

Dear reader,

This is an Author Manuscript of an article published in Jutta Krispenz (ed.), *Scribes as Sages and Prophets*. It agrees with the manuscript submitted by the author for publication but does not include the final publisher's layout or pagination.

Original publication:

Kessler, Rainer

Amos and Wisdom

in: Jutta Krispenz (ed.), *Scribes as Sages and Prophets*. Scribal Traditions in Biblical Wisdom Literature and in the Book of the Twelve, pp. 65–77

Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter 2021 (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 496)

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110483604-004>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

Published in accordance with the policy of De Gruyter Brill:

<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/publishing/for-authors/author-policies/repository-policy-books?lang=en>

Your IxTheo team

Liebe*r Leser*in,

dies ist eine von dem/der Autor*in zur Verfügung gestellte Manuskriptversion eines Aufsatzes, der in Jutta Krispenz (Hrsg.), *Scribes as Sages and Prophets* erschienen ist. Der Text stimmt mit dem Manuskript überein, das der/die Autor*in zur Veröffentlichung eingereicht hat, enthält jedoch nicht das Layout des Verlags oder die endgültige Seitenzählung.

Originalpublikation:

Kessler, Rainer

Amos and Wisdom

in: Jutta Krispenz (Hrsg.), *Scribes as Sages and Prophets*. Scribal Traditions in Biblical Wisdom Literature and in the Book of the Twelve, S. 65–77

Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter 2021 (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 496)

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110483604-004>

Die Verlagsversion ist möglicherweise nur gegen Bezahlung zugänglich.

Diese Manuskriptversion wird im Einklang mit der Policy des Verlags De Gruyter Brill publiziert:

<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/publishing/fuer-autoren/autoren-richtlinien/repository-richtlinie-buecher>

Ihr IxTheo-Team

Amos and Wisdom

Rainer Kessler

It has long been observed that some elements in the book of Amos are close to phenomena which can be found in wisdom texts. More than fifty years ago, this led to the thesis of wisdom influence on the prophecy of Amos of Tekoa.

1. State of Discussion

The thesis of wisdom influence on Amos was developed in the 1960s by Samuel Terrien and Hans Walter Wolff. Refutation followed immediately.

1.1 The Observations of Terrien and Wolff

In his essay on Amos and Wisdom, which appeared in 1962, Samuel Terrien proposed eight specific correlations between the prophet Amos and the biblical wisdom literature: 1. Consecutive numerals used in pairs (Am 1–2); 2. The concept of a relationship between Yhwh and Sheol (Am 9:2); 3. The didactic method of appealing to common sense by running through a series of cause-and-effect relationships (Am 3:3-8); 4. The use of the word *sôd*, “secret” (Am 3:7); 5. The use of the term “to do what is right” (Am 3:10); 6. The sapiential idiom behind the indictment, “And his anger did tear as a prey continually” (Am 1:11); 7. The appellation of “Isaac” for the nation (Am 7:9 and 7:16); 8. The reference to Beer-sheba (Am 5:5 and 8:14) which is connected with Isaac, the father of Esau i.e. the Edomites, who are known for their wisdom.¹ Terrien’s central thesis was “that peculiar affinities existed between Amos and the wise” and that “the prophet received from the sapiential circles some of his ideas”.²

Two years after Terrien, Hans Walter Wolff published his book on the intellectual roots of Amos.³ Wolff expanded and supplemented Terrien’s essay observing a vast amount of wisdom elements in Amos. He divided them into two groups. The first is formed by typical speech forms: 1. Didactic questions (3:3-6, 8; 5:25f; 6:2, 12) (cf. Terrien’s no. 3); 2. The woe-oracles (5:7, 18; 6:1, 3-6, 13); 3. The consecutive numerals (Am 1–2) (cf. Terrien’s no. 1); 4. The admonition (4:4f; 5:4-6, 14f). Wolff’s second group embraces characteristic themes: 1. Israel and the nations (Am 1–2; 3:9; 6:2; 9:7); 2. “To do what is right” (3:10) (cf. Terrien’s no. 5); 3. Justice and righteousness (5:7, 15, 24; 6:12); 4. Other isolated themes.⁴ Wolff explained these similarities as a result of the prophet’s biography; for him Amos was rooted in

