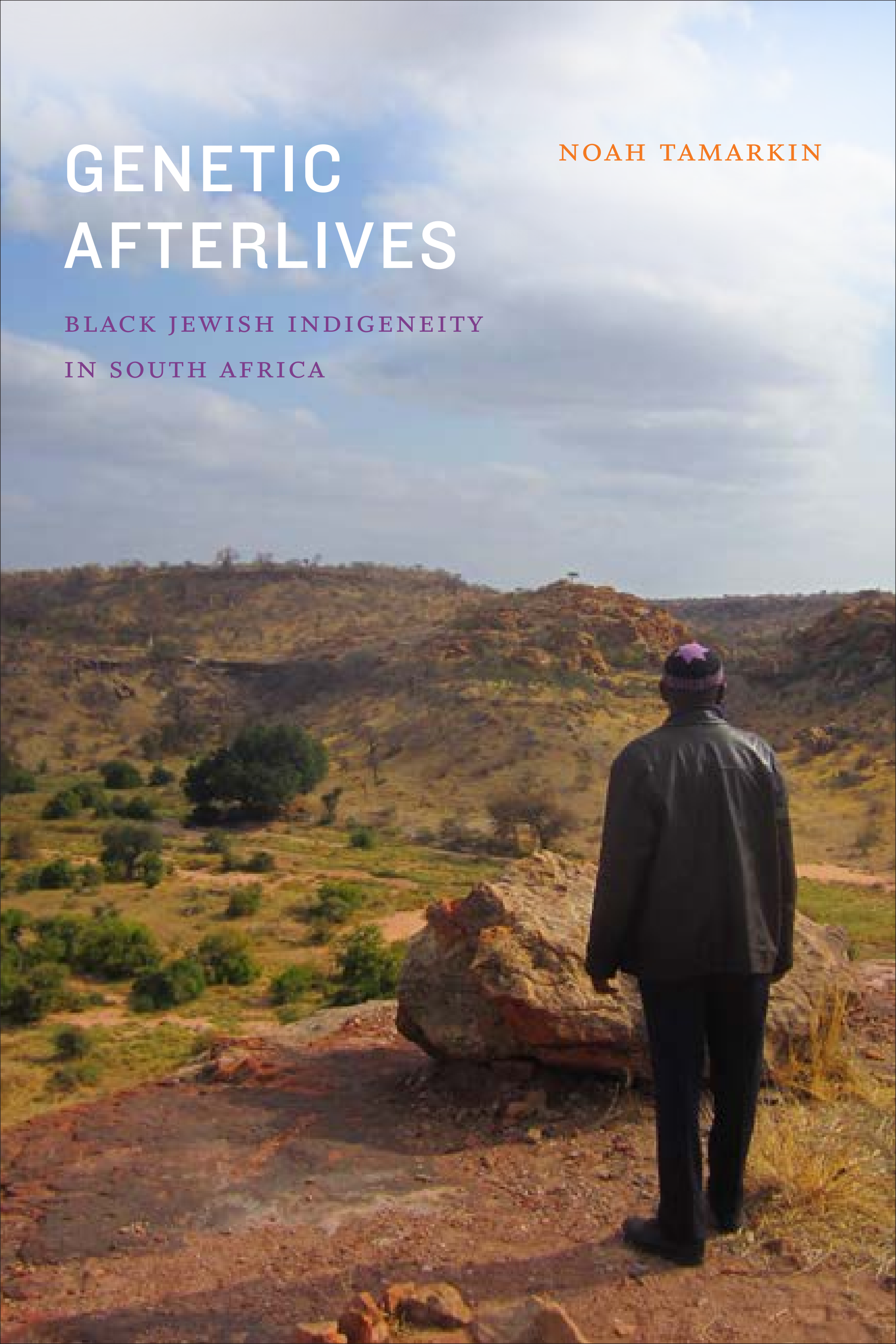
GENETIC AFTERLIVES
NOAH TAMARKIN
BLACK JEWISH INDIGENEITY
IN SOUTH AFRICA

GENETIC AFTERLIVES

BUY

THEORY IN FORMS

A series edited by Nancy Rose Hunt and Achille Mbembe

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GENETIC AFTERLIVES

NOAH TAMARKIN

BLACK JEWISH INDIGENEITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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For my mothers, my fathers, my siblings,
For Mpho, puppy of my heart,
And for Juno, love of my life

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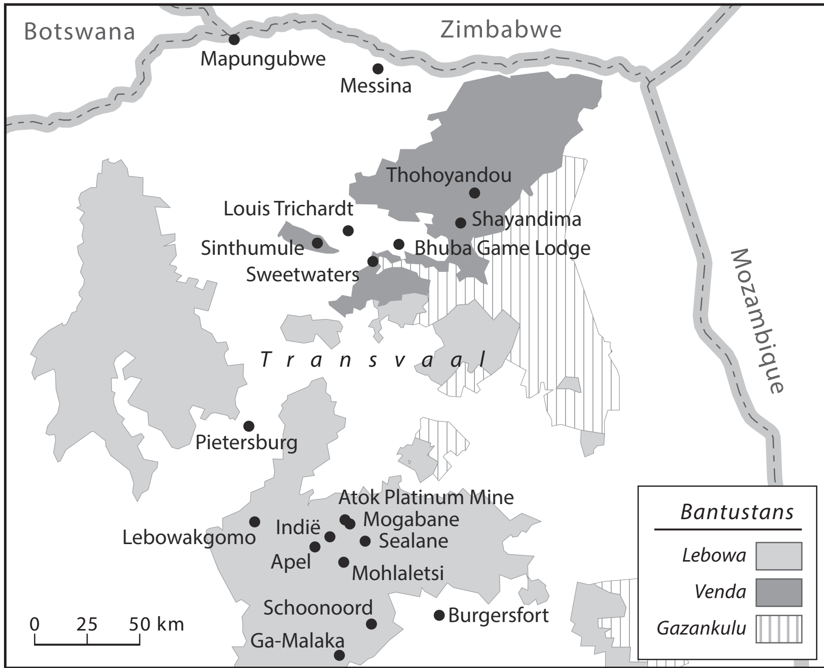

