xurseey nun sube məli birin sama mənni tagi. ¹⁷⁸
[Domesticated animals and all kinds of animals will lie in the middle there.*]
[And flocks lie down in her midst, and all animals of nation.]

Yube nun xundi fan kə radangima na banxi kanaxie fari.
[Vulture and owl also pass the night on those ruined houses.]
[even vulture even owl pass the night on her capitals.]

E bətti bama ¹⁷⁹ naadee nun wunderie kanaxie fari,
[They sing religious songs on the ruined doors and windows,]
[voice sings on the window destruction on threshold,]

naxee xa wuri bara borō.
[whose wood is rotten.]
[for cedar destroyed.]

15 Yi taa xungbe nu luma Ṽəlexin na,
[This great city lived in happiness,]
[This joyous city inhabited]

a bənə nu sama,
[her liver was in peace.]
[in security.]

a nu falama a yêbe,
[ she said to herself.]
[ she said in her heart.]

«N keren nan tide gbo.»

¹⁷⁶ This final section in chapter 2 describes the divine punishment against the Assyrians who were Judah’s enemies to the north.

¹⁷⁷ Ninevah was the capital of Assyria, the major world power of that time.

¹⁷⁸ This indicates a situation in which there are few people remaining and the animals are living among the ruins of the cities.

¹⁷⁹ While animals can not sing religious songs like humans do, the fact that these animals had taken over the ruins of Judah’s enemies’ capital city was a type of “praise” to God.
[I alone am important.]
[I and nothing forever.]

A xun bara rakana di,
[How has her head has been destroyed,]
[How has she become destroyed,]

a fa findi wulai subee xøni ra?
[and become a place for wild animals?]
[a resting place to all animals passing on her?]

A xui ramini, a a belexe lintan.
[God Almighty gave the signal for her to be destroyed!*]

Sora 3
1 Naxankate na taa matandila seniyentare be,
[Punishment is for the rebellious unholy city,]
[Woe to the rebelling and defiled city]

naxan luma mixi tɔɔɔ ra.
[who continues to oppress people.]
[oppressing.]

2 A mu xui suxuma,
[She does not obey voice,]
[she does not obey the voice,]

a mu marasi rabatuma,
[she does not follow advice,]
[she does not receive the admonition,]

a mu a xøili tima Alatala ra,
[she does not put her confidence in God Almighty,]
[in Yahweh she does not trust,]

a mu makɔʁe Ala ra.
[she does not approach him.]
[to God she does not draw near.]

3 A xa kuntigie findixi yɛtɛe nan na,
[Her important men are lions]
[Her chiefs are lions]

naxee e xui raminima a ya ra,
[who make their voice come out before her.]

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180 It is not clear in the text who is doing these two actions or for what reason. Scholars suggest two possible meanings: One is that people whistle and gesture in amazement when they see the destruction of such a powerful city. The other is that God is whistling and gesturing for the soldiers to come and destroy the city.

181 This refers to the city of Jerusalem, the capital of the Jews. In this section God explains why they will be punished.

182 The voice here refers to the voice of God.

183 The advice here refers to the advice of God.

184 This refers to the important men of Jerusalem.
The fact that they do not tear the meat in the morning indicates that they do it immediately in the evening time when they catch their prey. This emphasizes the evil nature of the judges.

The priests had holy garments and holy utensils that they used every day. Their ungodly life style made their holy actions unpleasing to God.

This refers to God.
[Their cities are all devastated, there are no people, no people live there.]
[their cities are laid waste from any men, no inhabitant.]

7 N nu bara a fala, 188
[I said, *]
[I said.]«Wo 189 gaaxuma n ya ra,
[You will fear before me.]
[Surely you will fear me.]
wo n ma marasi suxuma,
[you will accept my advice,]
[you will accept correction.] a xɔnyi xun mu rakanama n ma xεερε saabui ra.» 190
[you will not be defeated by my sent ones.*]
[and her dwelling will not be cut by all that I visit on her.]
Kɔnɔ e 191 keli subaxa, e fe naaxie raba.
[But they rose early in the morning, they did evil deeds.]
[Surely they rise up early, they pervert all their deeds.]
8 Na nan na ki, wo 192 mamɛ ti n bɛ,
[That is why, you wait for me,]
[Therefore wait for me.] Alatala xa masenyi
[This is the message of God Almighty.*]
[Oracle of Yahweh]
lɔɔxe be n tima seedɛɛxɔna rabade,
[for the day I stand to make testimony,]
[for the day I stand to testify.]
barima n bara nate tongo sie 193 malande,
[because I have decided to gather the nations,]
[For I have decided to gather the nations,]
a nun mangyæ malande alako n xa n ma xoɛɛ xoɔɛɛ danke filide e ma,
[and to gather the kingdoms so that I can pour on them the curse of my harsh anger,]
[to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them my curse of all my anger anger,]
barima n ma xoɛɛ te xa duniŋa rajɔŋ,

188 God was speaking to the people.
189 God is probably talking to the people of the pagan “nations” that he mentions in verse 6, but he might be including the people of Judah as well.
190 Here God is not predicting what they will do; rather, he is telling them that if they act righteously their city will not be destroyed.
191 This refers to the people of the pagan “nations” that God spoke to in the beginning of the verse.
192 Here God is speaking to the Jews again, and he tells them how he will punish all the pagan nations.
193 In the Jewish prophets’ writings the term “nations” refers to all nations other than themselves. Since they believed themselves to be the only nation following God, they assumed that all other nations were pagan nations worshipping false gods and idols. This applies to the “kingdoms” mentioned in this verse also.
[because the fire of my anger must end the world,]
[for by fire of my passion earth will be consumed,]
9 barima n fama sie de kiri rasniyënde,
[because I will purify the lips of the nations,]
[For then I will change peoples to have faultless lips,]
alako e birin xa xili ti Alatala xili ra,
[so that they all will call by the name of God Almighty,]
[to call all of them in the name of Yahweh,]
e birin xa a rabatu tunke keren na.  
[and they all will worship him with one shoulder.]
[serve him one shoulder.]
10 Kelife yire makuye dangife Kusi xuree ra,
[From a distant place across the rivers of Cush,]
[from across rivers of Cush]
n ma di ginmae yensenxi naxee n maxandima,  
[my daughters who pray to me, they worshippers will bring sacrifices to me.]
[my dispersed suppliant daughters will bring offerings.]
11 Na lxâse wo  
[In that day you will not know shame anymore for your deeds,]
[In that day you will not be shamed for your deeds,]
wo fe  
[the evil deeds you did to me in rebellion,]
[that you rebelled to me,]
barima n yete igboee bama wo ya ma,
[because I will take out the arrogant from among you,]
[for I will turn from your midst your people exulting in pride,]
alako wo naxa lu wo yete igboâa kui n ma geya seniyëxi fari.
[so you will not remain in your arrogance on my holy mountain,]
[and you will not continue to be haughty again in my holy mountain.]
12 N tɔɔmixinjëe nun mixi magoroxi luma wo ya ma,
[I will leave poor and humble people among you,]
[And I will leave in your midst a humble and meek people,]
naxee xaxili tima Alatala ra.
[who put their confidence in God Almighty.]
[and they will refuge in the name of Yahweh.]
13 Isiraiyla đonxâe  
[The rest of Israel will not do evil deeds again,]
[Rest of Israel will not do evil,]

194 The Hebrew figure of speech of serving God “with one shoulder” means to serve him in unity.
195 The Hebrew texts here uses the term “daughters” to refer to Jewish cities whose people were faithful to God in their exile.
196 Here God is speaking to his people, the people of Israel.
197 This mountain refers to the mountain that God’s holy temple was built on in the city of Jerusalem.
198 This refers to the Jews that survived the destruction of their land and the exile as their punishment from God. They returned to Israel, rebuilt the temple and the city of Jerusalem.
e mu wule falama,
[they will not speak lies,]
[and they will not speak lies,]
madaxu wọnyi e mu toma e de kui.
[deceiving words will not be found in their mouth.]
[and a tongue of deceit will not be found in their mouth.]
E e de madonna, e e sama gaaxu xanbi.\(^{199}\)
[They will pasture, they will lie down without fear.*]
[For they will graze and they will lie down.]
14 Siyon di ginëmae\(^{200}\). wo xa wo xui ite sëwë kui,
[Daughters of Zion, you should raise your voice in joy.]
[Daughter of Zion, shout with joy]
wo xa wo xui ite,
[shout]
[shout,]
wo xa pëlexin, wo xa sëwa wo sondonyi birin na.
[be happy, be glad with all your heart.]
[rejoice and be glad with all heart.]
15 Alatala xa xọne bara gbilen wo fëxọ ra,
[God Almighty's wrath has turned away from you.]
[Yahweh turned away your judgment.]
a bara wo yaxuie ragbilen wo fëxọ ra.
[he returned your enemies away from you.]
[he turned aside your enemy.]
Isirayila Mange findixi Alatala nan na.
[The King God Almighty of Israel has remained in your midst.*]
[The King of Israel is Yahweh.]
A na wo tagi, wo naxa gaaxu sɔnɔn.
[He is in your midst, do not fear anymore.]
[You will not fear evil ever.]
16 Na lɔxọ a a falama Darisalamu be,
[In that day he will say to Jerusalem.]
[In that day he will say to Jerusalem.]
«Siyon,\(^{201}\) wo naxa gaaxu,
[Zion,* do not fear.]
[Fear not Zion,]
wo naxa a lu e xa wo pëlexëe ragoro.\(^{202}\)
[Do not let them descend your hands.*]
[Let them not drop your hands.]

\(^{199}\) The metaphor shows how God's people are like "sheep" with plenty to eat because their "Divine Shepherd" provides abundantly for their needs.

\(^{200}\) Zion is the name of the hill on which the temple of God was built. It is in Jerusalem. When the Jewish prophets say “daughter of Zion” they are not referring exclusively to younger females in Zion, but they are referring to the entire population of Jerusalem including the surrounding villages.

\(^{201}\) This refers to the people living in Jerusalem since Zion is the "holy mountain" of God in Jerusalem.

\(^{202}\) The Hebrew metaphor of "dropped hands" means to give up or lose courage.
17 Wo Marigi Alatala na wo ya ma,
    [Your Lord God Almighty is among you,]
    [Yahweh your God is in your midst]
wo Rakisima Senbema.
    [your Saviour Strong One,]
    [the saving warrior,]
A wo madunduma a xa xanunteya ra,
    [he consoles you with his love,]
    [he consoles you with his love,]
a seewama ne wo xa fe ra seewe xui ra,
    [He rejoices over you with sound of joy,]
    [He rejoices over you with sound of joy,]
18 N mixie bama wo ya ma
    [I will take people away from among you]
    [I will remove from among you]
naxee sunnuxi na waxati xa fe ra,203
    [who are sad about that time,]
    [grieving of the appointed time]
naxee findixi yaagi ra.
    [who are a shame,]
    [who are a burden shame,]
19 A mato, n naxan nabama mixie ra na laxoe naxee wo toso.
    [Look, what I will do with the people that day who oppressed,]
    [Behold what I will do on that day with those who oppressed you,]
N mixie rakisima naxee mu nerema a fanyi ra,204
    [I will save the ones not walking well,]
    [and I will save those limping,]
n mixi kerixi ragbilenma ne e xonyi.
    [I will return those chased away,]
    [and those scattered I will gather,]
N e xa yaagi poxoma matoxe nun binye ra yire birin dunija ma.
    [I will replace their shame with praise and honor everywhere on the earth,]
    [I will put their shame to praise and a name in all the earth,]
20 Na laxoe n wo ragbilenma ne.
    [In that day I will return you,]
    [In that time I will bring you,]
N wo malanma ne alako n xa a niya wo xa matoxe nun binye soxo,
    [I will gather you so that I can make you receive praise and honor,]
    [and in time I will gather you for I give you a name and praise,]
dunija namane birin kui,
    [in all the territories of the earth,]
    [among all the peoples of the earth,]
wo ragblenfe ra kelife wo xa suxui kui wo ya xori.
    [returning you from your captivity before your eyes,]
    [returning your captivity to your eyes,]

203 The time refers to the divine judgment.
204 This indicates the people who were suffering.
Alatala bara wọyẹn.
[God Almighty has spoken.]
[Says Yahweh.]
7 - An instrumental translation of Zephaniah in Susu

In the last chapter this research proposed one method of translating the book of Zephaniah for Susu Muslims in which the form of the source text was maintained and contextual considerations were included in the paratextual apparatus. In this chapter the research juxtaposes that “documentary approach” with an “instrumental approach.”