¹ Samuel Terrien, “Amos and Wisdom”, in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage*, FS Muilenburg, eds. B.W. Anderson / W. Harrelson (New York: Harper 1962): 108-115, 109-114 [reprint in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, ed. J.L. Crenshaw (New York: KTAV Publishing House 1976): 448-455].

² Terrien, p. 114 .

³ Hans Walter Wolff, *Amos’ geistige Heimat*, WMANT 18 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964); in English: *Amos the Prophet: The Man and His Background* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1973).

⁴ Wolff, *Heimat*, pp. 5-52.

traditional wisdom⁵ and could even himself have been one of the clan elders of the town of Tekoa.⁶

1.2 Refutation by McLaughlin

In the half century since then, the positions of Terrien and Wolff have been discussed in many forms and with different results.⁷ Recently, in an essay which appeared in the 2014 JBL volume, John McLaughlin has re-evaluated “Terrien’s and Wolff’s arguments for wisdom influence in Amos, and specifically for the wisdom tradition as a major social context for the prophet and his message”.⁸ Considering the three main categories used by Terrien and Wolff, namely “wisdom forms, wisdom vocabulary, and wisdom ideas, plus a fourth: geographical links”, he comes to a clear-cut result: “The preceding analysis demonstrates that there is no evidence of influence from wisdom circles on Amos. ... As a result, Amos should no longer be included among the wise, and henceforth commentators should not interpret the prophet, the book, or individual passages in light of the wisdom tradition”.

2. Changing Landscapes

Amos as a clan elder formed by wisdom traditions, or no evidence of influence from wisdom circles on Amos – who is right? My answer is: both are right, or alternatively neither is right. Why this answer? Both positions have the same presuppositions. The first is that there is a clearly defined area which can be called “wisdom tradition”, and which is able to influence other defined areas, for example that of prophecy. The second presupposition is that we are able to grasp a person named Amos who may or may not be influenced by this clearly defined wisdom tradition. Both presuppositions have become questionable in the course of the last few decades of research.

2.1 The Biography of the Prophet

Concerning the person of the prophet, scholars have become more sceptical than they were half a century ago. In the Anchor Bible Commentary by Andersen and Freedman, first published in 1989, we still find a detailed reconstruction of “The Life and Mission of Amos the Shepherd and Prophet”.⁹ Six years later, Jörg Jeremias in his commentary stated that a

⁵ Wolff, *Heimat*, pp. 60f: “... daß Amos selbstverständlich seine angestammte geistige Heimat hatte. Sie ist ... in einem bestimmten Typ der Sippenweisheit [zu suchen].“

⁶ Hans Walter Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 2. Joel, Amos*. BK XIV/2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969 / ²1975), 108: “im Kreise der Sippenältesten”.

⁷ One of the first was J.L. Crenshaw, “The Influence of the Wise upon Amos. The ‘Doxologies of Amos’ and Job 5,9-16; 9,5-10,“ *ZAW* 79 (1967): 42-52. Cp. further Hans Heinrich Schmid, “Amos. Zur Frage nach der 'geistigen Heimat' des Propheten” [1969], in id., *Altorientalische Welt in der alttestamentlichen Theologie*. Sechs Aufsätze (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1974): 121-144.

⁸ Quotations from John L. McLaughlin, “Is Amos (Still) among the Wise?,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 281-303, 283.303.