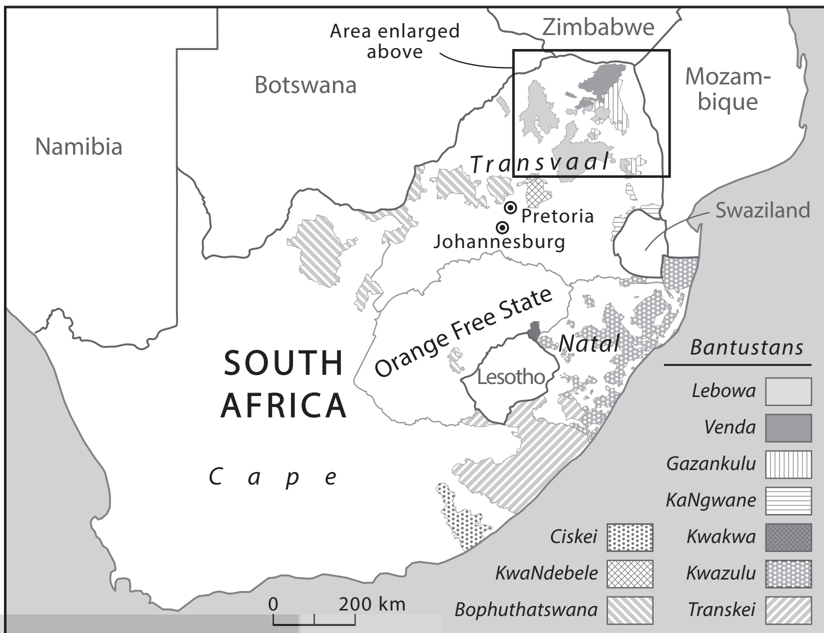

MAP 1 Apartheid South Africa, ca. 1980. Map by Jim DeGrand

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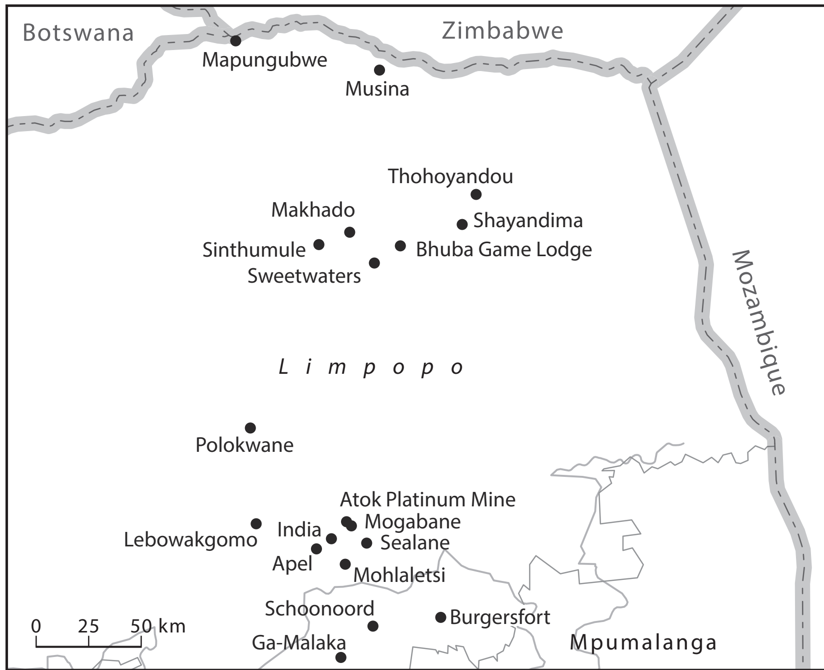

MAP 2 Contemporary South Africa, ca. 2019. Map by Jim DeGrand

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INTRODUCTION

DIASPORA, INDIGENEITY, AND CITIZENSHIP AFTER DNA

"Shalom, shalom, shalom to all the Hebrews all over the world: Jews, Orites, Balubas, Tutsis, Bentendors Mwenye, Asantes of Ghana, Senas, Lemba Bashabi, Falashas," Professor M. E. R. Mathivha began, standing before the crowd that had gathered for the Lemba Cultural Association (LCA) annual conference in South Africa.[1] Professor Mathivha was a Lemba elder and intellectual. He had taught African languages and literature at the University of the North, a black segregated university in apartheid South Africa's Northern Province, since 1961.[2] This was where he had earned the title "professor." He became the LCA's second president in 1982, and from that point forward, he had been responsible for Lemba survival. It was now October 11, 1997, and Professor Mathivha's welcome invoked a Hebrew collective that included people with roots all over the African continent. He welcomed this Hebrew collective not because they were present; they were not, aside from the thousand or so Lemba people who had gathered for the event. Rather, he welcomed them because they were *connected*: this was his statement of kinship and solidarity.

