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EDITORIAL BOOK CRITIQUE: *THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD AMEN: ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE THE BIBLE HAS NEVER TOLD*

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Abstract:

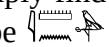
The Origin of the Word Amen: Ancient Knowledge the Bible has Never Told is a book that promises to pique the interest of any reader interested in classical  Kmt 'Black Nation/Land of the Blacks',  *mdw nṯr* 'Hieroglyphs,' the Akan language, and historical-linguistic connections between the three. Specifically, the book promises to deliver information about how the word  *imn* 'Amen,' as attested in classical  Kmt 'Black Nation/Land of the Blacks,' persists in the contemporary Akan language. While under a steady hand this should be a simple enough thesis to substantiate, unfortunately, the authors' obvious lack of grounding in historical linguistics, their lack of knowledge of  *mdw nṯr* 'Hieroglyphs' as well as their lack of understanding the morphology (word structure) of the Akan language all mar the analyses presented in the book.

Keywords: Amen, Heru Narmer, historical linguistics, folk etymology

Osei, O. K., Issa, J., & Faraji, S. (2020). *The Origin of the Word Amen: Ancient Knowledge the Bible has Never Told*. Long Beach, CA: Amen-Ra Theological Seminary Press.

1. Introduction

In *The Origin of the Word Amen: Ancient Knowledge the Bible has Never Told,* what should be an open-and-shut case is saddled with a plethora of spurious look-alikes and folk etymologies prompted by attempts to analyze one language with another without actually having studying the language to be analyzed itself. Indeed, even if any of the numerous comparisons made in the book actually turned out to be etymologically related, without methodology, there is no way to determine whether they actually are or not, nor how the

authors came to their conclusion(s). In other words, the conclusion(s) are not scientifically replicable nor verifiable by any discernible method. In fact, the book as a whole lacks any clear implicit or explicit linguistics-based methodology whatsoever. From what can be gleaned from having read the book twice, the practice therein seems to be to simply find any word with an /m/ and /n/ in that order and posit that the source word must be  *ỉmn* 'Amen.'

The foreword of the book states that:

> After decades of research as a philologist and scholar of ancient Egyptian history and religion I have proven that the word 'Amen' is of ancient Egyptian origin and the Akans of Ghana and Ivory Coast still possess within their lexicon verbal relics of the God 'Amen' which substantiates the Akan claim to ownership of this Ancient Egyptian universal deity (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:foreword).

The central problem of the book is foreshadowed in this very statement which mentions study of history and religion without mention of study of the  *mdw nṯr* language itself, its grammar, or any aspect of linguistics pertaining thereto. Beyond these specific technical limitations, it is clear to the reader that even a basic understanding of morphology, morphosemantics, and/or knowledge of what morphemes are and how they work are not evident within the pages of the book. However, we readily find such statements as "Remarkably the word Amen lives on in the Twi word for ancestors as Ns**aman**fo and the place where the ancestors dwell, Ns**aman**do [sic]. In other words, for the Akan the ancestors are the 'People of Amen' who dwell in the 'Land of Amen'" (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:1). This passage demonstrates a complete lack of understanding of 1) what morphemes are and 2) where the morpheme boundaries in the Akan language are. The root of both *nsamanfo* and *asamando* is *ɔ-sa-man*. *n-* serves as pluralizer in the first of the two words while, in the second, the prefix should be *a-* (functioning as a nominalizer) rather than *n-* (Kambon, Duah and Appah 2018). To randomly decide to ignore the prefixes as well as the *-s-*, the latter of which is an integral part of the root word *ɔ-sa-man* itself betrays a lack of knowledge of how the Akan language operates, a lack of knowledge of linguistics as a discipline in general and morphology as it pertains to word structure specifically. The equivalent of the analysis contained in the book would be like saying something to the effect of "sal**aman**der," "ad**aman**t," "militi**aman**," "sh**aman**," "**Aman**da," "se**aman**," and

"camer**aman**" are all derived from Amen. Then, once the declaration is made, it could simply be buttressed by coming up with a folk-etymological back story in prose to justify the whole exercise. Such a practice, while perhaps fun to do and even entertaining to the reader, is not historical linguistics—it is folk etymology under the guise of linguistics.

2. The Authors' Ideas and the Book's Thesis

In this section of the editorial book critique, I will discuss the authors' ideas and the book's thesis within a scholarly perspective. This will serve as a critical assessment of the book within the larger scholarly discourse. Firstly, and most strikingly, the authors seem to be wholly unaware of the work of Tata Theophile Obenga, who has already made comparisons between  *imn* 'Amen' and contemporary Afrikan languages (Obenga 1993). In fact, the authors do not critique, draw from, or even refer to this work. There is a thin line between actually doing groundbreaking research on the one hand, and simply failing to do even a cursory review of relevant literature. This is particularly unfortunate as a review of the works of those who actually have formal training in linguistics, such as Tata Obenga, would certainly help the authors' cause in the area of credibility. Further, it would also help in terms of understanding that historical linguistics, as a highly technical sub-field, requires a methodology beyond what seems to amount to making a surface observation that one word may happen to look like another word in an entirely different language; or that any word that has an /m/ and an /n/ in it should be given a convincing back story that ties it to the word  *imn* 'Amen' somehow.

Again, the central thesis that the word  *imn* 'Amen' is found in classical  Kmt 'Black Nation/Land of the Blacks' is indisputable and beyond question. The thesis that this word persists in contemporary Afrikan languages is also well-founded and should be easy to substantiate. However, the major errors in this book—factual, scholarly, methodological, and otherwise—detract from the overall thesis and the arguments made in it to the point that it would be hard to recommend it without serious reservation.