⁹ Francis I. Andersen / David Noel Freedman, *Amos*. The Anchor Yale Bible 24A (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2008), 83.

reconstruction of the oral speech of Amos is nearly impossible.¹⁰ For a long time, scholars believed that the visions in Am 7:1 – 8:3 came closest to the historical Amos: “We believe that the visions and the account in which they are embedded bring us as close to the person of Amos and his self-understanding as a prophet of Yahweh as we are likely to get.”¹¹ However, even this assumption is now seen as doubtful by more recent authors.¹²

Besides the visions which are stylized as an “autobiographical” account in first person (“This is what the Lord Yhwh showed *me*”, 7:1, 4, 7; 8:1), two texts give information about the prophet in the third person. The first is the heading in 1:1 which tells that Amos was from Tekoa in Judah and prophesied in Israel in the middle of the 8th c. BCE. The information that he was a shepherd (or sheep-raiser or sheep-breeder) is probably taken from 7:10-17, the second “biographical” account on Amos.¹³ This long text consists mainly of quotations of direct speech of Amaziah and Amos. What it comprises as valid biographical information is Amos’s home in the south and the fact that he was not a professional member of a prophetic guild.

This information is not enough to draw any conclusions about the prophet’s possible contact with “wisdom circles”. As a result of recent research, the person of the prophet vanishes. What remains is the book of Amos.

2.2 Wisdom Texts and Literary Production

“Influence – or no influence – from wisdom circles on Amos” – the second pillar of this construction is also about to collapse. It is true that we find different areas of literature within the Hebrew Bible, and one of them is wisdom literature. It is represented for example by the “proverbs of Solomon that the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah copied” according to Prov 25:1. Besides it, we have the legal tradition: “This is the law (the *torah*) that Moses set before the Israelites” (Deut 4:44). And we have the prophetic literature, among it “The words of Amos ... who had visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam ben-Joash the king of Israel, two years before the earthquake”,¹⁴ according to the heading of the book.

It is true that Jeremiah distinguishes between the priest with his torah, the wise man with his counsel, and the prophet with his word (Jer 18:18). In a similar manner, Ezekiel speaks of the priest’s torah, the counsel of the elders and the vision of the prophet (Ezek 7:26). However, this does not mean that priestly and legal tradition on one side, wisdom literature on the other and prophetic books on the third side were formed and transmitted in strictly separated milieus, isolated from each other. According to this model, it would be possible to speak of

¹⁰ Jörg Jeremias, *Der Prophet Amos*. ATD 24/2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1995), IX: “Eine Rekonstruktion der mündlichen Rede des Amos ist nur noch in seltenen Fällen möglich und mit einem nicht geringen Grad an Unsicherheit.”

¹¹ Andersen and Freedman, p. 626.

¹² Jürgen Becker, “Der Prophet als Fürbitter. Zum literarhistorischen Ort der Amos-Visionen,” *VT* 51 (2001): 141-165; Georg Steins, *Gericht und Vergebung. Re-Visionen zum Amosbuch*. SBS 221 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk 2010).

¹³ Cf. Jeremias, p. 1-2.

¹⁴ Translation by Andersen and Freedman, p. 183.

influence from one field on another. But the model is highly questionable. The scribes who write down prophetic oracles, who codify and redact laws, and who collect and redact proverbs, are perhaps not the very same people. However, they share the same scribal education. For Karel van der Toorn the scriptures of the Hebrew Bible are the result of the culture of a literate elite. Their milieu is that of a scribal elite to be found in the temple of Jerusalem.¹⁵ For van der Toorn the scribes behind the Hebrew Bible were attached to the temple as an institutional and intellectual centre; they belonged to the clergy. He quotes Prov 25:1 as the most explicit reference to such scribes. He further contends that the law books were written in the temple, as well as the books of the so-called written prophecy.¹⁶

For David Carr the stress lies on wisdom literature. He holds that “there may have been some sort of identifiable group of particularly educated people—probably of varied professions—who played a role in early Israelite textuality and education through and especially during the late pre-exilic period.” He continues that “books such as Proverbs were produced and used by various members of the elite in education/enculturation”.¹⁷ He then demonstrates that intertextual connections can be shown between wisdom literature and prophetic and legal texts.