The LCA conference was being held, as it had been each year at least since the 1960s, at Sweetwaters Farm near Elim in what is now South Africa's Limpopo Province.[3] But this year was different. The previous November, researchers Amanda Spurdle and Trefor Jenkins of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg had published a genetic ancestry study in the *American Journal of Human Genetics* that supported Lemba oral histories of ancestral links to Jews. Specifically, they wrote, "It is apparent that the Lemba gene pool has

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received substantial contributions from Semitic males and smaller contributions from Negroid males" (Spurdle and Jenkins 1996, 1131). The BBC series *In the Blood* then publicized the study: the episode, featuring Jenkins alongside Mathivha and other LCA leaders, presented the Lemba as a genetically substantiated lost tribe of Israel whose true origins were in the Middle East, rather than in Africa.[4] Now another researcher, Tudor Parfitt, a Jewish studies professor at the University of London, had initiated a new study that attempted to link Lemba men directly to the Jewish hereditary priesthood of the Cohanim through a recently identified genetic sequence, the "Cohen Modal Haplotype."[5]

These late twentieth-century DNA studies catapulted the Lemba into two international debates: one about the racial and religious parameters of Jewishness, and the other about the claims and implications of genomic science. We might think that DNA can tell us whether the Lemba are really Jews. This book shows instead that DNA provides more questions than answers. It argues that genetic ancestry reinvigorates assumptions about race, religion, relatedness, and belonging—but it can also be an opening through which these assumptions are undermined and reconfigured.

Mathivha had invited Parfitt to be in the audience that day at Sweetwaters to collect saliva samples for the Cohanim study. Parfitt had researched Lemba origins beginning in the mid-1980s, and initially he had argued that the Lemba most likely descended from Arab traders rather than from Jews (Parfitt 1992).[6] But in light of the Spurdle and Jenkins study and recent developments in Jewish genetic ancestry research, he was now reconsidering his conclusions. Parfitt was working toward using genetic evidence to incorporate the Lemba into a collectivity of Jews who at that point, if they knew about the Lemba at all, imagined them and most other African Jews as suspect, invented, or otherwise beyond the boundaries of the Jewish people.[7] But when Professor Mathivha welcomed Hebrews rather than Jews as the overarching category in his opening address, he upended these exclusions. And as he continued his welcome address, he also upended how to think about Lemba genetic ancestry.

Professor Mathivha, other Lemba people, geneticists, Parfitt, and earlier researchers who had asked similar questions about Lemba origins since the late nineteenth century had collectively made possible the nascent fame of the Lemba as genetic Jews. But as Mathivha spoke that day to his gathered people—and to his invited researchers—he sought to reground this fame.

Mathivha invoked blood and Jewish ancestry but also culture and the physical place where members of the LCA that day were gathered. "Here is the cultural center, our home, our inspiration, our refuge, our meeting place with our God, Jehovah," he proclaimed. "The Lembas are members of the large family

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of the Hebrews. They are Jews with an ancestral home, Zion, where the patriarchs lie buried.[8] The researches which have been done indicate who you are. The result is a confirmation of our oral history. . . . The blood tests which have been done with the Lemba community indicate that the DNA chromosome 'Y' is the same with that which was found amongst the descendants of the ancestor Abraham. . . . I am making a call to the Lemba youth to develop this center as their heritage culturally and otherwise. . . . Should not we officially open it in 1998? . . . The cultural center is the heritage of our people." In this address, Mathivha swiftly moved from the notion that tests of DNA—something found in their blood—showed the Lemba who they are, to the idea that who they are was to be found in their heritage and that their heritage could be made manifest by building a physical structure, a cultural center, on the place where they were then gathered.

Sweetwaters, because of colonial and apartheid laws that restricted black land ownership while claiming black-occupied land for white settlers, had long been owned by the white Henning family. It had once been a village filled with many Lemba people. The story that I heard was that sometime in the second quarter of the twentieth century, white people took the land for a farm and forced everyone to move. But LCA founder and first president M. M. Motenda refused. Instead, he remained in the house that he had built, and the farmer Henning let him stay. He then constructed (with his own hands, the story goes) a one-room school building, which also served as the regular meeting place of the LCA executive committee.[9] In this way, the LCA was born on this site. With each year's annual conference, it became even more established as a Lemba ancestral home and an active facilitator of Lemba culture and connection.

Professor Mathivha explicitly invoked Zion when he pointed out that ancestral homes were places where patriarchs lie buried. But he did so at the top of the hill at Sweetwaters where, a short distance away at the bottom of the hill, Motenda lay buried, along with other past Lemba leaders and their relatives. When Mathivha called on ancestral burials, he was thus claiming for his people both Zion and Sweetwaters, belonging among Jews and belonging in South Africa. Mathivha's speech invoked Lemba Jewishness and therefore a diasporic connection with a center elsewhere. This echoed their growing fame as genetic Jews. But when he identified Sweetwaters as Lemba heritage and future, he also hinted at an emerging African Jewish indigeneity that would begin to flourish among Lemba people over the next decade.