Nord describes this communicative approach as a translation “intended to serve as a communicative instrument in its own right, fulfilling the same or a similar function [as that of the source text] for a particular target-culture readership or a general-target language audience.”

Given the need for the target culture to share a cognitive environment with the source culture in order for good communication to occur, this approach tends “to explicate the amount of pre-supposed information that is only implicitly given in the source-text, thus making the referential function work for the target audience.”

Theological implications and evaluations of such a translation approach lie beyond the scope of this present research. Methodology in translation can be greatly effected by organizational perspectives on the nature of the text that is being translated and what kind of translation is in fact desired by those commissioning the task (Wendland 2008:68-91). The fact that the project stakeholders consider the writing of Zephaniah as inspired of God, coupled with various perspectives on how such divine literature should be translated, will in part determine whether they consider this contextualized instrumental translation as a valid approach.

Whether a Bible translator approves of this approach or not as a proper way to translate Holy Scripture, he/she must find someway to address the communicational issues in question so that the transfer of the message can take place effectively. This research does not argue that the divide of contextual frames of reference must be bridged in a particular manner; it argues that the divide must be bridged and offers one example of how that might be done.

7.1 The role of contextual frames of reference in translation

Wendland’s model of “contextual frames of reference” syncs well with his “literary-rhetorical approach.” He describes this approach as two basic phases. First, “it offers certain analytical techniques intended to help translators understand the literary and rhetorical nature of the Scriptures more correctly and completely.” (Wendland 2004:14) Secondly, “it suggests various ways in which the biblical text may be recomposed using an appropriate L-R style within the diverse and disparate context of another language-culture, verbal tradition, and situational setting.” (Wendland 2004:14) These two tasks of translation stem from the reality of contextual frames of reference.

Successful communication operates within a context where participants share a cognitive environment and a repertoire of communication devices. They use these

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206 Ibid., p. 140.
frames of reference to decode and encode messages efficiently. While operating within these natural linguistic-cultural constraints, they not only succeed in understanding each other, but they are also able to be highly effective in their communication, i.e. persuasive, entertaining, clear, etc.

Translation takes a message from one linguistic-cultural context and presents it in a different linguistic-cultural context. For this translation to have the same effect and communicate the same message in a different cultural context, the message must undergo various modifications. These modifications vary in nature. On the more simple end of the spectrum, one may find surface structure lexical and grammatical modifications. At the more complex level, modifications deal with cognitive issues like background information, rhetorical-discourse devices, and argumentation strategies.

Role of the organizational frame of reference

The contextual frame of reference model underlines the important role of the organizational entity and/or translator who undertakes a translation project. (Wendland 2008:77) Their core values, their translation theory, and their specific skopos of the translation in question determine in large part the direction of the translated text as well as how that translation will be presented to the audience.

As also in the case of a documentary translation, one critical core value of the Susu translation project in question revolves around the theological presupposition that the text of Zephaniah constitutes a divinely inspired portion of the Judeo-Christian canon. This presupposition enforces certain limits as to how much the translation can deviate from the actual Hebrew text. Clearly the language used in the communication can be altered, otherwise translation would not even be possible, but the alterations must respect the assumed divine authorship and hence the illegitimacy of any form of human manipulation which would alter the presumed intended meaning of the original text. Perhaps any translator of any material should abide by a similar ethic, but in the case of literature which is recognized by the translator and his/her audience as “divinely inspired”, the issue becomes that much more important.

At the same time another critical core value seriously impacts the translation theory adopted by the project. Not only do the stakeholders maintain that the original was divinely inspired, they also maintain that the purpose of the original text was to provide to all cultures and generations a revelation of God’s will for mankind. This core value serves as the principal motivation behind the project. The impetus to make the text understood to all peoples in essence defines in part the skopos of the project.

207 Some would argue that this goal is too lofty and that in essence true translation is impossible in that the “same message” is never exactly communicated in the transfer. (Wilt 2003:7-9) While understanding the limitations of understanding the original properly and encoding it into another language successfully, as a translator one must “aim” for sameness of message. He/she can only bear the title of “translator” if there is a reasonable possibility of success in this goal. Dogmatism of course is inappropriate, but extreme negativism in this area is equally unhelpful.

208 See Wilt (2003:48)

209 The reader will note that the “role of the organizational frame of reference” is the same as that of the “documentary approach” that was presented in the previous chapter. The reason for this is that the
Mojola and Wendland cite the work of Nord with regards to her *Skopostheorie* in which she argues that besides focusing on translating the meaning of a text, the translator should carefully understand the function/purpose of the translation in a given context, and determine certain aspects of the translation accordingly (in Wilt 2003:14). All types of translations, whether they be documentary or instrumental, should serve their given purpose. For this reason de Vries and others argue for the creation of a “translation brief” in translation projects, which in addition to other things, “explicitly sets forth information concerning the primary communicative goal of the translation”. (Wendland 2008:71)

In light of these considerations the *skopos* of the Susu translation project could be stated as follows:

Provide a translation of the Judeo-Christian scriptures that could be easily understood by Susu Muslims with limited or no understanding of Jewish-Christian theology and history. The translation on its own should accurately communicate, to the best of the translators’ ability, the meaning of the original text as understood by the majority of Biblical scholars. Everything possible should be done to enhance the acceptability of this translation by the Susu audience without compromising ethical or doctrinal values.

While this statement does not provide all the details of the project, the principles expressed should be a key element in the decision making process about those details. Some translation guidelines, for example, that this *skopos* would dictate are as follows:

- Lexical and grammatical choices should serve to translate primarily the meaning and impact of the text as opposed to the merely literal form of the text. The formal features of the original grammar and syntax should be followed when it does not hamper the understanding or the rhetorical impact of the passage.

- Figures of speech in the Hebrew text should be either explained in Susu or changed to analogous Susu figures of speech.

- Implied cultural and background information readily accessible to the original audience but inaccessible to the Susu audience, should be made explicit in the translation when its absence would hamper the understanding or the rhetorical impact of the passage.

Organizational presuppositions and purposes are the same in both cases. What differs is the following *skopos* and translation guidelines for the two methodologies.
When the original text is not fully understandable, an exegetical interpretation of the passage should be preferred over a nonsensical or unintelligible rendering.

Susu discourse considerations should be followed to ensure the clarity and the persuasive impact of the text.

Much discussion would be needed to clarify all of the details of every given passage and communicative situation involved in translating Zephaniah into Susu, but these are offered as some of the key directives of the project.

**Content choices to enhance acceptability**

In an attempt to ensure the acceptance of this translation by the Susu people, those responsible for the project need to consider the way the Susu perceive the task of transferring ancient holy texts into modern languages. Harleem clarifies the orthodox Muslim perspective in these words:

The Qur’an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic. Theologically, it is the Arabic version that is considered the true Qur’an, the direct word of God, and read in acts of worship. No translation is considered to be the Qur’an, or word of God as such, and none has the same status as the Arabic. Translations are considered by Muslims merely as renderings of meanings of the Qur’an. (2011:8)

In reality Muslims, in their desire that their Holy Scriptures be read by non-Arabic speakers, do in fact translate the Qur’an. Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali in his preface to The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an, says “Almost all languages spoken by Muslims have translations of the Qur’an in them. Usually the Text is printed with the Translation.” (1992:xix)

He goes on to explain the importance of these translations with an interesting distinction between “form and meaning.”

The ambition of every Muslim is to read the sounds of the Arabic Text. I wish that his or her ambition were also to understand the Qur’an, either in the Arabic or in the mother-tongue or some well-developed tongue which he or she understands. Hence the need for good and accurate translations. (Ali 1992:xix)

Theologically one can argue for or against the intrinsic value of pronouncing the original words of a holy text that one may or may not understand. However, there can be no question from a Muslim perspective or from a Judeo-Christian perspective that understanding the meaning of a text plays a critical role in developing spirituality by giving insight to the divine revelation.

While Muslims argue that only the Arabic version constitutes the authoritative text, translations have been produced in many major European, African, and Asian languages. Typically these translations have been called “interpretations” or “the true meaning” of the Qur’an. This terminology exemplifies a tension between considering the Arabic text as the “true Qur’an” and any given translation as a “mere interpretation”. Ali, for example, refers to Pickthall’s translation of the Qur’an as a

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210 The Islamic doctrine of *tanzil* emphasizes that the Qur’an descended from heaven in its present Arabic form. This “holiness” explains for Muslims the impossibility of a perfect translation (Coward 1988:99)
literal translation and says that “it can hardly be expected that it can give an adequate idea of a Book which (in his own words) can be described as ‘that inimitable symphony the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy.’” (1992:xx) With this somewhat negative evaluation of Pickthall’s translation, which they both would almost consider inevitable given the sublime nature of the original, he goes on to explain the impetus behind his own translation work. He says, “Perhaps the attempt to catch something of that symphony in another language is impossible. Greatly daring, I have made that attempt. We do not blame an artist who tries to catch in his picture something of the glorious light of a spring landscape.” (Ali 1992:xx)

While Ali’s evaluation of his translation effort may be somewhat discrediting, no doubt in an effort to praise the nature of his Holy Text, in reality his noble effort accomplishes the communicative purpose of portraying the content of the Qur’an. Muslims, Jews, and Christians can all rightly say that capturing every single nuance of the original surpasses the ability of the most able translator. Translation theorists may even argue the theoretical impossibility of such a task. But the reality remains that religious devotees communicate the contents of their divine revelation to peoples of other languages; diplomatic interpreters aid world leaders to understand each other and develop treaties; tribunal interpreters represent the cause of their clients in a pursuit of justice; and journalists employ interpreters and translators every day to communicate to the masses the unfolding events of the world.

In reality, the Judeo-Christian perspective on the translations of Holy Scriptures concurs with the Muslim position in that both recognize that any given translation can make mistakes and fails to perfectly convey the complete meaning of the original. Even in Judeo-Christian circles only the original text constitutes absolute scriptural authority. Translators speak of their “attempt” to understand the original correctly and communicate it in the target language adequately.

Perhaps the utility of this discussion lies in the need for Jews and Christians “to connect” with their Muslim audience in their translation projects by underlining their common position. The Susu translators propose to do this in three ways. First, they intend to present the instrumental translation in a diglot format with the Hebrew text in one column and the Susu text in the other. This presentation underlines the authoritative nature of the Hebrew text, while giving the “meaning” in the other column. Second, they propose to use the Muslim traditional convention of entitling the work as “The Meaning of the Holy Book of Zephaniah.” Finally, they will explain the nuance of this title in the introduction of the book.211

Paralinguistic choices to enhance acceptability

When producing a publication such as “The Meaning of the Book of Zephaniah,” both with a documentary and instrumental approach, formatting issues as well as content issues need to be taken into consideration. As Wendland pointed out years ago in his book Graphic Design and Bible Reading, “Formatting is part of semantics and therefore part of meaningful translation.” (1993:4) The subject of publication goes somewhat beyond the scope of this research, but it needs to at least

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211 The same things could be done in a documentary translation, but the final explanation given in the introduction would be different.
be mentioned in so much as it refers to the cognitive environment principle which is so critical in the contextual frame of reference model.