3. Social Justice in Amos and in Wisdom Texts

What are the consequences of this new picture of the formation of the Hebrew Bible for the relationship between Amos and wisdom? We do not have space to evaluate all the correlations that Terrien and Wolff found between the prophet and wisdom literature. I will limit myself to the field of social justice. This field is not mentioned at all in Terrien’s eight points; Wolff only touches on it in his point on justice and righteousness.

3.1 The General Situation

My thesis is that the social transformation which began in the eighth century BCE provoked a threefold response. First, prophets criticized social injustice, and their words were later written down. Second, the codification of the law and the redaction of law codes began; most scholars nowadays date the Covenant Code as the oldest collection in the late 8th or early 7th century. And third, wisdom traditions are collected and redacted during the reign of King Hezekiah (Prov 25:1).

All these three reactions to social change share two fundamentals: one is the strong relation with the will of God, the other is what is called today the option for the poor. Both fundamentals are found both in prophecy, especially in Amos, and in the older collections of proverbs (and of course in the torah, but this is not the question at hand).

¹⁵ Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, Massachusetts / London, England: Harvard University Press 2007), 1-2.

¹⁶ van der Toorn, p. 82-87.

¹⁷ David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible. A New Reconstruction* (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press 2011), 428f; cf. also id., *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford et. al.: Oxford University Press 2005).

3.2 Social Justice in Amos and in Proverbs

Social justice is an overall theme in the book of Amos. To illustrate the relationship between the text of Amos and wisdom traditions I limit myself to three examples.

3.2.1 Oppression of the Poor and Needy

The theme of oppression of the poor and needy runs through the book of Amos from its very beginning. The first oracle against Israel enumerates the social types of “the righteous” (*šaddîq*), “the poor” (*’æbjôn*), “the needy” (*dal*), and “the afflicted” (*’ānî*) (2:6-7). All these groups of people reappear in the course of the book, “the righteous” in 5:12; “the poor” in 4:1; 5:12; 8:4, 6; “the needy” in 4:1; 5:11; 8:6; and “the afflicted” in 8:4. They are always portrayed as victims of social violence. The keywords for the interaction with them are “to oppress” (root *’āšaq*) (3:9; 4:1); “to trample (upon)” (root *šā’af*) (2:7; 8:4); “to push out of the way/aside” (root *nāṭah* hiphil) (2:7; 5:12); “to crush” (root *rāṣas*) (4:1); “to afflict” (root *šārar* II) (5:12); and “to exterminate” (root *šābat* hiphil) (8:4).

The same social groups as in Amos also appear in wisdom literature. A special case is “the righteous” (*šaddîq*) who in Proverbs are mainly not seen as victims of social violence (Prov 10:3, 6, 7 et al.). Beside the righteous we find “the poor” (*’æbjôn*) (Prov 14:31; 30:14; 31,9, 20); “the needy” (*dal*) (10:15; 14:31; 19:17 et al.); and “the afflicted” (*’ānî*) (15:15; 22:22; 30:14 et al.). The root “to oppress” (*’āšaq*) is known for the treatment of the poor by the powerful and wealthy (Prov 14:31; 22:16; 28:3 et al.). Also the root *nāṭah* hiphil is used in the same way as in Amos. It can have as object “the way of the afflicted” (Am 2:7) or “the ways of justice” (Prov 17:23) as well as directly the victims (“to push aside the poor”, Am 5:12; and “to push aside the righteous”, Prov 18:5).

Two quotations from Amos and the Proverbs may demonstrate how near prophetic and wisdom texts can come to each other:

Am 4:1 accuses those

“who oppress the needy (עַשְׂקוּ דָלִים = *’āšaq dallîm*),
who crush the poor (אַבְיוֹנִים = *’æbjônîm*)”.