Like Hebrews all over the world, I, too, was not present that day at the 1997 LCA conference. It would be years before I would read about Lemba DNA in a *New York Times* article and begin my own ethnographic research.

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The article, "DNA Backs a Tribe's Tradition of Early Descent from Jews," made connections between genetic markers and authoritative truth, demonstrated slippages between race and religion, and relied on colonial tropes about Africa as an unchanging place without history.[10] The *Times* story compelled me to pursue another kind of story, generated in conversation with Lemba people as theorists and intellectuals, that would clarify the stakes of Lemba DNA and that might trouble, rather than reinforce, colonial forms of representation: in short, one that was ethnographic.[11]

I begin with Professor Mathivha's 1997 welcome address rather than with my own interactions with Lemba people in South Africa because his speech marked a pivotal moment in Lemba genetic knowledge production. In this moment, DNA transformed from authoritative knowledge that could tell Lemba people the truth about their origins into evidence that Lemba people could use to challenge others' assertions of who they really were and where they really belonged.[12]

This book analyzes how Lemba people have negotiated their ambivalent relationship to Jewish diaspora, African indigeneity, and South African citizenship, both before and after their association with Jewish genetic ancestry. In doing so, it calls into question where and with whom we locate the meaning and significance of DNA. How might our understanding of the stakes of genetic data change if, instead of primarily seeking to analyze what DNA means for geneticists and their critics, we consider it from the perspective of people who have been part of genetic ancestry studies as research subjects? What stories might unfold if we view published genetic ancestry studies as a starting point rather than an end point? This book tells one such story.

Geneticists' research intentions, data, and analyses are only the starting points of genetic ancestry. As Professor Mathivha's speech suggests and as I have found over nearly fifteen years of working with Lemba people, genetic ancestry continues to matter to research participants after results are published, and how it matters is an ethnographic question with implications for how citizenship and other forms of political belonging are claimed, contested, and experienced.

The central concept of this book, "genetic afterlives," highlights how participants in genetic ancestry research remake the meaning of genetic evidence when they repurpose their data to speak less to researchers' questions and more to their own. I consider their circulations of genetic data as *theorizations*: this, I argue, is a form of genetic knowledge production. Former research subjects like the Lemba, through their interpretations and circulations of their own genetic data, produce new genetic knowledge and new forms of gene-

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tic evidence—knowledge and evidence that should be understood as ongoing traces of the genetic studies from which they depart, rather than beyond the boundaries of science.

This book asks us to consider the meaning of genetic ancestry if we look not only to the expertise of scientists who investigate where and how humans have moved in the distant past, but also to their research subjects: the people throughout the world whose blood and saliva scientists seek as a source of answers to questions of deep human history. I argue that it is through former research subjects' genetic knowledge production that we can begin to grasp why DNA so powerfully compels us, and what that might say about contemporary political belonging. In what follows, I aim to more fully account for the work that genetic ancestry does, from ideas that it can bolster about race, ethnicity, gender, nation, and relatedness to how and by whom these ideas might be challenged.

"The Lemba" and the Production of Genetic Knowledge, Jewish and Otherwise

I use the collective term "the Lemba" above and elsewhere in this book because genetic ancestry always implicates groups rather than individuals alone. This is clear in the growing body of research in anthropology, science and technology studies (STS), and Jewish studies that finds "the Lemba" as such to be a productive example of how DNA and identity intersect.[13] It is also clear in Lemba genetic knowledge production. Only a small number of specific Lemba men were personally and directly former research subjects in the studies that linked them to Jews. But whether or not they were themselves sampled by Jenkins or Parfitt, all Lemba people are potential former research subjects: they become former research subjects as they come to know about, theorize, and act upon Lemba genetic ancestry.

Not all Lemba people are invested in producing genetic knowledge about themselves, just as not all Lemba people have the same relationship to the Lemba Cultural Association, Jewish identity, or even ethnicity as an important way to understand themselves in relation to others. Discovering which people produce genetic knowledge, under what conditions, and for what reasons is therefore just as important as the knowledge itself in illuminating what genetic ancestry means and how it matters.

I was introduced to Lemba genetic knowledge production in July 2004 by Kgoshi Mpaketsane, an unrecognized Lemba traditional leader.[14] On this particular day, Mpaketsane and I were alone in his truck, on a gravel road near

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his home in a small village in the Limpopo Province's Sekhukhune district. We had met for the first time a few days before, and he had already surprised me by immediately welcoming me as a researcher, as if my presence there was anticipated and my proposed research activities obviously necessary.

I should not have been surprised. As I would soon learn, Kgoshi Mpaketsane had been at the center of decades-long efforts to establish a legally recognized Lemba chieftaincy, and amplifying his knowledge about himself and his people via an international researcher had the potential to bolster his case. Now Mpaketsane surprised me again: he wanted to teach me about who he and I were in relation to one another. As it turned out, it wasn't just his interest in getting his story out via a researcher that facilitated my welcome. Kgoshi Mpaketsane told me that I was a Lemba because I was a Jew. He further explained that the Lemba DNA tests showed that "we are all Jews. It doesn't matter black or white; it's in blood."