Before a Muslim audience analyses the content of a so-called “Holy Book”, they carefully observe the physical formatting. They filter their observations through their cultural grid, which provides them with some key information. The overall presentation of the book, including the quality of the cover, the binding, and the aesthetic presentation of the artwork, all play a part in evaluating whether or not this book is worthy to be read. In Brad Williams’ discussion of these issues, he states, “A high quality publication underlines the importance of the document, and according to the cognitive environment of our Muslim friends, may be more coherent with the nature of the text.” (2006:23:2:71)

When they open the book, the layout of the text jumps to their eye with the bold affirmation that the text is either “divine” or “secular”. The presence of an elegant border around the text makes the affirmation that this portion is sacred or divinely inspired. At this point a Susu knows whether he is holding a kitaabui (“Holy Book”) or a buki (“book”, i.e. a human book). Williams explains, “A key principle found in the Muslim’s ‘cognitive environment’ aims at the protection of the special status of the actual inspired text, as opposed to material authored by humans.” (2006:23:2:69) A layout with borders around the Biblical text and no borders around the extra-textual material (e.g. footnotes, introductions, glossary, etc.) builds on the Muslim cognitive environment to make a firm affirmation of the nature of the book.

Perhaps the most powerful paralinguistic choice to enhance acceptability of a religious publication among Susu Muslims lies in the choice of orthography. As Muslims, the Susu have been introduced to the Arabic script and a majority of the men are able to read the Qur’an, though they do not actually understand the meaning of the words that they are pronouncing. Over the years they have adapted the Arabic script to write their own Susu language and use those conventions widely in the personal communications.

Of course the key characteristic of the Arabic script in the Muslim mindset lies in the belief that God used this script to reveal his will to the prophet Muhammad and the world. This detail makes the script extremely prestigious for religious communication in general. Adoption of this convention would greatly enhance the prestige of a translated Holy Book. Decker and Injiiru account for this prestigious convention with these words: “In essence, it is God’s font; God writes from right to left.” (2012:29:2:77)

Presenting “The Meaning of the Book of Zephaniah” in Arabic script would accomplish two things. First, the issue of widespread illiteracy in the Roman script would be overcome for the majority of the older male population who are literate in Arabic script. Second, the presentation of a kitaabui with borders around the holy text, appropriate artwork, and a text in Arabic script, would automatically convey the message that this text is a spiritually important publication that should be read.

7.2 Advantages and disadvantages of the instrumental approach

While the documentary approach to translation provides the linguistic stimulus of the original text in the most integral mode possible, the instrumental approach focuses on the receptor audience. The emphasis shifts from “what was said,” to “what will be understood.” In this process the translator interprets and repackages the message with a constant concern that the audience understands and appreciates the message in their own context.
The primary disadvantage of this approach lies in the inevitable uncertainty that plagues a translator who is dealing with an ancient text far removed from his own context. The modern translator can never be completely sure of the cognitive environment or the communicational intent of the original author. Despite thorough exegesis and a solid understanding of background information pertaining to the document being translated, a degree of uncertainty inevitably remains. The attempt to incorporate the ancient background of the original cognitive environment of the author into the translated text puts the translator at risk of adding incorrect communicational information to a document that will be taken by the target audience as the “word of God.”

The instrumental-approach translator will no doubt seek to minimize this risk with thorough exegesis and research, but given the nature of human knowledge, the “risk” will always remain. Perhaps the only justification for running this risk lies in the higher probability that the audience will understand the message presented and be impacted by it. While this justification is certainly noble, one must question whether the end justifies the means. The documentary-approach translator takes the safer approach, while attempting to provide necessary information for an adequate understanding in the paratextual apparatus.

Another disadvantage with the instrumental approach stems from the inclusion of information known by the original audience but unknown by the modern audience. While this information helps the modern audience to understand, it also potentially raises the question of why such information would be in a document that was written for people who would have automatically known these things and not needed that it be made explicit. The inclusion could seem odd to the critical modern reader, not because the reader would not benefit from the information, but because he or she might postulate that giving the information in the text would not have been necessary for the original audience.

Following the instrumental approach raises the issue of how to include background information necessary to the modern reader in such a way as to not make the inclusion of the information seem awkward, or worse yet, to in some way alter the focus or the flow of the pericope.

The major advantage of the instrumental approach regards the ease with which the message translates into the context of the target audience. Having taken their cognitive environment into consideration during the translation process, the text naturally appears to have been composed for their assimilation. The need for extra-textual communication is reduced and the reader finds himself/herself in a much better position to understand and apply the message. The goal was for the author to communicate to all audiences; the translated text following the instrumental approach, becomes the means to that end.  

212 During a series of informal interviews in which passages from the documentary translation and the instrumental translation were read to several Susu Muslims, someone said, Most people made some sort of comment on the importance of being able to understand a translation for it to be functional. Someone said, “Simple people do not understand ‘heavy’ words. They need an explanation; it is like a dictionary that helps people to understand. The translator becomes a messenger.” Relating to his experience with the Qur’an, another person said, “I know Arabic, but when I read the Qur’an, it is really complicated and hard to understand. When I read this translation [a pericope using the instrumental approach], it is easy to understand exactly what it means.”
7.3 An instrumental translation of the Hebrew book of Zephaniah for Susu Muslims

Methodology and presentation

The following translation of Zephaniah in Susu attempts to incorporate the information gleaned from both the rhetorical and textual frames of reference exhibited in the source and target language-cultures to provide a translation that will convey the same message in an effective and powerful manner. Information from the Hebrew context was used to “understand” the message, and information from the Susu context was used to “recompose” the message in the closest functionally equivalent manner.

In order to present this translation along with the underlying rationale, each line of the poetic message has been written in three forms. The first form is the actual Susu text written without indentation. The second form is a semi-literal rendering of the Susu text in English which allows the reader to clearly see the structure used in Susu. The third form is a semi-literal English rendering of the Hebrew original designed for those who do not read Hebrew to compare the source text with the translation. Both the second and the third forms have been enclosed in square brackets and have been indented. The English rendering of the Hebrew has also been italicized to clearly distinguish the role of the various lines.

Italics have been used in the Susu text to clearly indicate notions that have been added in the translation. The rationale for these additions is provided in the footnotes. These should be read to better understand the translation decisions made. Other footnotes explain aspects of the translation that may not be clear to people unfamiliar with the Susu language-culture. The footnotes in this section serve to clarify the rationale behind the translation. They do not constitute a part of the actual Susu translation. Note that an asterisk has been provided in the English translation of the Susu text to note where the footnote regarding the Susu text is located.

One should know that the absence of footnotes in this Susu translation represents a decision partially based on an analysis of the Susu context. Susu communication is typically oral, and therefore the use of footnotes constitutes a foreign concept for the Susu. They process messages orally, without relying on a written format that provides “extra” information regarding a part of the message.

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through the convention of a footnote. Such information provided within the context of the discourse itself allows the communication to be more natural and effective.\textsuperscript{213}

A related issue deals with the role of a formal introduction to the actual message of Zephaniah. In order to prepare the Susu audience for the actual text, the translators have written an introduction which provides clear background information pertinent to the text, as well as reflections about how the message might be applicable to the Susu Muslim audience. The decision to include such an introduction is clearly based on the model of contextual frames of reference in that it attempts to provide the Susu with an understanding of the Hebrew cognitive environment, as well as a link to his/her own culture.

\textbf{The instrumental translation of Zephaniah in Susu}

\textbf{Text of the Introduction to the translation of Zephaniah}

\textbf{Masenyi Folè}


Alatala to Annabi Iburahima sugandi a xa batula ra, a naxa laayidi tongo a bɛ a a xa die fama wuyade han e findi si baramaa xe bɔxi fanji nde kui. A naxa giben na laayidi fala ra Annabi Iburahima xa di Isiyaga be a nun a xa mamadi Annabi Yaxuba be. Annabi Munsa to te e faxa xanbi, a naxa e bɔnsɔxe ramini Misira boxi ma sìgafe ra bɔxi nde ma Ala naxan laayidixi e bɛ. Na ɲama nuna xili «Isirayila» barima e fındixi Annabi Yaxuba xa di fu nun firin bɔnsɔxe ra. Ala nu bara Annabi Yaxuba xili masara «Isirayila» ra beenu a xa faxa.

Annabi Munsa to Isirayila ramini Misira xa konyina kui, a naxa e xanin gbangberen yire sìgafe ra Kanan bɔxi ma. Kira xɔn ma Alatala naxa ʍoyen e bɛ Turusinina geya fari, a fa saate xiri a tan nun e tan tagi, a a xa sɛriye sebɛ gɛmɛ walaxɛn ma, a e fi Annabi Munsa ma. Na kitaabuie fındixi Tawureta Munsa nan na. Namipɔɔmee nun sɛrexudeebe nu na sɛriye masenma Isirayila ɲama be temui birin a falafe ra e Marigi Ala na wama e malife duninjeigiri kui na sɛriye saabui ra. Kɔnɔ Ala nu bara a masen e bɛ, a a xa ɲama mu luma e xa xanunteya kui Alatala mabiri na sɛriye rabafute ra.

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\textsuperscript{213} During a series of informal interviews with several Susu, one university trained Imam said, “Footnotes are good for intellectuals, but for other kinds of people you must change the words so they can understand what the text is saying.”

232
When God Almighty selected Prophet **Abraham** to be his follower, he promised him that his descendents would multiply to the point they would become a blessed nation in a good land. He repeated that promise to Prophet **Abraham's** son **Isaac** and to his grandchild Prophet **Jacob**. When Prophet **Moses** came up after they died, he led their people out of Egypt to the land that God had promised them. That

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214 In the Susu translation Islamic terms for God are used that they can identify easily and find relevant to their context.

215 A vocative title for prophets is used in the Susu translation in keeping with their tradition of using honorific titles for all prophets.
people was called «Israel» because they were the tribes of the twelve sons of Prophet Jacob. God had changed Prophet Jacob’s name to «Israel» before he died.216

When the Prophet Moses led Israel out of Egyptian slavery, he took them through the desert on the way to the land of Canaan. On the road God Almighty spoke to them from on top of the Sinai217 mountain making a formal covenant with the people. He wrote his law on stone tablets that he gave to the Prophet Moses. That holy book was the Torah of Moses218. Prophets and priests presented that law to the people of Israel all the time as an expression of love to the Creator who wanted their best interest, but God had said to them that his people would not remain true to him and his law.

Years later God’s prediction became reality. The people of Israel abandoned God Almighty’s law and began to worship idols that they learned about in Canaan.219 Some of their kings led them to follow those idols, but other of their kings tried to make them worship only God Almighty and follow his will. King Josiah was one of those good kings. He did everything possible so that his people would worship God Almighty.

The Prophet Zephaniah also helped King Josiah in that work. He preached saying that their sins would cause God to punish them. He said that if they did not turn away from that road they would be killed like the pagan nations that were around them. He also told them that God could save them if they were willing to obey his voice. He said God wanted to help them because of his love, but that if they did not follow him, he would lead them to destruction.

This awesome message is important for God’s people even today. In our situation, our sins are ruining us. We have much suffering in our land, because everyone is trying to get what they want, even if it means that others will suffer.220 Money that is supposed to be used for the whole people, one person does everything so that it will be for him alone. Riches have become people’s «god» and they are abandoning God’s will, and committing sin so that they can get rich.