3. Errors that Detract from the Thesis and Arguments Made in the Book

In hopes of advancing the research, this section of the editorial book critique will take a brief look at the aforementioned errors that detract from the thesis and arguments made in the book. As there are too many to cover them all and since doing so would well and truly require a book of equal or greater length than *The Origin of the Word Amen: Ancient*

Knowledge the Bible has Never Told, here I will simply look at some of the most obvious and egregious beginning with the following passage:

> The historic founder of Egypt's first dynasty popularly known as Narmer and sometimes given the name Menes according to the reports of Herodotus and Manetho actually carried the royal name 'Heru the Soaring Falcon of Amen.' In fact, Herodotus and Manetho [sic] rendering of the name of the founder of ancient Egyptian civilization as Menes provided a clue that his name carried the royal title Amen.
> Herodotus acquired his information from the priest-scribes of ancient Egypt that had for over two thousand years recorded the names of their kings on papyrus like the historic 'Turin' papyrus. (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:11)

Apparently, the authors did not deem it necessary to actually go and read the sources with which they claim to be familiar. The relevant quote from Herodotus—in Greek and with translation—is as follows:

> **Μῖνα** τὸν πρῶτον βασιλεύσαντα Αἰγύπτου οἱ ἱρέες ἔλεγον τοῦτο μὲν ἀπογεφυρῶσαι τὴν Μέμφιν. τὸν γὰρ ποταμὸν πάντα ῥέειν παρὰ τὸ ὄρος τὸ ψάμμινον πρὸς Λιβύης, τὸν δὲ **Μῖνα** ἄνωθεν, ὅσον τε ἑκατὸν σταδίους ἀπὸ Μέμφιος, τὸν πρὸς μεσαμβρίης ἀγκῶνα προσχώσαντα τὸ μὲν ἀρχαῖον ῥέεθρον ἀποξηρῆναι, τὸν δὲ ποταμὸν ὀχετεῦσαι τὸ μέσον τῶν ὀρέων ῥέειν. ἔτι δὲ καὶ νῦν ὑπὸ Περσέων ὁ ἀγκὼν οὗτος τοῦ Νείλου ὡς ἀπεργμένος ῥέῃ ἐν φυλακῇσι μεγάλῃσι ἔχεται, φρασσόμενος ἀνὰ πᾶν ἔτος· εἰ γὰρ ἐθελήσει ῥήξας ὑπερβῆναι ὁ ποταμὸς ταύτῃ, κίνδυνος πάσῃ Μέμφι κατακλυσθῆναι ἐστί. ὡς δὲ τῷ **Μῖνι** τούτῳ τῷ πρώτῳ γενομένῳ βασιλέι χέρσον γεγονέναι τὸ ἀπεργμένον, τοῦτο μὲν ἐν αὐτῷ πόλιν κτίσαι ταύτην ἥτις νῦν Μέμφις καλέεται·
>
> The priests told me that **Min** was the first king of Egypt, and that first he separated Memphis from the Nile by a dam. All the river had flowed close under the sandy mountains on the Libyan side, but **Min** made the southern bend of it which begins about an hundred furlongs above Memphis, by damming the stream; thereby he dried up the ancient course, and carried the river by a channel so that it flowed midway between the hills. And to this day the Persians keep careful guard over this bend of the river, strengthening its dam every year, that it may keep the current in; for were the Nile to burst his dykes and overflow here, all Memphis were in danger of drowning. Then, when this

> first king **Min** had made what he thus cut off to be dry land, he first founded in it that city which is now called Memphis. (Herodotus and Godley 1986:384-387, Herodotus 2018) [**bold emphasis added]**

This demonstrates a clear lack of academic rigor with regard to the authors, apparently, not having actually read the text to which they refer.

Beyond this serious lapse, from a methodological perspective, attempting to use Greek to ascertain the original name in *mdw nṯr* is not reliable because Greek masculine proper nouns in the nominative case (including surnames) commonly end in *-s* (GreekPod101.com 2020). Thus, Greek authors rendering a name as Menes would not be an indication of the form of the source word from *mdw nṯr*, but would rather tell us about how the grammar of the Greek language works. How someone writing in Greek may choose to represent any names or words from a different, unrelated language is clearly not the best way to ascertain the specific source word—especially when, in this case, the actual source word is readily available in *mdw nṯr* for all to read. Yet, incredibly, the book argues that:

> The transliteration of Ir-ka-amen to Ergamenes clearly demonstrates that the name 'Menes' refers to the word Amen and that the Egyptian priest Manetho stated that the founding Pharaoh of ancient Egypt carried the royal name of Amen (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:11).

This is simply faulty logic and a mistake that no one who has actually seriously studied *mdw nṯr* or who has actually read the primary source texts could ever make. In this case, the intransitive verb from which the name *mnỉ* 'Meni (He who endures)' is derived is clearly *mn* 'be firm, established, enduring (of king)' (Vygus 2015:1378). Adding the *-ỉ/-y* to *mn* 'enduring' makes it 'He who endures' (Lundström 2020g). Anyone with even the most rudimentary knowledge of *mdw nṯr* should be aware of this very regular process. Indeed, even anyone <u>without</u> knowledge of *mdw nṯr* should at least be able to observe that *nswt bity mnỉ* 'Nswt Bity Meni' and *ỉmn* 'Amen' are clearly not the same word and, therefore, it would be wrong to treat them as such.

Indeed, if primary sources written in *mdw nṯr* were consulted, one would find *nswt bity mnỉ* 'Nswt Bity Meni' in one entry of the 'Turin' papyrus that the authors mention in passing (Gardiner 1959:II:10). They would find another entry written as *nswt bity mnỉ* 'Nswt Bity Meni' (Gardiner 1959:II:11, von Beckerath 1999:38-39, 1:E2).

In neither case is their "Menes" or  *imn* 'Amen' to be found in the original  *mdw nṯr* 'Hieroglyphs.' More pointedly, *nswt bity mni* 'Nswt Bity Meni' is clearly different from  *imn* 'Amen' in terms of both form and semantic content as mentioned. The two words simply have the same phonemes in them in the same order. Nonetheless, the book continues in this worrying vein to the tune of the following:

> What are the etymological and linguistic roots of the name 'Menes?' Menes is a Greek transliteration of the word Amen (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:11).

However, this is another methodological lapse in that the book does not include any consideration that there is a multitude of other words in  *mdw nṯr* that have the consonant sequence /m/ + /n/ in that order **other** than  *imn* 'Amen' and which could, thereby, be the source of the word as it may or may not happen to be rendered in Greek. Indeed, a cursory search of Vygus (2015) turns up a whopping 436 words in  *mdw nṯr* that have the Gardiner sign Y5—the biliteral  *mn*, which is the same glyph used in the word *imn* 'Amen'. Some of these other words are shown in Table 1.