I learned three things from him in this moment. First, my interactions with Lemba people were never only as a researcher, but also as a Jew. As he and others made clear, our responsibilities to one another went beyond general hospitality and general research ethics. Second, just as Professor Mathivha did years earlier, Kgoshi Mpaketsane troubled the terms of Jewish inclusivity that could either affirm or call into question that the Lemba are part of the Jews. In Mpaketsane's iteration of this, he was a Jew because he was a Lemba, but *also* I was a Lemba because I was a Jew. Finally, his explanation complicated my thinking about race, Jewishness, and genetics. I had wanted to know why some Jews were accepted as such at their word, while others had to prove themselves, both religiously and, increasingly, biologically: I interpreted the Lemba DNA studies as a form of Jewish racism.[15]

In her own engagement with Lemba genetic ancestry within the larger context of Jewish genetics, Nadia Abu El-Haj offers an important critique of this kind of question. She writes about how the American liberal multicultural Jewish organization Kulanu has partnered with right-wing Israeli groups like Amishav and Shavei Israel to settle "lost" Jews of color in the illegal settlements that have continued to displace Palestinians in recent decades. As Abu El-Haj explains, "Nonwhite Jews become the site for discussions of Jewish racism, which is viewed as an entirely internal Jewish problem. The question of Palestine, the realities of a colonial present, and its very violent forms of racism in a state structured around the distinction between Jew and non-Jew, subject and citizen, and movement and enclosure are displaced" (Abu El-Haj 2012, 214).

The work of organizations like Kulanu, which has long had an interest in "returning" the Lemba to Judaism and perhaps also to Israel, demands an un-

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derstanding of Lemba genetics in relation to the global racial and territorial politics of Jewishness and Zionism (see chapter 2). Indeed, recent work in Jewish studies positions genetic ancestry, including that of the Lemba, as the cutting edge of these discussions (Baker 2017; Weitzman 2017). But Kgoshi Mpaketsane is not Kulanu, and the recognition he sought was not from Jews, nor was it from the Israeli state. In his reading, having Jewish DNA was powerful not only because it proved Jewish antiracism ("it doesn't matter black or white; it's in blood") but because it also, at least rhetorically, superseded the black-white racial classifications that inexorably shaped the lives of generations of South Africans before, during, and after apartheid ("we are all Jews"). Kgoshi Mpaketsane taught me that I could not understand Lemba genetics without also understanding the national racial and territorial politics of South Africa.

Lemba people live throughout Southern Africa, but for Mpaketsane and the other Lemba people with whom I worked, genetic ancestry was part of a South African national story about colonial, apartheid, and postapartheid power as it was enacted through race, ethnicity, and land. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, African, Boer (Dutch and other European settler), and British people struggled for power and authority in the Transvaal, the region of South Africa where most Lemba people live and where most of my research took place. The earliest colonial state in the region, the South African Republic, was established in the 1850s. In other parts of South Africa, such as the Cape Colony, some Africans at least in theory could access limited citizenship rights in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But in the Transvaal, both before and after the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, Africans were denied access to all aspects of political citizenship. Land expropriation, coupled with policies of indirect rule, transformed a complex diversity of people with equally complex historical and contemporary patterns of migration, affiliation, and differentiation into a subject population divided into distinct tribes with static territorial boundaries and colonially designated chiefs.[16]

Apartheid intensified race-based restrictions and ethnic manipulations: its central ideology hinged on racial segregation coupled with ethnic nationalism.[17] Under apartheid, all black South Africans were required to have a tribal affiliation. A series of laws, beginning with the Group Areas Act of 1950 and culminating in the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1958, laid the groundwork for the homeland system. The resulting "homelands" expanded on existing native reserves: they were designated self-governing territories, with the goal to declare each of them independent from South Africa. In reality, "homelands," often referred to as "Bantustans" to highlight their illegitimacy,

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were a means of denying black South Africans citizenship rights while also dividing them from one another based on ethnicity and subjecting them to leaders they did not choose.[18] Pass laws, introduced in 1952, were a central means of enforcing apartheid racial and ethnic mappings. They restricted the free movement of anyone designated nonwhite, and the obligatory passbooks identified each person not only by race but also by ethnic group.

Although "Lemba" was a deeply felt ethnic identity, it had not been one of apartheid South Africa's official ethnic groups. So while apartheid policies violently oppressed all black South Africans, Lemba people additionally experienced them as erasure. Lemba people, depending on where they and their immediate ancestors lived and what language they spoke, were legally classified as "Venda" or "Northern Sotho" and assigned citizenship in the respective Venda or Lebowa Bantustans until apartheid ended in 1994. Against this background of "Lemba" being juridically written out of existence, Lemba people sought recognition from the South African state as a distinct ethnic group beginning in the 1950s. The Lemba Cultural Association had been founded in the mid-1940s, but it consolidated through these struggles for recognition and provided a means for Lemba people in the townships around Johannesburg and Pretoria, in the Venda and Lebowa Bantustans, and across the South African border in Zimbabwe to remain connected to one another.

For the LCA and the Lemba chiefs that they supported, recognition under apartheid became inexorably linked to difference: if they could prove their difference, then perhaps, they hoped, they would be recognized as Lemba. In the 1980s, DNA technology appeared to LCA leaders as a powerful tool of differentiation, one that they enthusiastically added to their growing set of ways to make claims on the apartheid government.