The text then announces God’s judgement on them.

Prov 14:31 says:

“Those who oppress the needy (עַשְׂקוּ דָל = *’ōšēq-dāl*) insult their Maker,
but those who are kind to the poor (אַבְיוֹן = *’æbjôn*) honour him.”

Both texts side with the poor and needy and place God at their side. Both use the verb *’āšaq* for the oppression of the poor, and they denominate the victims with the parallelism of “poor” and “needy”. Ideology and terminology coincide.

3.2.2 Justice in the Gate

A special field where social justice can be violated is the court. Its place in the monarchical period was the city-gate where the elders and other people of influence (royal officials and

officers of the army) met to discuss public affairs and to constitute themselves as a court. The vulnerability of the system consists in that those who have social and economic power are able to manipulate the decisions in their favour. In ch. 5, the prophet Amos laments that the powerful “turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground” (v. 7). The victims are denominated as “the needy, the righteous, and the poor” (vv. 11-12). One means of oppression specifically mentioned is taking bribes (v. 12). The prophet adds to his charges the admonition to “establish justice in the gate” (v. 15).

Also in wisdom texts the gate is known as the place of court decisions (Prov 22:22). The possibility of offering “compensation” (*kāfær*, as in Am 5:12) or a “bribe” (*šōḥad*) is mentioned in Prov 6:35. As the proverbs’ first function is to analyse social reality, some of them describe the power of bribes in a seemingly “neutral” way: “A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of those who give it; wherever they turn they prosper” (17:8); or: “A gift in secret averts anger; and a concealed bribe in the bosom strong wrath” (21:14). This does not mean, however, that the wise accept bribes as a means of influence in the court. Their judgement on bribes is always negative: “The wicked accept a concealed bribe to pervert the ways of justice” (17:23). Like the prophet, the wise have a clear idea of how it should run in the courts: “It is not right to be partial to the guilty, or to subvert the innocent in judgement” (18:5). To the seemingly neutral description of the power of bribes in 21:14 quoted above, they immediately add what in their eyes should be the norm: “When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous, but dismay to evildoers” (21:15).

I will close this section with two quotations from Amos and the Proverbs to demonstrate the close relation between the two different corpora of texts:

Am 5:10-11 denounces those who

“hate the one who reproves in the gate (בשער = *bašša’ar*)”

and who “trample on the needy” (לד = *dāl*).

The prophet announces that they shall not live in the houses they have built nor drink the wine from the vineyards they have planted.

Prov 22:22-23 admonishes:

“Do not rob the needy because they are needy (לד = *dāl*),

or crush the afflicted at the gate (בשער = *bašša’ar*)”.

The proverb then warns that God shall “despoil of life those who despoil them”.

Both texts side with the poor and needy, both claim justice in the gate, and both announce divine intervention against the evildoers.

3.2.3 Weights, Measures, and Balances

The last example is taken from the field of weights, measures, and balances. Fraud in commercial transactions and in handing out credits in silver or grain is known from ancient times. The Laws of Hammurabi (ca. 1792-1750 BCE) mention the case of a fraudulent merchant: “If a merchant gives grain or silver as an interest-bearing loan and when he gives it as an interest-bearing loan he gives the silver according to the small weight or the grain according to the small *sūtu*-measure but when he receives the silver according to the large weight or the grain according to the large *sūtu*-measure, [that merchant] shall forfeit [anything

that he gave].”¹⁸ The Egyptian wisdom instruction of Amenemope (second half of the 2nd millennium BCE) also condemns fraud with weights and measures: “Do not move the scales nor alter the weights, / Nor diminish the fractions of the measure” (XVII,18-19); “Do not make for yourself deficient weights” (XVIII,4); “Beware of disguising the measure, / So as to falsify its fractions; / Do not force it to overflow, / Nor let its belly be empty. / Measure according to its true size, / Your hand clearing exactly” (XVIII,15-20).¹⁹

The motif of false weights, measures, and balances is well attested in Israel’s prophetic literature. Hosea describes Israel as “a trader, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress” (Hos 12:8 [Engl. 12:7]). The prophet Micah quotes words of Yhwh himself: “Can I forget the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, / and scant measure that is accused? / Can I tolerate wicked scales / and a bag of dishonest weights?” (Mic 6:10-11). A similar charge in the book of Amos will be cited below.