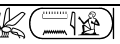
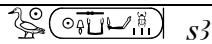
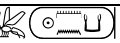
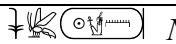
Table 1: Abridged sample of words in  mdw nṯr 'Hieroglyphs' that contain bilateral mn, but that do not mean imn 'Amen' (Vygus 2015)

 *mn* 'be firm, established, enduring (of king)' (intransitive verb)	 *mnit* 'mooring post, whipping post' (noun)
 *mns3* 'ejaculation, orgasm' (noun)	*mny* 'corvée, forced labour' (noun)
 *mnw* 'club, cudgel' (noun)	 *mn* 'sick man, the wretched man' (noun)
 *mnst* 'lack' (noun)	 *mnṯw* 'Bedouin' (noun)
 *mni* 'die' (intransitive verb)	*mnw* 'pain' (noun)

This means that there are literally hundreds of words **other** than  *imn* 'Amen' from which any supposed Greek rendering of Menes could potentially be derived. Below in

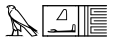
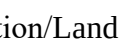
Table 2 is an abridged list of rulers with Gardiner sign Y5  *mn* in their names, wherein those names are <u>not</u> derived from the word  *imn* 'Amen.'

Table 2: Abridged list of rulers with Gardiner sign Y5 *mn in their names, that are not derived from the word*  *imn 'Amen' (Vygus 2015)*

 *Nswt Bity mni* 'Meni (He who endures)' (Lundström 2020g)	 *Nswt Bity smn-n-Rᶜ* 'Nswt Bity Smen-en-Ra (The one whom Ra has made firm)' (Lundström 2020i)
 *sꜣ Rᶜ mn-kꜣ-Rᶜ* 'Son of Ra, the Men-Ka-Ra (Established one of the ka of Ra)' (Lundström 2020j)	 *sꜣ Rᶜ Mnṯw-m-sꜣf* 'Son of Ra, Montu-m-Saf (Montu is his protection)' (Lundström 2020k)
 *mn ḫꜣw ḥr* 'Men-Khau-Hor (Established of appearances of Hr)' (Lundström 2020l)	 *sꜣ Rᶜ smnḫ-kꜣ-rᶜ ḏsr-ḫprw* 'Son of Ra Smenkh-Ka-Ra, Djoser Kheperu (Potent is the ka of Ra, sacred of forms)' (Lundström 2020a)
 *Nswt Bity mn-kꜣ-Rᶜ* 'Nswt Bity, Men-Ka-Ra (Established one of the ka of Ra)' (Lundström 2020b)	 *Nswt Bity Mn-ḫpr-Rᶜ* 'Nswt Bity Men-Kheperu-Ra (Lasting is the Manifestation of Ra)' (Lundström 2020c)
 *sꜣ Rᶜ mnṯw-ḥtp* 'Son of Ra Montuhotep (Montu is at peace)' (Lundström 2020d)	 *Nswt Bity Mn-Mꜣʿt-Rᶜ* Men-Maat-Ra (Enduring is the Truth of Ra) (Lundström 2020e)

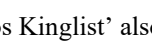
There is an adage that states "If your only tool is a hammer, then every problem looks like a nail" (Investigator 2014). In this case, it appears that if one's knowledge of  *mdw nṯr* is limited to  *imn* 'Amen,' one will be hard pressed to understand that there are other names that have /m/ and /n/ in them, in that order, that are not traceable to *imn* 'Amen,' but which are clearly attested in the historical record.

This begs the question of "Were actual primary source documents not consulted?" After all, as mentioned above, the name is attested very clearly in the so-called 'Turin' Canon. Indeed, the so-called 'Turin' Canon, the so-called 'Abydos Kinglist', the

so-called 'Palermo stone,' the seal impression of  *ḳȝi-ꜥ ḥr* 'Qa'a (The raised arm of) Heru,' and the seal impression of  *ḥr dn* 'Heru Den (The Slaughterer)' are the authoritative primary sources for the names of the earliest rulers of  Kmt 'Black Nation/Land of the Blacks.'[1] Why, then, do the authors seem to think it prudent to hop over actual textual records from  *Kmt* 'Black Nation/Land of the Blacks' itself to rely on supposed transliterations of Greek authors that they clearly did not even deem necessary to check for themselves? As mentioned previously, in all actual fact, Herodotus rather represented the name as ***Μῖνα/Μῖνι*** 'Mina/Mini'—not Menes as erroneously claimed by the authors.

Indeed, to go from a supposed "Menes" that Herodotus did not even write to then guess that the original word in  *mdw nṯr* must have been *imn* 'Amen' would be tantamount to saying **Salim**, **slime**, **slim**, **slam**, **slum**, and **Islam** are all the same word because they look vaguely similar on the surface in that they have the same consonants in the same order and they may or may not happen to be represented in the same way in Greek! If someone were to make such unsubstantiated conjectures, he/she would be prudently advised to simply learn the English language (and/or Arabic) and to quit guessing.

Again, as far as the book goes, it looks like instance after instance of running with surface resemblance in terms of how a word happens to be rendered in the Latin script and then adding in a back story rather than actually understanding morphosemantics, historical linguistics, or how the grammar of  *mdw nṯr* actually works at even the most basic level. These are the pitfalls of writing about a language without actually taking the time to study that language well (or at all). Similarly, it is the result of tackling what must certainly be regarded as a complex and technical linguistics-related study without sufficient linguistics training. Indeed, the book's lack of any coherent methodology does not allow for disambiguation between surface look-alikes and actual substantive etymological relation based on thorough research and evidence-based analysis. It is methodologically flawed to

[1] It is worth noting that the so-called 'Abydos Kinglist' also has  *Nswt Mni* 'Nswt Meni' as its very first entry Lundström, Peter. 2020f, "Abydos King List", Web: Pharaoh.se. Retrieved 16 June 2020, 2020 (https://pharaoh.se/abydos-king-list).

rely on a purported Greek transcription rather than consulting the actual *mdw nṯr* text in question to simply read what it says.