When apartheid ended, racial and ethnic identity was no longer state regulated. Bantustan governments were dissolved, and black South Africans finally became citizens. But postapartheid policies maintained the inherited reified ethnic identities of the past through naming eleven official languages that corresponded to colonial and apartheid understandings of tribal/ethnic groups, and through a support of chieftaincy (now called "traditional leadership") and customary law that some argued impeded democracy by maintaining indirect rule (Buthelezi 2016; Mamdani 1996; Ntsebeza 2005). Through these policies, the erasure that Lemba people endured under apartheid continued, and so did their efforts to become recognized through the established politics of traditional authority, new possibilities for reclaiming expropriated land, and an emerging politics of indigeneity, even as their growing international fame as "genetic Jews" emphasized their origins elsewhere.

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Kgoshi Mpaketsane's efforts to be recognized by the South African state as a Lemba traditional leader, as well as those of LCA leaders to achieve Lemba recognition in other ways, are the other reason that the phrase "the Lemba" sometimes appears in this book. These leaders have dedicated their lives to Lemba survival, and in South Africa, this has meant working toward recognition of the Lemba as a distinct ethnic group. Lemba representation always carries the weight of their efforts: this was true for Lemba leaders as they represented their people to me throughout my research, and it is true for me as an ethnographer negotiating multiple forms of knowledge production—including my own. My approach to writing about Lemba people therefore echoes that of Lemba leaders who could never lose sight of these larger stakes, even as they welcomed me into their homes and lives in all of their complexity. From these leaders, I learned that it is obvious and self-evident that "the Lemba" exist as black Jews, and it is equally obvious and self-evident that the term "the Lemba" encompasses a heterogeneous group of people with different politics, religious practices, and access to the power to define "the Lemba" and seek recognition on their behalf.

I conducted fourteen months of ethnographic research in South Africa between 2004 and 2006, followed by shorter research visits over the following decade. My interlocutors were LCA leaders and members and their families and neighbors, other Lemba leaders such as Kgoshi Mpaketsane and their families and neighbors, and various academics who had worked with Lemba people or had other forms of experience or expertise relevant to my questions. I lived and worked with people of all ages, genders, and statuses.[19] But the politics of both recognition and genetic knowledge production favors men, elders, and leaders, particularly when the genetic knowledge in question centers the Y chromosome. Y chromosome studies sample men but pronounce on origins of peoples, thus reaffirming the position of men as representative of both community and tradition. I seek to trouble these biases by highlighting Lemba authorship and internal debates, by contextualizing Lemba organizing efforts, by attending to the politics of gender and generation, and whenever possible by referring not to "the Lemba" but to specific Lemba people and to "Lemba people" as a plural, but never all-encompassing, collective. Most people appear in this text with their real names because they are real historical actors who wish to be regarded as such. Those who did not explicitly wish to be identified, Lemba and otherwise, are anonymized.

Kgoshi Mpaketsane and LCA leaders guided my research to align with their recognition goals, but there are gaps between their projects and mine. Navigating these gaps was a central tension in my research that this book cannot fully

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resolve. This may not be exactly the book that they were hoping I would produce out of our work together. But my hope and intention are that it will attest to their deep care for their people as they work to assure that their histories are not lost or misunderstood, and that their futures can be realized as Lemba South Africans, with all the rights and recognitions that identity should entail.

In legal claims to land, chieftaincy, and reburial of precolonial remains, DNA became a form of evidence that testified to Lemba ethnic difference against a postapartheid South African state that, like the apartheid state before it, could not recognize them. It became a valuable tool for Lemba people as they chartered new paths to South African belonging in ways that others found contradictory.

There are two approaches, then, to reading Lemba genetic ancestry. The first emphasizes geneticists and their publics as knowledge producers, and genetics as a way to illuminate the racialized and territorialized power dynamics of contemporary Jewish identity.[20] But the second approach shifts the frame: instead of viewing Lemba bodies as raw materials and geneticists as knowledge producers, genetic studies become raw materials for Lemba people as they produce their own genetic knowledge. In doing so, Lemba people redefine genetic Jewishness through the racial, religious, and ethnonational mappings that resonate *for them*.

The Claims of Genetic Ancestry

Genetic ancestry increasingly shapes how we think about ourselves and our pasts on species, population, and individual levels.[21] But it also underwrites and motivates claims that we make—on concepts of race, ethnicity, and belonging, on one another, and on nation-states and various forms of citizenship. Scholars such as Nadia Abu El-Haj (2012), Amade M'charek (2005a), Jenny Reardon (2005), Kim TallBear (2013), and others have shown that genetic ancestry both produces and is produced by research projects that seek to map human diversity on global, continental, and national scales.[22] In doing so, it simultaneously offers universalizing narratives and a renewed investment in racial and ethnic classification. We can see this most prominently in large-scale genome projects, in medical research that uses ancestry as an approximation of a promised future of personalized care, and in a commercial industry that offers millions of consumers, predominantly but not only located in the United States, information about their origins.[23] This book, however, addresses genetic ancestry as something more diffuse, complex, and unpredictable than these well-known examples can account for.