Hebrew wisdom literature is also aware of the problem of fraud with the help of weights, measures, and balances. It condemns it: “Diverse weights and diverse measures are both alike an abomination to Yhwh” (Prov 20:10), and: “Differing weights are an abomination to Yhwh, and false scales are not good” (20:23). Yhwh himself guarantees correct balances and weights: “Honest balances and scales are Yhwh’s; all the weights in the bag are his work” (16:11).

Two quotations may demonstrate the similarity in thinking and language shared by the prophet Amos and wisdom texts:

Am 8:5 quotes the evildoers who say:

“We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,
and practise deceit with false balance (מֵאֲזַנֵי מִרְמָה = *môznêj mirmāh*)”.

Prov 11:1 says:

“A false balance (מֵאֲזַנֵי מִרְמָה = *môznêj mirmāh*) is an abomination to Yhwh,
but an accurate weight is his delight.”

3.2.4 Comparison

The parallels are evident. The texts not only share key words but also a theological tendency. Prophetic accusations as well as proverbial sayings are formulated in favour of the poor and needy. And both underline that violation of the weak is against the will of God. In the case of prophecy this is self-evident because the prophets speak in God’s name. But it is also true for wisdom texts. It is easy to demonstrate that the so called theologisation of wisdom is closely connected with the social question.²⁰ Wisdom literature rarely portrays God as a force who

¹⁸Quoted from William W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture. Volume II. Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*. Leiden et al.: Brill 2000, p. 342.

¹⁹Quoted from William W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture. Volume I. Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*. Leiden et al.: Brill 1997, pp. 119-120.

²⁰For the so-called “theologisation of wisdom” cf. Othmar Keel / Silvia Schroer, *Schöpfung: Biblische Theologien im Kontext altorientalischer Religionen*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht / Fribourg: Acad. Press ²2008, ch. XI Die Theologisierung der Weisheit (transl. by Peter T. Daniels: *Creation : biblical theologies in the context of the ancient Near East*, Winona Lake, Indiana : Eisenbrauns); and Ruben Zimmermann, *Theologisierung der Ethik:*

directly intervenes in human affairs, but when it does, it is in connection with violation of the weak. The first line of Prov 22:22-23 was already quoted above: “Do not rob the needy because they are needy, or crush the afflicted at the gate ...” The continuation then introduces the idea of divine intervention: “... for Yhwh pleads their cause and despoils of life those who despoil them.” God also intervenes in favour of widows and orphans: “Yhwh tears down the house of the proud, but maintains the widow's boundaries” (Prov 15:25); and in the form of an admonition: “Do not remove an ancient landmark or encroach on the fields of orphans, for their redeemer is strong, he will plead their cause against you” (23:10-11).

With all these parallels in formulation and concepts it is not astonishing that Amos and wisdom texts share the moral principle of “justice and righteousness” (מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה = *mišpāt ūsēdāqāh*). Amos accuses those who “turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground” (5:7; cp. 6:12); he claims: “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream” (5:24). For the proverbs, “To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to Yhwh than sacrifice” (Prov 21:3). While the proverbs use the binominal “justice and righteousness” only in 21:3, they are full of both of the elements (for “justice” = מִשְׁפָּט = *mišpāt* cp. 12:5; 13:23; 16:11 etc., for “righteousness” = צְדָקָה / צְדָקָה = *sēdāqāh* / *sēdāqāh* cp. 10:2; 11:4-6, 18-19 etc.). At times, they use them in opposition: “Better is a little with righteousness than large income with injustice (צְדָקָה בְּלֶמֶט מִשְׁפָּט = *bēlō’ mišpāt*) (16:8); at times they combine other derivatives of the same roots, especially the righteous (צַדִּיק = *saddīq*) in combination with justice (מִשְׁפָּט = *mišpāt*): “The thoughts of the righteous are just” (Prov 12:5a).