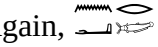
Another glaring mistake is made in the following passage:

> The **writing of Narmer's name carried the phonetic value of n'r**, which because of **its proximity to the catfish sign** on the artifact in which it was discovered has been interpreted as equivalent to the word catfish. (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:11-12) [bold emphasis added]

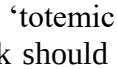
Such a statement reveals an inability or unwillingness to consult relevant source texts. More pointedly, even if source texts are consulted, it is of the utmost importance to actually learn how to read them. To say "The writing of Narmer's name carried the phonetic value of n'r" does not make sense given that the authors do not represent it phonetically, but decide to use an apostrophe rather than an International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcription to write the name. What they render with an apostrophe would be *nꜥr* if one was to actually even follow Egyptological transliteration convention. However, this convention is still never to be confused with the actual "phonetic value" of the word mentioned in the book (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:11). It is common knowledge and "The fact cannot be stressed enough that the transcription is **purely conventional**. The Egyptological transcription must not be interpreted as a phonological and even less as a phonetic representation" (Peust 1999:47) (bold emphasis added). Thus, the means by which they came by the phonetic value is another head-scratcher. Further, to mention the writing of the name Narmer in "proximity to the catfish sign" means that the authors are utterly lost when it comes to *mdw nṯr* itself (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:11-12). The writing of the name is not in "proximity to" the "catfish sign," the catfish **<u>is itself</u>** one of the two glyphs (a triliteral and a biliteral, respectively) actually used to write the name as shown in Figure 1. The two glyphs can be read clearly in the examples below:

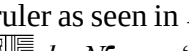
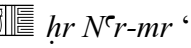
Figure 1: Extract from the Hr Nar-mr 'Heru Narmer' Palette (JE32169)

1. *nꜥr* 'catfish' (Vygus 2015:714)
   mr 'painful' (Vygus 2015:1145)

Again,  *nʿr* ‘catfish’ represents half of the name; it is not in “proximity to” the name as shown in the *srḫ* ‘serekh’ of Figure 1.[2] The book goes on in words that can only be described as both confused and confusing saying:

> Yet the phonogram n’r seems to be a forerunner to the later *imn hru* or *mn* or, meaning Amen Heru and the catfish symbol was simply the ‘shamanic’ and ‘totemic’ symbol used by the king to convey his power as an expression of the natural world and his allegiance to his clan. (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:12)

By what means has their “n’r” transformed into either “imn hru or mn,” which somehow also means “Amen Heru?” What is the phonological rule by which this supposed transformation takes place? In what phonological environment? What are the natural classes of sounds involved and what are the implications throughout the phonetic inventory? The reader is left to only guess. Also, which supposed clan is this? Without a reference or shred of evidence of this phantom clan to which allegiance is being paid in sight, the reader is left, once again, to guess. We are also left to wonder what exactly is a ‘shamanic’ or ‘totemic’ symbol doing in the middle of a  *srḫ* ‘serekh’ and on what basis the book should include the notion that a triliteral, rather than simply being read, should be regarded as such.

Even more disturbing is the revelation that the authors seem to think that  *ḥr Nʿr-mr* ‘Heru Narmer’ as a whole was a title as evinced in the following quote from the book, which states that “The name ‘Narmer’ was not the personal name of the founding king of Egyptian dynastic civilization, but a royal title was Heru Amen the ‘Soaring Falcon of Amen’” (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:12). Even the beginner knows of what is referred to as the so-called **“Horus name”** of each ruler wherein  *ḥr* is typically written above the **personal name** of the ruler as seen in  *ḥr ḳ3i-ʿ* ‘Heru Qa’a’s’ seal impression which shows the name  *ḥr Nʿr-mr* ‘Heru Narmer’ to the far bottom right:

[2] Lit. *srḫ* ‘cause/make to know’ with the causative *s* followed by the verb *rḫ* ‘know.’ The authors do not make mention of the actual breakdown of the word but rather mention “the symbol of the serekh façade which is clearly a metaphor to describe the ‘House of Amen.’”

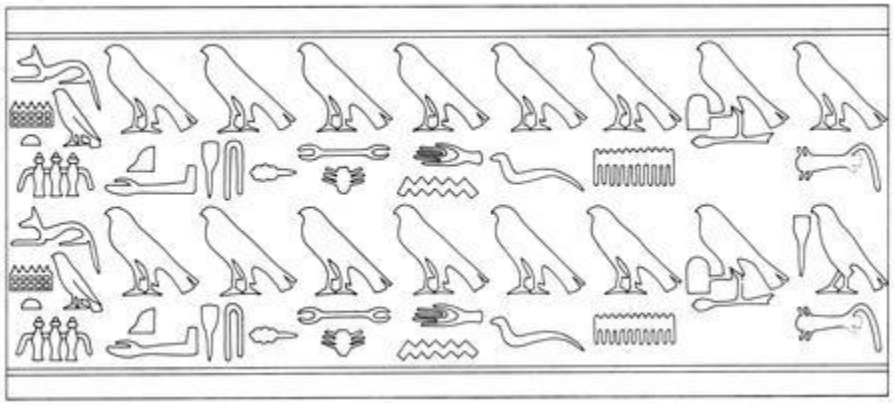
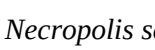
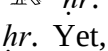
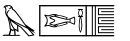


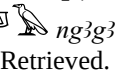
Figure 2: Necropolis seal impression of  *Ḳɜi-ʿ ḥr 'Qa'a (The raised arm of) Hr' (Dreyer 1987:36)*

However, the word  *imn* 'Amen' is conspicuously missing. So, what new information, then, are the authors actually bringing to the table? Knowledge of "Horus names" that have been known and understood for well over a century (Petrie 1888)? The insertion of the word  *imn* 'Amen' where it is not written? The erasure of the glyphs  *nʿr-mr* where they actually are written? The reader is left to wonder what he/she is supposed to actually do with all of this. Another point missing from the discussion is that the early rulers of  Kmt 'Black Nation/Land of the Blacks' were known as  *šmsw ḥr* 'Followers of Heru' making it evident why the earliest names of rulers, and indeed, names of rulers throughout the history of  *Kmt* 'Black Nation/Land of the Blacks' were prefaced with  *ḥr*. After all, the rulers were understood as being the very incarnation of  *ḥr*. Yet, again, the authors seem obliviousness to all this in their desperation to rope in an unwilling  *imn* 'Amen' by some means, no matter how dubious the grounds for their claim may be.