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Anthropologists have long held that race is not genetic and that there is more genetic variation within social racial categories than between them. But this anthropological consensus has not been shared among all population geneticists, particularly those involved in large-scale genetic diversity projects (Reardon 2005). Now genetic definitions of race have gained renewed prominence among wide-ranging publics, dovetailing with a resurgence of white supremacy and ethnonationalism.

For example, milk-chugging parties are recorded and posted on the internet by white nationalists in the United States celebrating lactose persistence as a feature of supposed European genetic purity (Harmon 2018a, b). A DNA test is approved in Israel to help immigrants from the former Soviet Union prove that they have Jewish ancestry (Rabinowitz 2020; Sharon 2017; see also McGonigle and Herman 2015). Migrants set to be deported from Canada whose nationalities are contested are given genetic ancestry tests by government officials to determine their deportation destination (Khandaker 2018; Marrocco and Joly 2018; Mochama 2018; see also Abel 2018). In each of these examples, genetic ancestry lends an appearance of scientific validity to essentialist and exclusionary ideas about race and nation.

This book approaches genetic ancestry as a contested political and cultural object. As such, it takes seriously how genetic ancestry is theorized by those who are not geneticists. But this also requires informed critique of genetic ancestry research on geneticists' terms. Most science and technology studies scholars who write about DNA emphasize this kind of informed critique, though they do so for different reasons. Indigenous STS scholar Kim TallBear (2003, 2013) studies scientists ethnographically as a way to reject colonial frameworks that subject indigenous people to scientific scrutiny.[24] For anthropologist Nadia Abu El-Haj (2012), it is epistemological specificity that is at stake: she argues that the theories of history, inheritance, and identity that inform genetic ancestry research are not self-evident and therefore must be excavated in terms of where they come from and what they produce. Others, such as Duana Fullwiley (2007, 2008) and Ramya Rajagopalan and Joan Fujimura (2012), emphasize how genetic ancestry makes race.[25] They show how choices that different geneticists make in sampling, labeling, and computational analysis can produce misleading results that in turn are sometimes taken up by journalists and the general public as evidence for biological racial differences—again, a conclusion that anthropologists have long rejected.[26] Attuned to these and other ways that ideas about genetic ancestry circulate beyond laboratories—what Alondra Nelson (2016) calls "the social life of DNA"—some also extend these analyses, as I do in this book, across multiple social worlds.[27]

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Following these scholars, we might distinguish between the claims *of* DNA—what geneticists and others contend it can tell us, and the methodologies that form the basis of their assertions—and claims made *with* DNA as it circulates in social, political, and legal contexts. My focus in this book is on the latter: if the meaning of DNA emerges through social interactions, then the social interactions that happen *after* scientists publish their work must also be considered as part of the meaning of genetic ancestry.[28] But while we can't view the claims *of* genetic ancestry as the culmination of its meaning, neither can we ignore the specificity and nuance of those claims.[29]

Genetic ancestry relies on a core premise that increasingly fine-tuned analyses can accurately reconstruct human migration histories and link contemporary people to ancestral places.[30] These links are usually framed as racial or ethnic origins. Three concepts—population, admixture, and haplotype—are especially important for understanding how geneticists do this, and why we cannot take it at face value.

As used by geneticists, population has no inherent content: it can be any group that researchers find meaningful to compare to another. Populations, then, are never neutral: they are made rather than found. And the populations that geneticists make are inexorably entangled with race. The mid-twentieth-century shift from race science to anthropological genetics replaced "race" with "population" in genetic research.[31] But it continued to describe old categories in new language, even as many scientists' understanding of what they were naming shifted substantially.[32]

Geneticists' use of the concept "admixture" demonstrates how the racial legacies of population work today. Admixture imagines *populations* that are genetically distinct from one another and *individuals* who hail from one or more of those populations. One example is genetic tests that are commercially marketed to individuals, usually white Americans, who suspect or hope that they might have Native American ancestors (TallBear 2013).[33] The results are delivered as "admixture" percentages, such as 80 percent European ancestry and 20 percent Native American ancestry, where "European" DNA and "Native American" DNA are each conceptualized as racially pure, in contrast to the individual whose body contains traces of both. Genetics and society scholars argue that genetic admixture reinvigorates discredited notions of continentally defined biological races that have pure or "unmixed" forms.[34]

"Population" and "admixture" are scaled-up concepts that call to mind whole groups of people and whole genomes, bringing new life to old concepts of race. But the work of differentiation and categorization in genetic ancestry is both smaller and larger than this: it requires linking molecular and global

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scales to associate people with places. Haplotypes and haplogroups are tools that geneticists use to make these links.

"Haplotype" names small variations that are found on the Y chromosome and in mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). These are used as proxies for describing paternal and maternal inheritance because, in contrast to all of our other genetic material which recombines in the process of reproduction, they are passed down intact from parent to child.[35] Haplotypes become modal, as in the Cohen Modal Haplotype, through their presence at a greater frequency in any given group when compared to any other group that has been deemed relevant within a particular study.[36]

As a measure of relative frequencies, modal haplotypes thus say more about the classificatory interests of researchers than they do about biologically or historically significant relationships in and of themselves. But once a haplotype is named, it is imbued with classificatory power, which easily slips into claims about biological or historical significance. Joan Fujimura and Ramya Rajagopalan (2011) call this "genetic geography." Expanding this concept, Catherine Nash (2015, 174) points out that to link DNA to place is to argue that all people have a place to which they naturally belong.