The Prophet Zephaniah’s advice is good for us. If we return to God Almighty, and obey his law, if we put our trust in him, God will care for us, he will help us in our life, and will help us in the after-life.221 May God make the voice of his holy book enter our heart so that we can be saved. Amen.222

216 The history of the people of Israel is related to historic prophets that Susu Muslims know well.
217 The proper name used to translate Sinai is Turusina, an Islamic rendering of the proper noun that the Susu Muslims know well.
218 This identifies one of the four holy books mentioned in the Koran and accepted by Susu Muslims.
219 This sin resonates to the Susu Muslim who live next to other people groups where idolatry is quite common. They consider this the gravest sin of all, so the message of Zephaniah against idols will resonate true to the Susu.
220 This evaluation is widely held by the Susu in Guinea today.
221 Well-being both in this life and the after-life is important to the Susu.
222 Concluding a discourse with a blessing and the response of Amina (i.e. amen) is a natural rhetoric that matches their expectations in this kind of a communication act.
Text and translations of the Contextual Translation of Zephaniah

**Sora**

Alatala xa xane Yudaya be

[God’s anger toward Judah]

1 Alatala xa masenyi nan ya, a xa xane nde be, This is God Almighty’s message for his group/people*

[Word of Yahweh]

naxan nu sabatixi Isirayila boxi ma a yirefanyi mabiri.

[which was settled in the land of Israel to the south.]

Na longori nu xili Yudaya,

[That area was called Judah*]

a mange findi Amon xa di Yosiya ra.

[it's king was Amon’s son Josiah]

in the days of Josiah, son of Amon, king of Judah

Alatala nu bara yi masenyi fi a xa xane ma Annabi Sofoni saabui ra.

[God Almighty had given this message to his group/people by means of Prophet Zephaniah*]

[that was to Zephaniah]

Sofoni findi Kusi xa di nan na, Gedaliya mamadi, Amari tolobite,

[Zephaniah was the son of Cush, the grand-child of Gedaliah, and the great-grand child of Amariah]

son of Cush, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah]

Yudaya mange Esekiya tolontolonyi.

[the great-great-grandchild* of Judah’s king Hezekiah.]

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223 The use of the term *sora* (i.e. chapter) corresponds with the Koranic use of the term which best fits the Susu Muslim frame of reference.

224 This translation opts to use one section heading per chapter at the beginning to follow the Koranic convention of giving each chapter a title.

225 The insertion of this word stems from the missiological desire to not enflame the racial reality that exists between Jews and Arabs. Calling the Jews “God’s people” could imply to the Muslim reader that his own relation to God is inferior because of his ethnicity. Certainly there is theological justification in the Bible that non-Jews can also consider themselves part of the people of God.

226 Verse 1 is actually formatted as prose, but in order to give a clear translation of the Susu and the Hebrew, it has been broken down into “lines.”

227 This historical information clearly implied from Hebrew prophetic literature, needs to be understood by the reader so as to correctly collocate Judah as a part of Israel, a geographical entity well known to the Susu Muslim.

228 The understanding that God gave the message to Zephaniah to then give to the people of Judah is made explicit in the translation.

229 The use of specific kinship terms going back four generations attempts to enhance the authority of the author by indicating his historical connections with a spiritual reformer.
[son of Hezekiah]
(Blank line for unit marker)

2 Alatala xa masenyi nan ya.230
  [This is the message of God Almighty.]
  [Oracle of Yahweh]
N birin Ṽoṵma ne duṵja bende funi231 fari.
  [I will end everything on the dust-ground of the earth.]
  [I collect I end everything from the face of the ground.]

3 N adama nun sube Ṽoṵma nē,
  [I will end human and animal.]
  [I end human and animal]
 n ɔɔni bama nē koore ma,
  [I take bird away from the sky.]
  [I end bird of the heavens]
 n yexe bama232 nē baa ma.
  [I take fish away from the sea.]
  [and fish of the sea]
N maratantanyi nun mixi ɔɔaxi Ṽoṵma nē,
  [I end cause-to-mistake and evil people.]  
  [and the incitements with the evil ones.]
 n adamadie bama nē duṵja bende funi fari,233
  [I take away humans from the dust-ground of the earth.]
  [I cut man from the face of the ground.]
Alatala xa masenyi nan na ki.
  [That is the message of God Almighty.]
  [Oracle of Yahweh.]
(Blank line for unit marker)

4 N nan n belexe italama nē Yudaya bɔxi xili ma,
  [I will stretch out my hand against the land of Judah.]
  [I will stretch out my hand on Judah.]
N e xa mixie birin halakima nē,
  [I will destroy all their people.]
  [and on all the inhabitants.]
Hali naxée na e xa mangataa Darisalam.234

230 Fronting this phrase develops the inclusio of verses 2-3 in a manner easily recognized by the Susu audience.
231 The Susu use the expression “the dust of the dirt of the earth” as a semantic intensifier, which nicely fits the grammatical intensification device used in the Hebrew. It is also used to form the inclusion of the pericope.
232 The Susu translation employs two couplets with lexical repetition to intensify the passage.
233 The same two verbs repeated in verses 2-3 in the couplets are used in the final two lines of the passage to balance the text and provide coherency (i.e. Ṽoṵma-ṵma, bama-bama, Ṽoṵma-bama).
[even those who are in the capital* Jerusalem.]

[N Bali kuye235 bama ne, naxee luxi wo xa bɔxi ma.
[I will take away the idols* of Baal, which are in your land.]  
[I will cut from this place the remnant of Baal]

[N e xa batui yareratie nun e xa diim236 sereyedubee sɔntɔma ne.
[I will kill their worship leaders and the priests of their religion.*]  
[with the name of pagan priests with priests.]

5 N mixie halakima ne,
[I will destroy people.]  
[and …]

[naxee tema e xa banxi fari, e e yae te koore ma,
[who climb on their house, and raise their eyes to the sky.]  
[the worshippers on the roofs to the hosts of the heavens,]

E fa tunbuie yati batu alae ra.237
[they then worship the stars as gods.*]
[ ]

[N filankafuie paxankatama ne,
[I will punish the hypocrites.]  
[ ]

[naxee e kali Alatala xili ra,
[who swear by the name of God Almighty.]  
[and the worshippers-swearers to Almighty God]

[e man e kali Moloko kuye238 xili ra.
[they also swear by the name of the idol* Molech.]

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234 The rewording here provides a fluid way to add the implied information about Darisalam, namely that it was the capital city of the region. This information is critical since the Susu do not know the relationship between Jerusalem and Judah.

235 The translation identifies Baal as an idol since the Susu do not know this background information. This clear identification immediately justifies God for his wrath in the mind of the Susu audience.

236 This addition distinguishes between the idol priests and the Jewish religious priests, since both are included in the condemnation.

237 Since astrology is unknown to the Susu, the translation attempts to clarify the concept of worshipping the stars.

238 Moloko (i.e. Molech) needs to be identified as an idol since the Susu have no background knowledge about this form of idolatry.
[and the swearers to Molech.]

6 N mixie rabeninha nɛ naxee bara gbilen Alatala fɔxɔ ra,
    [I will let go of people who have stopped following God Almighty.]
    [and the ones turning back from behind Yahweh.]

    naxee mu Alatala fenma,
    [those who do not seek God Almighty.]
    [those who do not seek Yahweh.]

    naxee mu birama a xa marasi fɔxɔ ra.
    [those who do not follow his advice.]
    [and not inquire of him.]

(Blank line for unit marker)

7 N tan Daali Mange, n xa a fala wo bɛ,\textsuperscript{239}
    [I myself, King of Creation, I tell you,*]
    []

    Wo sabari n tan\textsuperscript{240} wo Marigi Alatala ya ra,
    [Be quiet before me, your Lord God Almighty,]
    [Be quiet before the face of the Lord Yahweh,]

    barima a xa lɔxɔ xungbe na fafe.
    [because his big day is coming.]
    [for near is the day of Yahweh.]

    Alatala yati\textsuperscript{241} fama sɛrɛxe mɔɔli ndɛ\textsuperscript{242} bade.
    [God Almighty himself will come to make a certain type* of sacrifice.]

    A mixi ndee rafalaxi\textsuperscript{243} na nan ma.
    [He has prepared* certain people for that.]
    [He has consecrated his invited ones.]

8 Na sɛrɛxe findima munse ra?\textsuperscript{244}
    [What is that sacrifice?*]

Alatala xa sɛrɛxe lɔxɔ,. 

\textsuperscript{239} This insertion makes the unit break in the Hebrew text that is marked with a shift from first to third person as God makes a judgment declaration. An alternative address for God is used to add variety in the text and use other means to exalt God, something very important in Muslim discourse.

\textsuperscript{240} The shift from first person to third person can be understood by the Susu, but identifying the third person as God himself clarifies the discourse.

\textsuperscript{241} The Susu mindset cannot conceive of God offering a sacrifice, so this nuance of the text needs to be highlighted despite the clarity of the grammar.

\textsuperscript{242} The use of the term "sacrifice" here is an instance of strong contra-expectation. To assure that the reader captures this concept, the translation has added the semantic component of an "unknown element." This prepares the reader for verse 8.

\textsuperscript{243} The Hebrew text employs a verb here that allows the author the luxury of a "double-entendre." In Susu the term for "holy" would automatically indicate cleanliness, something that the context of the passage does not allow. The word "prepare" captures the nature of the activity of God, but looses the irony of the word Hebrew play.

\textsuperscript{244} This question helps the reader maintain a distinction between his natural conception of a "sacrifice" with this peculiar usage of the term/image in this passage that will be identified in the next lines.
[On God Almighty’s sacrifice day,]
[And it will be on the day of Yahweh’s sacrifice,]

n n ma na ma 245 mangë xa die nun kun tigie halakima në,
[I will destroy my group/people’s* king’s children and the important people,]
[I will visit-harshly the princes and the sons of the king]

a nun n ma mixi wana lufe alô si gbëte, 246
[and my people who want to be like other nations,*]

[They put on pagans’ clothing]
[and those who dress with foreign clothes]

9 N mixie halakima naxee birama kuye batuie xa namunyie fôxô ra, 247
[I will destroy those who follow idol worshippers’ customs,*]
[I will visit-harshly …]

alô tuganfe banxi sode dë ra.
[like jumping over the house door’s entrance.]
[those who jump over the threshold.]

N mixie halakima 248 naxee e marigi xa banxi rafema gere nun yantar e.
[I will destroy those who fill their lords’ house with war and betrayal.]
[those who fill their lords’ house with violence and deceit.]

Na lôxô banna xo, têrôxômixie xo, e birin fama Alal xa xône tote. 249
[In that day rich people and poor people, they will all see the wrath of God.*]
[in that day.]

(Blank line for unit marker)

10 Alatala xa masenyi nan ya. 250
[This is God Almighty’s message.*]

[Oracle of Yahweh]

Na lôxô mixi gbelegbelema nê Darisalamu birin kui, 251

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245 The Susu Muslim reader needs this identification to realize that the pronouncement of judgment is against the people of God rather than God’s enemies. There is an underlying assumption that God’s people are good, and anyone being punished must certainly be among the proclaimed enemies of God outside of his people.

246 This sentence gives a collocation to the action of using foreign fashion. The essence of this gesture was the desire to be like other people who did not worship God. The identification of “other people” as “kaafirie” is also critical to complete for the Susu mind that has no idea about the religious distinctions between the Jews and other ethnic groups.

247 This line follows the same logic mentioned above by identifying this custom as a pagan practice.

248 This is a repetition of the phrase in 1:9a in order to make it clear that this is a second category of people that will be punished.