In the book, we also find the following: "This royal title was Heru Amen the 'Soaring Falcon of Amen'" (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:12). Here, I must point out that what is featured is, as a rule, a perched falcon rather than a "soaring falcon" in conjunction with

the name.[3] Where in  *ḥr Nʿr-mr* 'Heru Narmer' the authors find "soaring" or "Amen" is a mystery. However, it should be noted that one cannot simply create meanings out of thin air as neither "soaring" nor  *imn* 'Amen' feature in the name *ḥr Nʿr-mr* 'Heru Narmer.' While the authors argue that the  *srḫ* 'serekh' should also be read as *imn* 'Amen,' the argument remains unconvincing—particularly for those who have studied uniliterals and are aware that the word *srḫ* 'serekh' should be read as *srḫ* 'serekh.'

In the book, it is declared that "Therefore, Herodotus' and Manetho's 'Menes' and the archaeological discovery of the name 'Narmer' are titles that both refer to the historic royal name of Amen Heru" (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:13). The book does not demonstrate that the personal name  *Nʿr-mr* 'Narmer' is a title. Indeed, if it was a title, one would expect that said title would be applied to others. However, because *ḥr* 'Heru' is the title while  *Nʿr-mr* 'Narmer' is the personal name, it is only *ḥr* 'Heru' that is applied to other rulers.  *Nʿr-mr* 'Narmer,' on the other hand, because it is a personal name and not a title, is not applied to anyone else. Yet, incredibly, the statement is made that "The name 'Narmer' was not the personal name of the founding king of Egyptian dynastic civilization, but a royal title carried also by other kings of the pre-dynastic and early dynastic period" (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:12). Who were these kings? What were their personal names? Where is the primary-source evidence that illustrates the existence of these phantom kings? Indeed, if  *Nʿr-mr* 'Narmer' is a so-called "title", the burden of proof is on the authors of the book to show evidence that any other ruler had the so-called "title"  *Nʿr-mr* 'Narmer' prefacing his/her personal name, whatever that may

[3] In  *mdw nṯr*, the following words to soar (cloudwards) are as follows:
 *ng3g3* soar (of wind) Vygus, Mark. 2015. "Middle Egyptian Dictionary." Web: Pyramid Texts Online. Retrieved.
 *3g3p* clouds, be overcast, soar cloudwards ibid.
 *igp* clouds, be overcast, soar cloudwards ibid.
 *igp* clouds, be overcast, soar cloudwards ibid.
 (*i*)*gp* be overcast (of sky), soar cloudwards ibid.

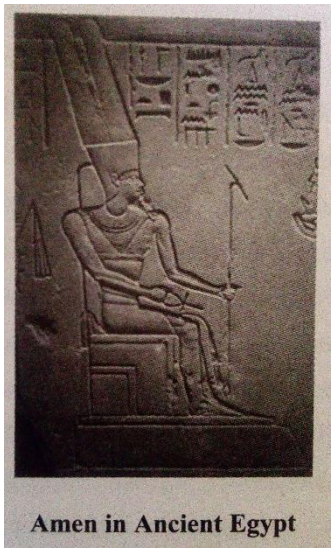


Figure 3: Image from the book (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:15)

have been. Further, the *ḥr* 'Heru' name of every other ruler, which also appeared in a *srḫ* 'serekh' would also have to be dealt with in the same way—an unwieldy proposition.

Another demonstration of a dearth of knowledge with regard to *mdw nṯr* is evinced in ascribing incorrect captions to images when the *mdw nṯr* is clearly visible in the image itself for all to read. An instance of this can be seen on page 15 where the caption in English says "Amen in Ancient Egypt" but in *mdw nṯr* it clearly says *ỉmn-Rꜥ nswt nṯrw* 'Amen **Ra** Niswt Netcheru (King of Divinities)' not just Amen as mistakenly claimed by the authors (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:15).

Figure 4: Figurine of Rꜥ 'Ra' in the Egyptian Museum (Photo Credit Ọbádélé Kambon 2016)

On the following line, it says "The Amen also stood alone as a supreme divinity and was often described as 'the One and only One without a second whose names are manifold and innumerable" (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:15). Troublingly, the authors write "Amon is a variation of Amen while Wi and Ra constitute appellations for Amen" (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:39). Firstly, *Rꜥ* 'Ra,' is not an "appellation" but is the *Ntr* 'Netcher (Divinity)' associated with 'the sun,' who was seen as being on par with *ỉmn* 'Amen (The Hidden One).' Thus the amalgamation of the two as *ỉmn-Rꜥ nswt nṯrw* 'Amen **Ra** Niswt Netcheru (King of Divinities)' as clearly inscribed in the photograph that they use as reproduced here in Figure 3. Apparently the authors are unaware of the existence of *Rꜥ* 'Ra,' as a *Ntr* 'Netcher (Divinity)' in his own right as shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5 and they think of Ra as some sort of appellation—making skeptical minds question the lead author's "decades of research as a philologist and scholar of ancient Egyptian history and religion" (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:foreword).

Secondly, while there is no source for this quote cited, it looks suspiciously like a translation by E.A. Wallis Budge, who writes "Adoration to thee, O Amen-Ra" and goes

Figure 5: Ọbádélé Kambon standing with a depiction of Rꜥ 'Ra' in Cairo (Photo Credit: Ọbádélé Kambon 2016)

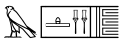
on to translate the latter part of the adoration as "thou One, thou Only One who hast no second whose names are manifold and innumerable" (Budge 1913:195-196). While the authors may not be able to read *mdw nṯr* in the picture they provided on page 15 of their book (without photo credit), they can certainly read the English translation provided by Budge which clearly reads "Amen-Ra" and not simply Amen (Budge 1913:195). Further, the fact that the authors use a quotation without citing their source would be regarded by many as plagiarism.