4. Conclusion

There is no doubt that there are close parallels between Amos and wisdom texts. Terrien’s and Wolff’s observations on the text remain valid to a certain extent. The only question is how to explain them. The search for a solution continues in the wrong direction when it asks whether there is an influence of wisdom literature on Amos. This is to ask the wrong question. The answer lies in the scribal milieu which is responsible for the tradition of the prophetic sayings as well as for the collection of proverbial literature (and for the redaction of the legal corpora, which is not the question at hand). There may have been specialisation among the scribes. There may have existed specialists for law matters and others for the collection and redaction of proverbs. There may have been scribes who did not work in official institutions like the temple or the palace. The figure of Baruch hints in this direction.²¹ However, all these scribes share the same curriculum. They are trained in the same skills. So it is not astonishing that they also share common ideas and even use similar or identical words and phrases.²²

Relikt oder Richtmaß? Die implizite Ethik der alttestamentlichen Weisheit und ihre Impulse für die gegenwärtige Diskussion, in *BThZ* 19 (2002) 99-124.

²¹ According to K. van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture* 2007, 82, there were no palace scribes independent from the temple, and he denies the existence of private scribes in the First Temple period. I cannot discuss these theses, but my view does not depend on the question whether the central place of the scribes was the temple or the palace, nor on the existence of private scribes. The decisive factor is the common milieu.

²² It is remarkable that S. Terrien, *Amos and Wisdom* 1962, 115 already held similar ideas: “That various groups, such as priests, prophets, and wisemen, existed should not be denied. At

It seems to me that this reconstruction of a common scribal milieu best explains the obvious parallels between the book of Amos and wisdom literature.²³

Postscript: The Signature of the Wise in Amos

It is noteworthy that the scribes who were responsible for the late redaction of the book of Amos have left behind a trace of their work. At the center of the accusations collected in Am 5, a wise writer notes: “Therefore the wise man remains silent in such a time, for it is an evil time“ (Am 5:13).²⁴ The verse is generally recognized as a late gloss. Its author is a *maškil*, a wise man or woman. He or she characterizes the time as “an evil time”. As in Mic 2:3, where we find exactly the same phrase, this time is “the time of the social wrongs” – the evil is what the oppressors do – as well as the time of the judgement – the evil is what Yhwh does.²⁵

Unlike the prophet who was forced by Yhwh to prophesy (3:8; 7:15) the wise scribe “remains silent”. He or she is not a prophet who utters new oracles, but preserves the words of the prophet Amos by writing the book of Amos. The scribes do this not out of a merely archival and historical interest. They want to know what the words of the prophet mean for their time – this “evil time”. By composing the book of Amos, the wise “remain silent” by passing on the words of Amos (and all those who had worked on the book before them).²⁶

the same time, such groups were not alien one from the others, and they lived in a common and mutually interacting environment.”

²³A shorter German version of this paper was published under the title “Amos und die Weisheit” in *Propheten der Epochen - Prophets during the Epochs*, FS I. Karasszon, eds. V. Kókai Nagy / L.S. Egeresi, AOAT 426 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 2015): 51-57.

²⁴English text by Andersen and Freedman, p. 503.

²⁵Quotations from Andersen and Freedman, p. 503, who, however, find an opposition between the two meanings (“either – or”).

²⁶My interpretation of Am 5:13 is based on Jürgen Ebach, *Beredtes Schweigen: Exegetisch-literarische Beobachtungen zu einer Kommunikationsform in biblischen Texten*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus 2014, pp. 93-97.