249 Analysis of the pericope shows that all segments of society fall under divine judgment. This phrase serves to underline the aspect of equality before God for all social classes, which constitutes a “relevant” factor in Susu society and their religious perceptions.

250 This phrase has been moved up to a more natural position in the Susu discourse.
[In that day people will scream everywhere in Jerusalem,*]
[And in that day a cry will cry out]
kelife taa naađe ma naxan xili Yexe Naade,
[starting from the city gate called Fish Gate,]
[from the gate of the fish]
han taa neeñe,
[to the new town,]
and a howling from the new-second,]
kelifa taa fari geyae ma,
[starting from the city on top of the hill]
and a great crashing from the hills,]
han makiti yire,252
[to the market place,]
wall inhabitants of the pounding place]
barima n bara kaafir253 yulée xa fe kana,
[because I have ruined the business of pagan merchants,*]
[for all people of Canaan will be silenced,]
n bara e birin faxa.
[I have killed them all.]
all the weighers of silver will be cut.
Na waxati n Darisalamu yire birin matoma ne a fanyi ra,254
[In that time I will look well in all the places of Jerusalem,]
[And it will be in that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps,]
alako n xa mixi sento,
[so that I may kill people,]
and I will visit-harshly the men]
The image of men “sitting on their dregs” has been translated in light of the following context which points to the wealthy men of Judah. The image of “wine dregs” would not be understood by the Susu who do not have this reality in their agricultural context, thus the text must be modified. This concept of the wealthy protecting their wealth to the detriment of the poor and in opposition to God resonates well with the Susu audience.

The liver is commonly used by the Susu as the seat of emotions or decisions.

The reference in this line from vineyards-wine was changed to seed-food so as to not “distract” the Susu Muslim who would immediately ask himself why the people of God were planting vineyards and drinking wine. The concept from Zephaniah’s perspective does not focus on wine, but basic agricultural-nutritional needs.
[because of fear of God Almighty’s day.]

[noise of the day of Yahweh is bitter.]

15 Xone loxe na a ra,
[It is a day of wrath.]  
[day of wrath is that day.]

ton loxe na a ra,  
[It is a day of suffering,*]  
[day of distress and anguish.]

ghaloe loxe na a ra,
[It is a day of destruction.]  
[day of trouble and desolation.]

dimi loxe na a ra,
[It is a day of darkness.]  
[day of darkness and obscurity.]

nuxui ifoxoxi loxe na a ra.  
[It is a day of a dark cloud.]  
[day of cloud and dark cloud.]

16 Gere xui minima na loxe  
[The sound of war comes out that day]  
[day of trumpet]

taa senbemae xili ma,  
[against the strong towns/cities.]  
[and shout against fortified cities.]

e yire makantaxie xili ma.  
[against their protected places.]  
[and against corner towers.]

17 N adamadie tonoma na loxe,  
[That day I will cause humans to suffer.]  
[And I will distress man.]  
e fa dinkon  
[they will stumble like blind men]  
[they will walk as blind men.]

barima e bara yunubi raba Alatala ra.  
[because they sinned against God Almighty.]  
[because they sinned against Yahweh.]  
Na kui e sontoma ne a naaxi ra.  

258 In these four lines the Hebrew pairs of synonyms have been replaced with a single word to capture the essence of the synonyms. The rhetorical strategy of repetition worked better than the use of synonyms in this particular case.

259 A different structure was needed in this verse to clarify the war activities, but the idea of “that day” was maintained for cohesion with the preceding lines.

260 The theme of “that day” is repeated in Susu to maintain the focus of the passage. This repetition constitutes a powerful rhetorical device in Susu.

261 The idea behind walking like blind people, seems to be that of someone stumbling along because they cannot see where they are going. This change in the translation makes the meaning more direct.
[Because of that they will die a terrible death,]

[and their blood be poured out like dust,]

[Their gold and silver can not save them]

[Their gold and silver can not save them]

[on the day of God Almighty’s wrath.]  
[in the day of Yahweh’s anger.]

[All the world will burn horribly on that that day]
[And in the fire … all earth will be consumed.]

[because of the wrath of God Almighty.]  
[…] of his wrath…]

[because his group/people followed after other gods.]
Na kui duniŋa mixi birin sɔntɔma nɛ.
[Because of that all people will be killed.]
[For certainly completion will be quick; he will do all inhabitants of the earth.]

**Sora 2**

**Alatala xa xɔnɛ Yudaya nun si gbețee ma**
[God’s anger toward Judah and the other nations]

1 Mixi sugandixie Yudaya ya ma,
[Chosen people in Judah,*]
[…the nation…]

*Naxee findixi n ma ɲama yati yati nan na,*
[Who are my very people/group,*]
[…undesired nation…]

wo xa wo yetɛ mato,*
[Gather to examine yourselves*]
[Gather yourselves,]

2 beenu waxati xa kamali,
[before the time is fulfilled]
[before it becomes the appointed time]

beenu Alatala xa xɔnɛ xa wo li,
[before God Almighty’s anger arrives,]
[before anger anger of Yahweh comes on you]

beenu Alatala xa lɔxɛ xɔrɔxɛ xa fa wo ma.
[before God Almighty’s harsh day comes to you]
[before the day of Yahweh’s anger comes on you.]

Na lɔxɛ dangima nɛ alo maale lagi foye naxan tutunma,*
[That day will pass as the rice crusk blown by the wind.*]
[as chaff-pass day]

3 Wo tan mixi magoroxi naxee na Yudaya bɔxì ma,*
[You yourselves humble people who are in the land of Judah,*]
[All the humble of the land/earth.]

naxee na Alatala xa yaamarie rabatufe,
[who are following God Almighty’s commandments,]
[that obey his judgments/commandments,]

wo xa Alatala fen,
[you should seek God Almighty,]

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267 The translation adheres to the meaning of the Hebrew word “desire” instead of the more commonly accepted translation of “shameless.” The paragraph addresses that nation within a nation, the truly chosen ones among the people of Israel, who trusted in God’s promises, and were faithful to his laws.

268 The concept of “gathering together” found in the Hebrew text is taken as a time of mutual introspection leading to repentance.

269 The agricultural image is applied to rice, the staple crop for the Susu, to enhance familiarity and thus relevancy for the Susu audience.

270 This refers to the poor people who lived in the land of Judah that God had given them as an inheritance.
[seek God Almighty,]
wo xa a xa tinxinyi fen,
[you should seek his righteousness,]
[see righteousness,]
wo xa ye te magore fen.
[you should seek humility.]
[seek humility.]
Temunde na kui wo no ma ratangade
[Perhaps because of that you can be saved]
[Perhaps you will be hid]
Alatala xa xone Ixone ma.
[in the day of God Almighty’s anger.]
[in the day of anger of Yahweh.]
(Blank line for unit marker)

4 Ala munse rabama a xa nama yaaxuie ra,
[What will God do with/to the enemies of his people,]
[ ]
naxee na Filisita baxi ma laabe mabiri?271
[who are in Philistine land to the west?*]
[ ]
E xa taa Gasa beninma ne,
[Their town of Gaza will be abandoned.]
[For Gaza will be abandoned.]
e xa taa Asikalun kanama ne,
[their town Ashkelon will be desolate.]
[and Ashkelon will be deolate.]
e xa taa Asidodi kerima ne nama ya xeri,272
[their town Ashdod will be driven out in view of the group.*]
[Ashdod, they will drive her out at noon.]
e xa taa Ekiron talama ne.273
[their town Ekron will be uprooted.*]
[and Ekron will be uprooted.]
5 Naxankate na wo be,
[Punishment is for you,]
[Woe…]
wo tan naxee sabatixi baa de ra,
[you who are settled along the sea coast,]

271 Given the fact that the Susu do not know the ancient history of Israel and her enemies, this entire sections risks being considered irrelevant by the Susu audience. The addition of this phrase clarifies that the following judgment will be carried out on “enemies of God’s people.” Since Susu believers consider themselves God’s people, the pericope becomes relevant with a promise that her enemies will be destroyed.

272 The relevant point here is not the time of the day, but the fact that it will be an open and public defeat.

273 The translation clarifies that these proper nouns refer to four of the enemy cities.
[inhabitants of coast of sea,]
wo tan naxee kelixi suri naxan xilixi Kireti.
[you who comes from the island called Crete.]
[nation of Crete.]
Alatala bara natongo wo xa fe ra,
[God Almighty has made a decision about you.]
[Word of Yahweh is against you.]
Kanaanka naxee na Filisita boxi ma,
[Canaanites who are in the land of Philistine.]
[Canaan land of Philistine.]
wo xunnakanama ne han mixi birin non wo yi.
[I will defeat you till you have no more people left.]
[I will destroy from you any inhabitant.]
6 Xurusee fama lude wo xa taae nu na dennaxe.
[Domesticated animals will stay where your towns were.]
[the sea coast will be pastures.]
wo xonyi findima gosome nun kalonyie nan na xuruse de madonyie be.
[your place will become animal pens and wells for the shepherds.]
[wells of shepherds and sheep pens.]
7 Na boxi findima Yudayaka mixi donxee nan gbe ra,
[That land will belong to the last inhabitants of Judah.]
[The coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah.]
e fama e xa xurusee de madonde naa.
[they will pasture their domesticated animals there.]
[they will pasture on them.]
Nunmare temui e e malabuma ne e yaaxnie xa banxie kui
[In the evening they will rest in their enemies’ houses]
[in the houses … they will lie down in the evening.]
Asikalon taa kui,
[in the town of Ashkelon.]
[…of Ashelon…]
barima e Marigi Alatala fama e malide,
[because their Lord God Almighty will come to help them.]
[for Yahweh their God will visit them.]
a e xa mixi suxuxie ragbilenma ne e xa boxi ma,
[and their people taken will return to their land,]
[and return their exiles.]
kelife Babilon boxi ma e nu na geelimanie ra dennaxe ne tongo solofere bun ma.
[from the land of Babylon where they were prisoners for 70 years.]

274 The Susu have no idea about the geography of Crete. This implied information offers more insight into the historical situation of the Philistines.

275 The punitive nature of this action can better be understood when the reader realizes that the herds occupied the area where the Philistine cities were located.

276 This added background information serves to underline the historical importance of this return from exile.
8 Ala munse rabama a xa ɲama yaaxuita ra,
[What will God do with/to the enemies of his people,]

naxee na Mowaba bɔxi ma nun Amon bɔxi ma fuge mabiri? 
[who are in Moab land and Amon land to the east?]

N bara Mowabakae xa konbie m,
[I have heard the insults of the Moabites,]

Amonikae xa wɔyɛn bɛxuxie bara n li.
[The blasphemous words of the Amonites have arrived to me.]

E bara n ma ɲama konbi,
[They have insulted my people,]

e bara dangi e xa bɔxi naaninyi ra.
[they have crossed their land border.]

9 Na kui, n tan Isirayila Marigi Alatala,
[Because of that, I, Israel’s Lord God Almighty,]

Xili Xungbe Kanyi,
[Big Name Owner,]

n bara n kali Mowaba bɔxi luma ɲɛ alɔ Sodoma,
[I swear that the land of Moab will be like Sodom,]

e benba baride Ala naxan ganxi te ra kelife koore ma. 
[the birthplace of their ancestor that God burned with fire from heaven.]

N man a niyama Amoni bɔxi ra,
[I also do with Amon’s land,]

n naxan niyaxi e benba baride Gomora ra.
[what I did with their ancestor’s birthplace Gomorrah.]