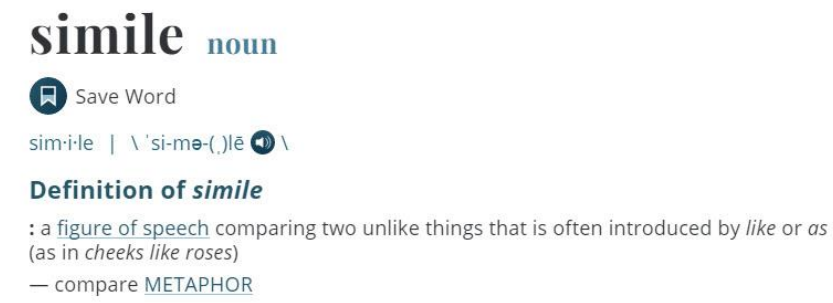
To move to the section featuring the Akan language, we find the quote "The Akans, before their exodus, belonged to the Ayoko clan whose primary deity was the falcon" (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:24). Apparently, the authors did not deem it necessary to study the Akan language to know that the name of the matriclan in question is *Ɔyokoɔ* not "Ayoko" (although it may sound like "Ayoko" to the untrained ear). Further, the *akorɔma* 'hawk' is not an *ɔbosom* 'deity,' but rather what is referred to in Akan as *akyeneboa* or *akraboa*—commonly rendered as 'totem' in English (Morgan 2020).[4] In any case, the book fails to mention the other seven mmusuaban 'matrilineages/matriclans' of the Asante: namely the Ɛkoɔna represented by the *ɛkoɔ* 'water buffalo;' the Biretuo represented by *ɔsebɔ* 'leopard;' the Asona, represented by *kwaakwaadabi* 'crow;' the Agona, represented by the *akoo* 'parrot;' the Aduana, represented by the *ɔkraman* 'dog;' the Asakyiri, represented by the *ɔpɛtɛ* 'vulture,' and the Asɛneɛ, represented by the *apan* 'bat.' The authors apparently focus on the falcon because it seems to be in alignment with their back story, but effectively ignore all other Akan people who are not from that one clan.

Another questionable piece of scholarship is found in the following passage which states:

[4] Perhaps it is here that the authors could revisit their "'shamanic' and 'totemic' symbol" discussion.

> **Ra** referred to the sun. **Ra** had a simile [sic] in the word **Wi or Wii 'the** sun'. Thus when calling the God of Gods with His right sobriquet, one could arrive at either Amen-Ra or Amon-wi (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:34) [bold in original text]

It is at this point that the reader is made aware that the authors do not seem to know what a simile is or how to use that word appropriately. Secondarily, the reader is made aware that the book does not take into account the fact that  *-wi/-wy* is the masculine dual form in  *mdw nṯr* and has nothing to do with 'the sun' (Allen 2014, Gardiner 1957). Indeed, Mfantse, a dialect of Akan, and  *mdw nṯr* are not one and the same whereby one would be able to project one's understanding of a Mfantse word onto  *mdw nṯr* as a shortcut to avoid having to actually learn  *mdw nṯr* itself. This lack of understanding is evident in the following quote that states "The word Wi occurs as suffix of the names of two pharaohs; (1) The pharaoh Hotephesekhemwi, the 21st pharaoh of the II Dynasty 2890-26876 [sic] B.C.E and Khasekhemwi, of the 4th pharaoh of the same Dynasty" (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:34). Again, it is clear that the authors cannot read  *mdw nṯr,* as upon doing so, one would clearly see the two  *sḫm* scepters of authority side-by-side in the written name  *ḥr ḥtp-sḫm.wi* 'lit. Heru, Hotepsekhemwy (peace of the two scepters)'—a clear sign that we are dealing with the masculine dual and not the Mfantse word for 'the sun' (Petrie 1901:plate VIII (8-11), von Beckerath 1999:42-43, 1:H).


simile noun

Save Word

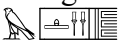
sim·i·le | \ ˈsi-mə-(ˌ)lē \

Definition of *simile*

: a figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by *like* or *as* (as in *cheeks like roses*)

— compare METAPHOR

Figure 6: Definition of Simile (Merriam-Webster 2018)

Even for someone who does not know how to read, in taking a look at the  *mdw nṯr*, one would at the very least clearly see two of something that would demand explanation (in this case, the explanation would be that it is an instantiation of the masculine dual form). Further, while the date "26876" given in the text is clearly a typo, the more egregious error is the positioning of name  *ḥr ḥtp-sḫm.wi* 'lit. Heru, Hotepsekhemwy (peace of the two scepters)' as the 21st of Dynasty II. The problematic nature of superimposing the modern Manethonian-derived Egyptological concept of Dynasty aside, even if one is going

to use that system, one should at least get it right that this is the 1st and founding ruler of Dynasty II. Secondly,  *ḥr stḫ ḫʿ sḫm.wi* 'Hr Stx Khasekhemwy (appearance of the two scepters)' is the 11th and final ruler of that dynasty (Lundström 2020h). More importantly, the analysis of the name given in the book is yet another case whereby even a basic understanding of  *mdw nṯr* grammar is replaced by the misunderstanding that  *wi* 'masculine dual' is a so-called "simile" for  *Rʿ* 'Ra.'

Next, I will turn my attention to the second section of the book which features the authors' understanding of  *mdw nṯr* words through the lens of the Akan language and vice versa. A brief sample of these ill-fated interpretations is given below. The first of these that I will look at is their oddly-rendered "Amenhotepe." The authors' Akan-based analysis is clearly derived from modern Egyptological rendering in Latin characters rather than an understanding of  *mdw nṯr*:

2. a. Amen ho te pɛ[5]
   Amen body clean perfect
   "Amenhotepe i.e. 'Amen is of immaculate holiness'"
   (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:42)

This would be a workable analysis if the name was based on an Akan phrase, however, the morphosemantics of Akan and the morphosemantics of  *mdw nṯr* are not one and the same. Further, without an understanding of morpheme boundaries, errors are bound to ensue.