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277 The role of this added phrase is multifaceted: a) It indicates geographical information about Moab and Amon that will eventually show that God’s intervention “all around” his people. b) It indicates a unit break that describes God’s intervention in a different area. c) It identifies the people in question as “enemies of the people of God” and thus becomes relevant to the Susu who also has his/her enemies.

278 The identification of Sodom and Gomorra in conjunction with the birth of the ancestors of Moab and Amnon adds relevance to this passage. The reader understands the connection of these two cities with these two countries, and the promised destruction with fire and salt recalls the historic destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in a similar manner.
[Their land will be destroyed, weeds and salt will be there.]
possession of grass and pit of salt and desolation forever.
N ma ɲama naxan luxi, e Mowaba nun Amoni harige bama nɛ e yi,
[My people who remain, they will take away Moab’s and Amon’s wealth.]
The remnant of my people will pillage them.
e xa bɔxì findima nɛ n ma si seniyɛnxi gbe ra.
[their land will belong to my holy nation.*]
the rest of my nation will possess them.
10 E na sɔtɔma e yɛte igbọna nan ma.
[They will receive that because of their arrogance.]
This to them for their arrogance.
E bara Alatala Xili Xungbe Kanyi xa ɲama konbi,
[They insulted God Almighty Big Name Owner’s people,]
[for they insulted and rose up against the Yahweh of Hosts’ people,]
e bara te a xa ɲama xili ma.
[They rose up against his people.]
[they rose up against his people.]
11 Alatala magaaxu, a e ɲaxankata senbe ra.
[God Almighty is to be feared, e punishes them powerfully.*]
Fearing of Yahweh (be) to them.
A kuye birin kanama nɛ duninja ma,
[He will destroy all the idols of the earth.]
He will destroy all the gods of the earth.
si birin fa Alatala batu e xɔnyi.
[and then all the nations will worship God Almighty in their place.]
[and men in their own place will bow down to him, all the coasts of nations.]
(Blank line for unit marker)
12 Ala munse rabama a xa ɲama yaaxuie ra,
[What will God do with/to the enemies of his people,]

naxee na Kusi bɔxì ma yirefanyi mabiri?281
[who are in Cush land to the south?*]

Wo tan Kusikae,
[You Cushites,]
[Also you Cushites.]
wo282 fan sɔxɔma nɛ n ma santidegema ra.

279 The concept of “holy” was added to help the Susu understand that the Israelites who were “left”, were saved from destruction because of their trust in God and holy life-style.
280 The reference to divine punishment has been inserted to summarize what God promised to Moab and Amon previously, and provide a context for the reason why it is stated that God should be feared. Otherwise 2:11 lacks connection between the cause and the consequence.
281 See note on Zephaniah 2:4, 8.
282 The translation uses the second person plural to match the previous line, since in this context the shift of person permitted in Hebrew would not be “correct” in Susu.
[you also will be pierced with my sword.]
[they will be pierced with my sword.]

(Blank line for unit marker)

13 Ala munse rabama a xa ɲama yaaxuie ra,
[What will God do with/to the enemies of his people,]
[ / ]
naxee na Asiriya bɔxi ma kɔla mabiri?283
[who are in Assyria land to the north?]
[ / ]
Ala a sɛnbɛ raminima ne kɔla ma,
[God made made his strength come out in the north,]
[He stretched out his hand against the north,]
a fa Asiriya sɔnto.
[he then killed Assyria.]
[and he destroyed Assyria.]
A e xa mangataa284 Ninewe xunnakanama ne,
[He defeated their capital Ninevah.]
[And he put Ninevah to destruction,]
a na findi gbengberen yire ra.
[he made it desert.]  
[dry as desert.]
14 Xurusee luma e de madon na na taa kui,
[Domesticated animals pasture in that city,]
[And flocks lie down in her midst,]
a nun wulai sube mɔli birin.
[along with all kinds of wild animals.]
[and all animals of nation.]
Yube nun xundi285 kɔɛ radangima na banxi kanaxie fari.
[Vulture and owl pass the night on those ruined houses.]
[even vulture even owl pass the night on her capitals.]
E xui Ala matɔxɔma naađee nun wunderie kanaxie fari.
[Their voice praises God on the ruined doors and windows,]

283 See note on Zephaniah 2:4, 8, 12. Some argue that the Hebrew text does not make a syntactical break between the oracle against Cush and the one against Assyria. While this appears to be the case, this translation makes the break in order to maintain the east-west and north-south distinction in the pericope. It is possible that the same distinction was intended by the Hebrew author, but he did not rely on syntax to express it.

284 This background information is needed to show the connection between this city and the section on Assyria. For the original reader this was common knowledge, but not for the Susu audience.

285 The exact translation of these two birds is difficult. The best guess seems to indicate a jackdaw and an owl. The translation uses “vulture” for jackdaw since it was a carnivorous animal and fits the Susu frame of reference that would imagine a vulture in a context of destruction. The use of owl raises another issue, namely the connotation among the Susu of a bird connected with evil spirits. While some deny that the Hebrews had a similar notion, the choice still seems valid because of the eerie nature of a destroyed city.
naxee xa wuri bara boro.
[whose wood is rotten.]
[for cedar destroyed.]

15 Yi taa xungbe nu luma pe³xin na,
[This great city lived in happiness,]
[This joyous city inhabited…]

a bõne nu sama,
[her liver was in peace,]
[in security,]

a nu falama a yete be,
[she said to herself,]
[she said in her heart,]

«N keren nan tide gbo.»
[I alone am important.]
[I and nothing forever.]

A xun bara rakana di,
[How has her head has been destroyed,]
[How has she become destroyed,]

A fa findi wulai subee xöyi ra?
[and become a place for wild animals?]
[a resting place to all animals passing on her?]

Alatala tanxuma nan fi a xa kana!286
[God Almighty gave the signal for her to be destroyed!*]
[He whistled, he waved his hand.]

Sora 3
Alatala xa xanunteya
[God’s love]

1 Ala munse rabama a yete xa ŋama ra,
[What will God do with/to his own people,]

naxee na Darisalamu?287
[who are in Jerusalem?*]

Naxankate na wo be,
[Punishment is for you,]
[Woe…]

taa matandila sëniyëntare,
[rebelious and unholy city,]

286 The Hebrew text refers to the actions of whistling and waving one’s hand without making explicit who the subject might be. Exegetes discuss whether the lacking subject is people passing by expressing amazement at the destruction of the city, or if the subject should be God who calls others to come and destroy the city.

287 In an attempt to maintain clear and distinct unit markers, the same phrase used to introduce each pronouncement of divine judgment against an enemy entity is used to introduce God’s pronouncement against his own people.
[...the rebellious and defiled city,]
naxan luma mixi taŋa ra.
[who continues to oppress people.]
[...oppressing...]
2 A mu Ala\textsuperscript{288} xui suxuma,
[She does not obey God’s* voice,]
[she does not obey the voice,]
a mu a marasi rabatuma,
[she does not follow his advice,]
[she does not receive the admonition,]
a mu a xaxili tima Alatala\textsuperscript{289} ra,
 [she does not put her confidence in God Almighty,*]
[in Yahweh she does not trust,]
a mu makari a ra.\textsuperscript{290}
 [she does not approach him.*]
[to God she does not draw near.]
3 Na taaxa kuntigie luma alɔ yete
[That city’s important men resemble lions]
[Here chiefs ... are ... lions]
naxee e xui raminima nama tagi,
 [who make their voice come out in the midst of the group.]
[...roaring...in her midst...]
a xa kiitisamae luma alɔ wulai bare\textsuperscript{291}
 [her judges resemble wild dogs]
[her judges are wolves of evening]
naxee sube donma keren na.
 [who eat the meat immediately.]
 [not flaying in the morning.]
4 A xa namipənmee findixi yete igboee nun yantatee naa na,
 [Her prophets are arrogant men and traitors,]
[Her prophets are insolent, ment of treachery,]
a xa serekudubəe bara fe seniyɛni xe noxo,
 [her priests have soiled holy things,]
 [her priests profane the sanctity,]
e bara Ala xa seriyɛ matandi.
 [they have disobeyed God’s law.]
 [they disobey the torah.]
5 Kɔnu Alatala nan tinxin na mixie ya ma.

\textsuperscript{288} The clarification that the voice is the voice of God emphasizes and clarifies the point to the Susu audience.

\textsuperscript{289} The couplet of Yahweh-Elohim (Alatala-Ala) is maintained in the verse following a common Susu parallel structure.

\textsuperscript{290} Given the fact that the Hebrew text utilizes both Yahweh and Elohim in these four parallel lines, the Susu text has been organized in two couplets, the first line of which uses a divine name and the second a pronoun. This type of parallel structure is aesthetically pleasing in Susu.

\textsuperscript{291} "Wild dogs" are a close equivalent to "wolves," which are not known in Susu culture.
[But God Almighty is straight/just among that people.]
[Yahweh is righteous in her midst.]

A mu miix madaxuma,
[He does not deceive people.]
[He does not do injustice.]

lɔxɔ yo lɔxɔ a xa nɔndi yanbama.
[day after day his truth shines.]  
[morning after morning he gives his judgments.]

A tan mu lanlanteya kanama,
[He does not break trust.]  
[In the day he will not be missed.]

kɔnɔ tinxintare mu yaagi kolon.
[But the unrighteous do not know shame.]  
[and the wicked know shame.]

(Blank line for unit marker)

6 Alatala xa masenyi nan ya: 292
[This is the message of God Almighty.*]
[Oracle of Yahweh]

N bara sie ɲaxankata,
[I have punished the nations,]
[I have cut nations.]

n bara e xa yire makantaxie rabira,
[I have made their protected places fall,]
[their parapets are destroyed,]

n bara e xa kirae kana.
[I have destroyed their streets.]
[I have destroyed their streets.]

Mixi yo mu na e xa taae kui sɔnɔn,
[No people are in their towns anymore,]
[No men inhabit them,]

e birin xun nakanaxi.
[They are all defeated.]  
[their cities are laid waste from without.]

7 N nu bara a fala e be 293,  
[I said to them,*]
[I said,]

«Xa wo gaaxuma n ya ra,
[If you fear before me,]
[Surely you will fear me,]

xa wo n ma marasi suxuma,
[if you receive my advice,]
[you will accept correction,]

292 The insertion of this oracle formula parallel to the one found in 3:8 helps mark the boundary between the third person declaration in 3:1-5 against Jerusalem, and the first person declaration in 3:6-7 against the nations.

293 The Susu grammar expects an indirect object at this point.
wo xun mu rakanama.»  
[you will not be defeated.]* 
[and her dwelling will not be cut.]

Kɔnɛ e gbata fe naaxi rabade tun.  
[But they hurried to only do evil.]  
[Surely they rise up early, they pervert all their deeds.]

Na nan a toxi n bara e naaŋkata.  
[That is why I punished them.]

(Blank line for unit marker)

8 Alatala xa masenyi nan ya:  
[This is the message of God Almighty.]*

Oracle of Yahweh

Na nan na ki, wo xa mame ti,  
[That is why, you should wait.]  
[Therefore wait for me,]

lɔxɔ xe fama a lide  
[a day is coming*]  
[for the day…]

n ma natɛ kamalima temui naaɔɛ.  
[when my decision will be fulfilled.]  
[I will stand to testify.]  

N bara a fala wo be,  
[I say to you,*]  
[For I have decided…]

na lɔxɔ xe n sie naxaŋkatama n ma xaaxi ra,  
[that day I will punish the nations* in my raging wrath,]  
[to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them my curse of all my anger anger,]  

294 This direct quotation on the part of God creates a problem for the Susu Muslim reader. They can easily fail to see the legitimate contra-expectation that the author wants to express describing the illogical actions of Judah. They would see mens’ actions that appear to prove God’s thoughts wrong, something that their belief system can not allow. For this reaction the translation reworks the statement into a conditional clause, and develops the contra-expectation in the line after the quotation.

295 Instead of the Hebrew text “rise early”, the translation clarifies the intention of rising early with the notion of “hurry.”

296 This phrase completes the thought of the passage that is left dangling in Hebrew.

297 This formula is fronted as it would be in Susu rhetoric.

298 The translation has taken the word “day” from the Hebrew text and expanded it in a common Susu expression that indicates the certainty of a future reckoning when his decision will be executed.

299 To maintain the same rhetorical tone from the preceding two lines, this line has been added, again using a common Susu expression, to make a strong statement of an impending negative action.

300 The word “nations” is used to indicate the pagan identities, as opposed to the word “kingdoms,” that would shift the emphasis to the ruling party of those identities.
duniña birin xa kana.\textsuperscript{301}
\begin{itemize}
\item [all the world must be destroyed.*]
\item [for by fire of my passion earth will be consumed.]
\end{itemize}
(Blank line for unit marker)

9 N fama sie rasniyènde,
\begin{itemize}
\item [I will purify the nations.]
\item [For then I will change peoples to have faultless lips.]
\end{itemize}
alako e xa Alatala xilli fala,
\begin{itemize}
\item [so that they will speak the name of God Almighty.]
\item [to call all of them in the name of Yahweh.]
\end{itemize}
e birin xa a rabatu lanyi kui.\textsuperscript{302}
\begin{itemize}
\item [and they all will worship him in unity.*]
\item [to serve him one shoulder.]
\end{itemize}
10 Kelife yire makuye dangife Kusi xuree ra,
\begin{itemize}
\item [From a distant place across the rivers of Cush.]
\end{itemize}
\begin{itemize}
\item [from across rivers of Cush]
\item [my beloved\textsuperscript{*} worshippers will bring sacrifices to me.]
\item [my worshippers, my dispersed daughters will bring offerings.]
\item [In that day you will not be ashamed anymore for your deeds,]
\item [In that day you will not be shamed for your deeds,]
\item [the evil deeds you did to me,]
\item [that you rebelled to me,]
\item [because I myself will take out the arrogant from among you,]
\item [for I will turn from your midst your people exulting in pride,]
\item [so that arrogance will be eliminated from my holy mountain]
\begin{itemize}
\item [and you will not continue to be haughty again in my holy mountain]
\end{itemize}
\begin{itemize}
\item [Darisalamu tixi dennaxe.\textsuperscript{304}]
\item [where Jerusalem is built.*]
\end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{301} The terms “punish” and “destroy” are used to indicate God’s final intentions, rather than specifying the act of “gathering together” or “assembling” the nations, which would distract the reader from the end result and cause him/her to think about the process.

\textsuperscript{302} The Hebrew metaphor has been replaced with the concept of “unity.”

\textsuperscript{303} The Hebrew texts call these dispersed suppliants God’s “daughters”. A literal translation of this phrase would raise a theological issue for Susu Muslims (i.e. How can God have “daughters” without having sexual relations with humans?), as well as a distraction as to why he would use a feminine appellative for his people. The theological import of the phrase points to neither of these concepts. For this reason the idea of being God’s daughter has been interpreted as an indicator of loving relationship.

\textsuperscript{304} A solitary reference to God’s "holy mountain" would not be understood by the Susu reader. The reference to Jerusalem, a place well known to all Muslims, makes the phrase meaningful.
12 N tɔɔɔrɔɔmixie nun mixi magoroxie luma wo ya ma,
    [I will leave poor and humble people among you,]
    [And I will leave in your midst a humble and meek people,]
    naxee ṭaaxili tima Alatala ra.
    [who put their confidence in God Almighty,]
    [and they will refuge in the name of Yahweh,]
13 Isirayila ðonnoon mu ñaxi rabama sɔɔɔn,
    [The rest of Israel will not do evil deeds again,]
    [Rest of Israel will not do evil,]
e mu wule falama,
    [they will not speak lies,]
    [and they will not speak lies,]
e mu mixi madaxuma.
    [they will not deceive people.]
    [and a tongue of deceit will not be found in their mouth.]
E luma e malabu ra bɔɔ̃esa kui,305
    [They will rest in peace,*]
    [For they will graze and they will lie down,]
alo xuruse naxee na e de madonfe.306
    [like domesticated animals that are grazing,*]
[ ]
mixi yo mu e tɔɔɔrɔɔma sɔɔɔn.
    [no one will oppress them again.]
    [and none terrifying.]
(Blank line for unit marker)
14 Darisalamu xanuntenyie,
    [Beloved ones of Jerusalem,]
    [Daughter of Zion]
Naxee tixi Ala xa geya ɔniyənx Siyon fari,
    [who stand on God’s holy mountain of Zion]
[ ]
Naxee findixi Isirayila ñama ra,307
    [who are the people of Israel,*]
    [Israel]
wo xa Ala matɔɔɔɔ ɔẹẹwe ra,308

305 The metaphor equating God’s people with ”sheep” has been eliminated in the translation to provide a
    more direct access to the cherished state of ”peace.”
306 This phrase has been added to capture the imagery provided by the verbs in the preceding line that
    apply to domesticated animals.
307 The three Hebrew terms referring to God’s people in this verse, have been reduced to two terms in
    Susu in order to create a couplet that accompanies a second couplet indicating their joyful state. The
    term ”daughter” has been translated with ”beloved ones” for the same reasons given in verse 3:10. The
    reference to the ”holy mountain” found in 3:11 has been united to the appellative ”Zion” in order to
    clarify the meaning of this proper noun which carries a great importance in Hebrew literature.
[praise God with joy,*]
[shout with joy, shout,]
wo xa ṭełxin wo bọ̀n̩ 309 birin na.
[be happy with all your liver.*]
[rejoice and be glad with all heart.]
15 Alatala xa xọ́n̩ bara gbilen wo fọ́ọ̀ ra,
[God Almighty’s wrath has turned away from you,]
[Yahweh turned away your judgment.]
a bara wo yaxukir ṣe xọ́n̩yi.
[he returned your enemies to their place of origin.]
[he turned aside your enemy.]
Isirayila Mange Alatala bara lu wo tagi. 310
[The King God Almighty of Israel has remained in your midst.*]
[The King of Israel is Yahweh. In your midst…]
Wo naxa gaaxu, wo mu tɔɔ̱r̩ma sɔn̩an.
[Do not fear, you will not suffer anymore.]
[You will not fear evil ever.]
16 Na lọ̀xɔ̀ a a falama Darisalamu bẹ,
[In that day he will say to Jerusalem,]
[In that day he will say to Jerusalem,]
«Siyon mixie, 311 wo naxa gaaxu,
[People of Zion,* do not fear,]
[Fear not Zion.]
limaniya naxa ba wo yi ra.» 312
[Do not loose courage.*]

308 Instead of limiting the verse to the concept of being joyful, the idea of joyfully praising God has been added to foreshadow the reasons for that joy in the following verses. The joy is a result of God’s intervention, and therefore it is appropriate to praise him for it.

309 ”Liver” in Susu carries the same figurative value as ”heart” does in Hebrew.

310 The poetic structure of the four lines in this verse have been rearranged to form two clear couplets in Susu. The second line of both couplets expresses a result from the first line.

311 Given the fact that the identity of Zion has already been explained previously in this pericope, the translation uses the terms without giving any background information. The addition of ”people” clarifies the fact that Hebrew literature equates the ”holy mountain” with the people of God.

312 The Hebrew metaphor of ”dropped hands” is translated according to the idiomatic meaning to facilitate the understanding by the Susu audience.
[Do not drop your hands.]

17 Wo Marigi Alatala,
[Your Lord God Almighty,]
[Yahweh your God...]
wo Rakisima Senbema na wo ya ma.
[your Saviour Strong One is among you.]
[is in your midst, the saving warrior.]

A sëswama në wo xa fe ra,
[He rejoices over you,]
[He rejoices over you with joy,]
a wo madunduma a xa xanunteya ra,
[he consoles you with his love,]
[he consoles you with his love,]
a ñëleñinma në a xui itexi ra wo xa fe ra.
[he exults over you in a loud voice.]
[he rejoices over you with a shout of joy.]

18 N mixie bama wo ya ma
[I will take people away from among you]
[I will remove from among you]
naxee sunnunxi Ala xa kiiti loxœ,313
[who are sad on God’s judgment day,]
[grieving of the appointed time]
naxee findixi yaagi ra wo tagi.
[who are a shame among you.]
[who are a burden shame.]

19 Na loxœ n wo yaxuie naxankatama në,
[That day I will punish your enemies,]
[Behold what I will do with your oppressed on that day.]
n tɔɔrmixie rakisima,
[I will save the suffering ones,]
[and I will save those limping,]
n mixi kerixi ragbilenma në e xɔɔnyi.
[I will return those chased away.]
[and those scattered I will gather.]
N e xa yaagi ɲɔɔxɔ ṭaxɔxɔ nun binyɛ ra yire birin.
[I will replace their shame with praise and honor everywhere.]
[I will put their shame to praise and a name in all the earth.]

20 Na loxœ n wo ragbilenma në wo xɔɔnyi.
[In that day I will return you to your home.]
[In that time I will bring you.]
N wo malanma në alako wo xa matɔɔxɔ nun binyɛ sɔɔ, 
[I will gather you so that you can receive praise and honor.]
[and in time I will gather you for I give you a name and praise]
duniŋa ɲamarë birin kui.
[in all the territories of the earth.]
[among all the peoples of the earth.]

---

313 The word “judgment” clarifies the nature of the “appointed time” found in Hebrew.
N wo ragbilenma né, wo fama na tode.
[I will return you, you will see it.]
[Returning your captivity to your eyes.]  
Alatala xa masenyi nan na ki.
[This is God Almighty’s message.]  
[Says Yahweh.]
8 – Summary and conclusions

Translations aim to make a message understandable to an audience which is culturally or linguistically distant from the original audience. Something must be done to communicate or transmit the message to the target audience, and the audience must be able to receive or understand the message in a manner that reasonably reflects the author’s intention.

Cognitive linguists have shown how this process of transmission and reception far exceeds the complexity of a model that encodes and decodes messages with a one to one correspondence. They have shown that the transmitter, as well as the receiver, both operate from a cognitive framework that includes a vast array of background information intertwined in such a way as to make the communicative process so complicated that it is a wonder that communication can even take place.

In this research, the contextual frames of reference model serves as the framework to explore some of the intricacies in translating a Hebrew prophetic document from the seventh century B.C. for a West African Muslim people group called the Susu.

8.1 A Hebrew prophet

The first two chapters of this dissertation examine the Hebrew prophet Zephaniah, and the short book accredited to his name. The rhetorical structure of the book follows an ABAB pattern that promises divine destruction before making an appeal for repentance. The first discourse addresses Judah, while the second addresses all of the nations of the world. Various rhetorical devices lend weight to the appeal such as the claim of divine authority. The prophet affirms to speak on behalf of God, and he actually uses direct speech to highlight this theological truth. He motivates his audience to repentance by juxtaposing divine punishment to divine blessings of social justice and shalom.

The textual structure of the book of Zephaniah reveals a sampling of Hebrew literary devices designed to enhance the impact of the message on its seventh century audience. The author uses numerous techniques to maintain cohesion in the discourse, highlight certain key points, and present the material in an aesthetic manner that engages the mind and emotions of the audience. This detailed study of the Hebrew text shows the way in which grammatical intricacies can highlight the rhetorical nature of a hortatory text.