Below is the analysis of the name based on how  *mdw nṯr* actually works:

b.  
   imn *ḥtp*
   Amen peace
   'Amen is at peace'

As we can see the authors clearly do not know where the morpheme boundaries are and, therefore, they try to break up a single triliteral *htp* 'peace' into constituent parts that

[5] The book also demonstrates the lack of the keyboard that would allow the the authors the ability to render Akan characters ɛ and ɔ. The correct spelling of the word that they translate is provided here, however.

obviously do not exist in the original  *mdw nṯr*. Their method, or lack thereof, would be akin to analyzing the name with English to say that it is etymologically derived from "Amen hot E.P." meaning that Amen just dropped a hot new record album. As ridiculous as such a proposition would be to all and sundry, in the case of this book, the reader is, apparently, just supposed go along for the bumpy ride. Indeed, to use one language to analyze another is a path that is fraught with folly, particularly when at least one of the languages in question is not understood by the one doing the analysis. This problem is compounded when the writer is similarly ignorant of comparative/historical linguistic methodology. Alarmingly none of the three authors seemed to find any problem with the analysis itself nor with the fundamental issues that led to the problematic analysis in the first place.

The next interpretation is given by the authors as:

3. a. Amen me se
   Amen 1SG.POSS father
   "Amennese: (Amen-me-se) i.e 'Amen, my Father'"

which should be properly rendered as:

b.  
   ỉmn *msỉ*
   Amen give birth
   'born of Amen'

As can be clearly seen, the word  *msỉ* 'give birth' cannot be broken down into my father, which in *mdw nṯr* would be *it.ỉ*—an entirely different construction.

In a similar vein, the authors provide another dubious analysis in (3):

4. a. Amen ne mo na ɛ-te
   Amen CONJ 2SG.PL FOC 3SG.INAN-live
   "Amenemonete: i.e 'Amen lives with you': He was a godfather in the mansion of Amenehotepe III."
   (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:42)

In this case, an actual analysis of what the real name would be cannot be given because without any primary (or secondary) source mentioned in the book, it is impossible to know

what is meant by "godfather in the mansion" or who any personage by that name may actually have been as attested by the historical record. Regardless, to concoct a Twi meaning for a name in written in Latin characters without a source and also without 𓂋𓏏𓈖 *mdw nṯr* as a referent is, once again, a path fraught with folly.

The book continues in this worrying vein of using Akan to interpret 𓂋𓏏𓈖 *mdw nṯr* words/names as they happen to be transcribed in Latin characters or using Latin-character renderings of 𓂋𓏏𓈖 *mdw nṯr* in an attempt to make sense of Akan names. While it would be fair to address each entry one-by-one, again, to do so would require a book of equal or greater length than *The Origin of the Word Amen: Ancient Knowledge the Bible has Never Told*, which tips the scale at 89 pages.

In sum, because the authors have no apparent method apart from seeing which word looks like which when rendered into the Latin script, they are forced to rely on ill-fated attempts to make square pegs fit into round holes. These back stories are buttressed by alleging "corruption of the name" when the facts of the matter refuse to be packaged neatly into whatever interpretation is being argued for (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:36). In the final analysis, a lack of knowledge of 𓂋𓏏𓈖 *mdw nṯr* as well as a lack of understanding of basic linguistic principles such as the concept of the morpheme, the nature of diachronic phonological change, and many other important aspects of specific technical knowledge doom the entire exercise from the outset and consign the vast majority of surface look-alikes to the dustbin before even getting started.

Other problems with the book include unsupported declarations like:

> According to one local historian the authors interviewed while conducting research on this book, a song dedicated to Amen was the last song that many Africans sang before entering the notorious slave castles and departing to the New World. Whether or not these songs were exclusively sung by Akans who were sold off to slavery is not known (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:26)

Firstly, how does "the last song" turn into "these songs?" Such declarations leave the reader wondering who this mysterious local historian is and what his/her name is. Further, how does he/she know what song "many" Afrikans were singing hundreds of years ago when they entered "notorious slave castles" (often spirited in by enslavers under the cover of darkness to avoid detection—but mysteriously singing audibly, which would doubtless

attract unwanted attention)? Also, how many Afrikans constitutes "many?" Thirty? One hundred? One thousand? What exactly are the lyrics of this song and/or these songs? In short, how did this unnamed person come to know what he/she knows, assuming he/she actually even exists. If this person exists, why is he/she not properly identified and cited, even as personal correspondence, so that the information could be verified by other researchers?

The authors continue with the following:

> The African American spiritual 'Amen' is a remnant of an ancient chant sung to the Amen in Ghana. Although the song was arranged by the famous African-American composer Jester Hairston, the song predates his findings. It was during the slave trade and the middle passage that it became a unifying, Pan African survival chant for those Africans transported to the United States. […] Therefore it should not be surprising that the African American spiritual 'Amen' is actually a traditional West African chant to the 'god' Amen redeployed in a new form in the context of American slavery. (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:28)

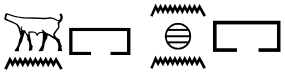
The burning question here, once again, is on what basis are these claims being made? Is this more testimony from the unnamed local historian? Is it conjecture? Is it pure (anachronistic) imagination? Again, without a source or citation by which the critical (and skeptical) reader could pursue even the very possibility of following up, we are left with more questions than answers.

Another error is found in the passage which mentions the "Amenemhet Kings" and that "An inscription at Thebes tells that he probably was the son of a woman named Nofret from Elephantine—a tradition that the prophecy of Neferti confirms" (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:75-76). In referring to the "Prophecy of Neferti" it appears that the authors are once again content to refer to a text without actually reading it as the "Prophecy of Neferti" does not mention any Nofret from Elephantine. The relevant lines of the text are as follows:

nswt	*pw*	*r*	*iit*	*n*	*rsi*	*Imny*
Nswt	DEM	FUT	come	from	south	Ameny

'This *Nswt* will come from the South, Ameny,'
[…]

s3 *ḥmt* *pw* *n* *t3-st* *ms* *pw* *n*
son woman DEM GEN land-of-bow (Ta-Seti) child DEM GEN
'Son of this woman of Ta-Seti, child of'



ḫn(*w*)-*nḫn*
Inside-Nekhen
'The interior of Nekhen.' (Kambon and Botchway Forthcoming:43)

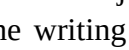
That is to say,  *nḫn* 'Nekhen' (so-called Hierakonopolis) is not the same as  *3bw* 'Abu' (so-called Elephantine) nor is the actual name of his mother identified in the text.

While a sympathetic, yet critical reader—such as myself—would not doubt the sincerity with which the authors approached the subject of their book, unfortunately, it is hamstrung from the outset by factual, methodological, typographical, scholarly and numerous other errors and flaws. These errors and flaws are too many to mention and, indeed, they raise more questions than the book has the ability to answer.