8.2 A Susu Imam

Chapters three and four describe a Muslim xutuba (i.e. Friday sermon) delivered by a Susu Imam during the period of the hajj and the important religious celebration of Eid al-Adha. The rhetorical structure of the sermon describes in detail the pilgrimage to Mecca and uses those characteristics as a theological foundation for exhorting Guineans to pursue social harmony. The sermon is not an “exposition” regarding the religious celebration, rather an “exhortation” to live a life of peace and unity.

The Imam uses a rich inventory of rhetorical devices and grammatical structures to enhance the impact of his message. Much like the prophet Zephaniah, the Imam develops the concept of divine authority to which all humans should submit. His message, stemming from divine authority, should then be obeyed. A series of
blessings points to the logical conclusion that following the exhortation will lead to material and spiritual benefits; another reason for the audience to submit to the exhortation. The sermon uses various literary devices to embellish the message and make it more impactful, some of which are found also in the Hebrew literature such as the use of *inclusio*, couplets, and parallelism.

**8.3 Communication between the Hebrew and Susu worlds**

With the foundational description of a piece of hortatory communication from the ancient Hebrew prophetic world and an analogous communication from the modern Susu Muslim context, the next challenge of this research focused on how the gap between the two worlds might be bridged to formulate an effective communicative tool, namely a contextualized translation of Zephaniah into Susu. The cognitive linguistic framework which serves as the foundation of the contextualized frames of reference model provides an understanding of the elements necessary for a transfer of meaning to take place.

The most important element of the communicative puzzle provides a shared cognitive environment between the author and the audience. Without this shared understanding of worldview and historical background, true communication cannot take place. In some way the translator needs to provide the modern audience with a lens through which they can accurately understand the original message.

Another element which adds an aesthetic element to the equation consists in literary devices that the author and the translator can use to enhance the impact of their message. In the original communication, the Hebrew prophet used certain devices for various reasons. The effect no doubt rendered his message beautiful and powerful for those hearing the original message. The translation team, after having understood the use of those devices, then needs to find literary devices that can be used for the communicational benefit of the modern audience. In some cases the same devices can be used with similar effects, but in other instances these will need to be changed in order to produce the same effect.

A comparison of Hebrew Zephaniah and the Susu *Xutuba* shows that the prophets of Israel and the Susu imams have many religious themes in common. Just a few are: the sovereignty and authority of God, the importance of social justice and well-being, the role of religious tradition, and the concept of punishment and reward based on morality.

While this commonality makes the translation of Zephaniah a relevant piece of literature for Susu Muslims, the communicative context of seventh century Hebrew literature necessitates that a cognitive background be provided, either in the text or in the paratext, for the message to be understood by the Susu audience. This critical step for the translator takes various forms at different linguistic levels. Since the Susu are unaware of the four city names that were synonymous of the Philistine civilization in the Ancient Near East, for example, the Susu instrumental translation refers to “Gaza” as the “city of Gaza” (Zephaniah 2:4) to provide the background necessary to understand completely this reference. In other cases, the translator has to deduce exegetically from the text the referent of a noun phrase that would be otherwise incomprehensible for the Susu. In Zephaniah 3:10, for example, the “daughter of Zion” becomes the “beloved ones of Jerusalem who stand on God’s holy mountain of Zion.” In these cases, the translator exegete takes special attention to not add to the meaning of the original text, but rather to clarify the meaning with careful edits to the
translation. The documentary translation makes the same clarifications, but uses the footnotes in the paratext to do so.

The analysis of the text of Hebrew Zephaniah and the Susu Xutuba show that there are numerous rhetorical textual devices in common between the two languages. They serve to enhance the cohesion of the discourse, mark the specific sub-units, and add a literary aesthetic component. Both languages use devices like repetition, symmetry, and parallelism, but the grammatical structure of the respective languages can limit how the author uses these devices. Hebrew is able, for example, in Zephaniah 3:19b-c, to produce a grammatical chiasmus with a pre-verb direct object and a post-verb direct object in two sequential lines, but Susu is obligated to follow a strict pre-verb direct object paradigm. The translation cannot mirror the chiasmus, but it can use other types of parallelism that are compatible with the grammar of the Susu language.

Changes in text organization also need to be made in keeping with a lack of correspondence between the discourse features in Hebrew and Susu. While Hebrew can mark a new unit by referring to a participant in the first person after having referred to the same participant in the third person in the previous unit, the Susu need an ulterior clarification that the participant is the same in both units. The translator is obligated to make additions to the text to make this clear. Another example, found in Zephaniah 1:2, consists of fronting the statement “declares the Lord” in the Susu translation, instead of putting it in the middle of the declaration itself. The Hebrew pattern in this case causes confusion to the Susu reader, so the translation needs to accommodate for this discourse difference between the two languages in order to not confuse the Susu reader.

While the details of the rhetorical devices used in Hebrew Zephaniah and in the Susu Xutuba are described in detail in the body of this research, the necessary modifications made in the text of the instrumental translation in order to accommodate the differences between the two languages, are pointed out in the footnotes of that translation. Through a careful review of these two sources, the reader can ascertain the important translation principles at play when it comes to communicating a contextualized message.

Two translation models demonstrated

Two translation models were presented in this research (chapters five and six) that both attempt to bridge the gap between the ancient Hebrew world and the modern Susu context. They do this very different ways. The documentary approach uses a literal translation of the Hebrew text that is also accompanied by an elaborate paratextual apparatus which provides the cognitive environment necessary for the Susu audience to comprehend Zephaniah’s message. By reading the two texts, the Susu can see precisely the articulation of the original document, as well as the contextualized meaning of the document from a Susu perspective.

The instrumental approach on the other hand, attempts to modify the original text in such a way as to make it understandable to the Susu audience without the use of a extensive paratextual apparatus. This type of translation seeks to use the text itself as a communicative instrument with the hope that this direct communication will be more effective for an audience who has a limited willingness to invest very much processing effort with these foreign texts.

The two translations in this dissertation do not represent the effort of a specific translation organization to provide the Susu people with a translation of Zephaniah.
The author of this dissertation produced the translations as a purely academic exercise to explore the intricacies of contextualized translation where rhetorical insights and discourse techniques are taken into consideration. The author’s twenty-five years of field work in Guinea provided him with the linguistic and cultural insights necessary to postulate what these two models of translation would like look in the Susu context. The translation work done during these years independently of this doctoral research has provided numerous opportunities to discuss cases where understanding breaks down between the Biblical text and the Susu communication framework both with Muslims and Christians.

**Reflections on the advantages of disadvantages of the two models**

The advantages and the disadvantages of these two models have already been discussed in chapters five and six, but a final reflection regarding the difference of these two approaches needs to be articulated. The need to inform the modern audience of the cognitive environment in which an ancient document was produced clearly exists. Translators appreciate the contribution of cognitive linguists who have emphasized this complexity of communication. However, translators do not always agree on exactly how to apply these insights to their work. The two example translations in this research clearly demonstrate that diversity.

Perhaps a helpful way to articulate this difference lies in the terminology used to describe a translation publication. A documentary approach to translation could state their final goal as a “contextualized commentary” in which the original text is reproduced in the target language and a paratextual apparatus is provided which explains the document. The instrumental approach on the other hand, could state that their final goal is a “contextualized translation” in which the original text is modified so as to clarify the supposed meaning for a particular language and culture.

The contextualized commentary would be ideal for those people who have an intense desire to study the ancient texts for themselves. They willingly grapple with the cultural diversity between their context and that of the ancient prophets in order that they might benefit from that intellectual discovery process. This approach could also serve an audience who view Holy Scripture as a static literature which is best preserved in its original context rather than adapting it to a modern context. People of this mindset would best be served by a contextualized commentary in that they could possess the original text, but at the same time have a commentary of the text that would help them to understand it and apply it to their own life.

The contextualized translation on the other hand, would be ideal for people who are willing to engage the text, but who want to do so with minimal effort. They prefer that the text be a quick and direct tool to understand the original message. They are not necessarily willing to invest time and intellectual effort to make sense of a difficult to understand text. This can be due to their religious allegiance, which already suspects the utility of these texts from another religion, or it could be due to a lack of experience or willingness to deduct the meaning of a text based on information provided from another source (i.e. the paratextual apparatus).

In the final analysis both approaches can be useful either for distinct audiences, or for the same audience at different phases of their spiritual exploration. A “translation brief” for any given translation project should clearly delineate the skopos of a project and from that skopos determine the best translation approach to employ.
Voices from the Susu community substantiate the utility of both approaches. Some who are focused on the integrity of the Biblical text due to their own perspective on the interplay between divine inspiration and translation, tend to opt for a more literal treatment of the text. However, when the Susu read or listen to the contextualized translation, they inevitably comment on the clarity and the rhetorical power of the text resulting from the instrumental approach.

The prospect of using footnotes in the documentary model certainly opens the door to a “both-and” approach to translation where the document is translated literally but the reader finds a contextualized explanation of the text in the footnotes. The question remains just how accessible is this information in the footnotes for a people with low reading skills and little experience in deducting the meaning of texts through a series of parallel notes. Some Susu believe that such skills can be taught, but no one would dare believe this to be an easy process. Whoever proposes such methods will have to struggle with the question of just how much this extra processing could discourage a mass usage of the text by a largely illiterate population.

The Susu community played a critical yet indirect role in this research project. While they were not involved directly in the translation choices made of the text of Zephaniah presented in this work, their voice had been heard and listened to over the past 25 years of field work of the author during which time numerous people in numerous situations expressed their likes and dislikes for certain translation styles and choices. In actuality it was the Susu voice that prompted this research in an attempt to find a way to express the truths, the artistic value, and the compelling spiritual insights that can come from ancient texts. While the delicate and difficult Susu socio-religious context defies the task of providing a quantifiable evaluation of such preferences, the researcher trusts that the analysis that led to the proposal of multiple possible ways to address the issues at hand will be useful to translators and communicators in various contexts.

8.4 Conclusion

Independently of theological differences or preferences, if the Hebrew prophet Zephaniah had been a Susu Muslim in the twenty first century, might his message resemble the instrumental translation given in the previous chapter? This question touches the essence of this research. Having studied the composition of Zephaniah’s message in context, and having analyzed the composition of an analogous message in the Susu Muslim context, the hope was to develop a translation that would allow a Susu Muslim to “hear” the message without the distraction of “foreign elements.” The purpose was to create a contextually relevant translation of Zephaniah for the Susu Muslim.

The research began with the question: Can a rhetorical analysis of analogous discourses, both in the source and in a target language, assist in the development of a meaningful translation? The course of this research has led the author to deduce from a hortatory passage in Hebrew (source) and from an analogous hortatory passage in Susu (target) a series of rhetorical devices, some that can be used in both languages, and some that are peculiar to only one or the other of the languages. These devices have been used to translate the book of Zephaniah in Susu in a clear and meaningful fashion. This has been exemplified in two different translation approaches, one providing key information in the paratext, and a second in an instrumental translation. Clearly the comparison of rhetorical devices between analogous discourses in a
source and in a target language provide the translator with a repertoire of rhetorical devices to translate in a clear and relevant fashion.

While one cannot know exactly how the book of Zephaniah would have looked had the Hebrew prophet been a Susu Muslim in the twenty first century, there is no doubt that his message could have resembled the instrumental translation given in the previous chapter. The process embarked upon to develop such a translation has exemplified some important concepts in cross-cultural communication. Translation goes beyond language into the realm of cognitive behavior. These realms, these “frames of reference,” must be analyzed and utilized in order to create a truly culturally relevant translation in order to assure a successful communication experience.

Hopefully this research will add to the corpus of case studies of Bible translation projects around the world, and thus contribute significant data for the comparison and study of translation strategies.
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Translating Zephaniah in Context

by

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