4. Authors' Affiliation and Authority

According to the first author, Agya O. Kwame Osei, he states in the foreword that "I schooled in Ghana and obtained degrees in English and post graduate studies in Linguistics from both Cape Coast University and the University of Ghana (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:foreword)." This begs the question of what degree did he receive and from which university? Did he complete his post graduate studies? If so, what was the exact nature of his postgraduate degree and, again, from which university? As with most of the book, this information leaves more questions than answers.

In an email correspondence, Salim Faraji, Ph.D. stated "I am a historian steeped in archaeological and anthropological research with modest training in Coptic, Metu Neter and ancient Greek" (Faraji 2020). Whatever the nature of the training in Greek may have been, that training is not readily apparent in terms of how the original Greek text written by Herodotus was not consulted to see that Herodotus wrote *Mῖνα/Mῖνι* rather than

"Menes" as claimed by the authors. Also statements like "Narmer's name carried the phonetic value of n'r, which because of its proximity to the catfish sign […]" help us see that the authors are unaware that the "catfish sign" **itself** is what is transliterated as *nʿr* and that it is not in "proximity to" any other rendering of his name (Osei, Issa and Faraji 2020:11). It is also not clear why Dr. Faraji writes "Metu Neter" when the phonetic complements, sometimes used in the writing of the words  *mdw ntr* 'written characters, script,' clearly show that the conventional transliteration requires a *d* rather than the *t* he renders in "Metu" (Vygus 2015:942). If there is some type of devoicing rule that the author posited but which remained unstated, it should be conveyed clearly.

A web page of Medgar Evers College in New York lists second author Jahi Issa, Ph.D. as Substitute Assistant Professor of History (College 2020). Together with one of his co-authors of this book (Salim Faraji, Ph.D.), he has written "The Obama Administration: revisiting and reconsidering AFRICOM" and "The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Louisiana: Creating a Provisional Government in Exile" independently (Issa and Faraji 2009, Issa 2005). While not much from what is readily accessible online ties Dr. Issa to historical linguistics, one would not begrudge him the fact that an understanding of history would, indeed, prove to be an invaluable asset with regard to the objective laid out in the book.

5. Physical Content of the Book

The first thing that strikes me as a reader in my first and second readings of the book is the lack of  *mdw nṯr* 'Hieroglyphs' itself in a book about the word "Amen" apart from what looks like some type of scan or copied image. The use of a *mdw nṯr* 'Hieroglyphs' processing program, such as JSesh or similar, is missing from the text making the engagement with the language limited to Latin-script renderings This is a serious shortcoming.

Also, out of 11 photos/graphics, by my count, the only one which is credited is the one on page 9. The reader is left to guess whether the others are any of the authors' own work of simply downloaded from the Internet. Oddly, the front and back book covers feature *mdw nṯr* writing as a background, but, ironically enough the word  *imn* 'Amen' is conspicuously missing from the cropped photo chosen for this purpose.

There is a Table of Contents that points the reader to the organization of this concise book including the following:

- Preface
- Introduction and Amen in Akan and Ancient Nubia
- "King Narmer's Real Name"? Amen and Nile Valley Dynastic Civilization
- Amen in Classical Nile Valley Divine Kingship
- Brief History of Amen in Nubia and Egypt
- The Influence of Amen in the Old Testament
- Amen in the Greco-Roman World
- The Presence of Amen in Early Christianity and the New Testament
- The Flourishing of Amen in Late Antique Africa
- The Amen Tradition in West Africa
- The Amen Tradition in the Africa Diaspora via the Slave Trade
- The Origin of the Word Amen by O. Kwame Osei

The book also boasts two short appendices, the first of which deals with listing all of the occurrences of the word Amen in the Bible. The second is somewhat of an epilogue consisting of a brief discussion on cultural continuity between  *Kmt* 'Black Nation/Land of the Blacks' and the rest of the continent.

The book lacks an index, but there is a selected glossary that extends from page 74-page 83. There is not much in the way of scholarly citations in the work, but there are a few sparing footnotes used for this purpose as on page 8, for example. The selected bibliography is found on pages 84-88 and features both scholarly and non-scholarly sources.

6. Overall evaluation

While the book is clearly meant for a lay audience, an expert audience would be better equipped to read with a critical eye. Someone without a background in Akan,  *mdw nṯr*, or linguistics, for example, could clearly take the book at face value and presume competent and legitimate authority on the part of the authors—particularly because two of the three have "Ph.D." boldly emblazoned beside their names right on the front cover.

However, the numerous errors at every level mean that the book is, in fact, very dangerous for the audience for whom the book is intended. This is simply because very few readers may have the time and/or energy to follow up to see if what the authors are saying is actually true by cross-referencing and fact-checking with primary and/or even secondary resources.

The main strength of the book is that it presents some data that may be used for future researchers to comprehensively support or repudiate the book's thesis with evidence based on historical linguistics methodology. Further, the book may serve to initiate a conversation to sensitize those who may not know of the word  *imn* 'Amen' outside of the modern Judeo-Christian context.

The main weakness of the book, as mentioned previously, is that the authors would have been served well by a pre-publication review by anyone who reads and writes  *mdw nṯr*, someone versed in morphosemantics, as well as someone with a background in historical/comparative linguistics. In the final analysis, I think the book's thesis that the word  *imn* 'Amen' is etymologically related to some form of the word in contemporary languages, such as Akan, is marred by spurious look-alikes and folk etymologies. These, in turn, betray a lack of knowledge of linguistics in general as well the lack of a thorough understanding of the morphosemantics of the languages under study. In conclusion, in a world where so-called "Afrocentric" scholarship is under attack from a variety of quarters, the efforts of the authors in *The Origin of the Word Amen: Ancient Knowledge the Bible has Never Told* may have actually provided detractors with ammunition by which to make their case. That notwithstanding, the book will, undoubtedly spark conversation. Further, hopefully, it will inspire other scholars to bring linguistics-based expertise to bear to comprehensively substantiate or debunk the arguments made in the book in the interest of restoring  *mꜣʿt* 'Truth' to her rightful place, while  *isft* 'wrong, wrong doing, falsehood' is driven away.

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