These are some of the reasons to be skeptical of the claims of genetic ancestry. There are many others. For example, it inaccurately assumes too much about who moved, who did not, and how often in the distant past (Nash 2015).[37] It often relies on tautological arguments that in turn rely on small numbers of living people as proxies for a given place's past population: geneticists go looking for differences and then assign racial or geographic relevance to these differences based only on their a priori assumptions and the limited contents of their comparative databases (Palmié 2007).[38] Furthermore, it naturalizes and universalizes genealogical, heteronormative methods of figuring relatedness, and it privileges these over other ways of making kin and connections (Clarke and Haraway 2018).[39]

Geneticists usually acknowledge at least some of these limitations, but they also can send mixed messages about how to interpret their work. They promote genetic ancestry by asserting that because it is scientific, it can speak better than other methods to the truth of who people really are—even while they sometimes also claim that they traffic only in probabilities, not in certainties or identities.[40] But these scientific truth claims are inevitably identity claims as well. As Kim TallBear (2013) argues, they disrespect and undermine other knowledge about origins and identity by characterizing that other knowledge as "beliefs" and "myths" that can either be supported or refuted using genetic ancestry's methodologies: when we position DNA as the

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ultimate authority, we undermine our own histories, agency, and, in some cases, sovereignty.[41]

In this book, I likewise question forms of authority that give geneticists the final word on ancestry and origins. This does not cast doubt upon Lemba Jewishness. On the contrary, it makes room for Lemba identity as well as Lemba epistemic authority—both in terms of the status of their oral history in relation to genetic ancestry, and in terms of their genetic knowledge production in relation to that of geneticists. What is at stake here is when and how genetic evidence as bodily evidence is invoked and to what end. As DNA is increasingly called upon to speak to questions of racialized and exclusionary citizenship and belonging, understanding genetic ancestry as a multivalent political object could not be more important.

Becoming Lemba

It was June 2006 when F. C. Raulinga sat me down in his house, took out his draft of the book that he was writing and his archive of Lemba Cultural Association documents that he had authored in his nearly two decades as general secretary, and began to more formally teach me who the Lemba were and where they came from. He had provided a version of this when we first met in 2004. But now I had been in South Africa continuously for seven months, mostly in Kgoshi Mpaketsane's village in the predominantly Sepedi-speaking region of the Limpopo Province, about two hundred kilometers to the south of Raulinga's home. I had now heard other Lemba people's accounts of their history, and Raulinga felt it was important that I learn his authoritative, elaborated version of things.

He loosely based his narrative on a paper he had written that was, as he explained, "a summary of what we talk during a funeral of a Lemba Jew. . . . We talk about our culture, our history, our religion, our food, . . . the trade of our people, the genealogies, the family, the particular family of the one who is being buried, the praises of that clan, about the Lemba songs." Along with the Lemba Cultural Association annual conferences and the stories told to children by their parents and grandparents as they grew up, funerals were the place where Lemba history and culture came alive, and I attended them frequently throughout my fieldwork. In each of those contexts—the LCA, family stories, and funerals—Lemba elders such as Raulinga communicated in different registers to each other and to Lemba youth what they needed to understand in order to know themselves. Months later, when I attended my first LCA annual conference in September 2006, I would see Samuel Moeti, who took

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over as LCA president after Professor Mathivha's death in 2003, perform this role. Shortly after that I would see Raulinga do the same at Moeti's funeral. But on this day, Raulinga addressed me directly, as one researcher to another.

More specifically, Raulinga, a knowledgeable researcher without access to publishing his work, addressed me, a novice who would be able to produce a published record based on his and others' guidance. In that respect, we were enacting a dynamic that was familiar in the history of anthropology and that had marked over a century of inquiry into Lemba origins: researchers relied on Lemba expertise to produce accounts that could authoritatively travel.[42]

Cognizant of these dynamics, Raulinga first critiqued others' mistakes: this served to set the record straight, and it was also a warning so that my future published work might not require such corrections. Raulinga explained to me that one author, Hugh Stayt, an ethnologist who had trained at Cambridge in the 1920s, had misidentified one particular clan as Venda when they were really Ndebele.[43] For Raulinga, this mistake called into question the overall quality of Stayt's research. The subtext that Raulinga did not point out, but that I came to understand later, was that Stayt, writing in 1931, concluded that the Lemba were descended from Arab traders on the Swahili coast. Raulinga and most other Lemba South Africans rejected this conclusion as a negation of their knowledge of their historical links to Jews.[44] He also explained that several researchers had said that the Lemba are a lost tribe of Israel: this, he told me, was in direct contradiction to Lemba oral history (see chapter 1). With the warnings about how to avoid potential mistakes now out of the way, Raulinga told me his version of that oral history.

Before they were called Lembas, Raulinga explained, they were known as Senas, after the city Sena (named after Senaa in Judea) that they built in Yemen following the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. In Yemen's Sena, they were under the leadership of the Buba clan for hundreds of years, until the Hamisi clan took over and founded a new city, Pusela, near the Red Sea coast. When a dam broke, they split into several groups and scattered throughout the African continent: those who became known as the Lemba followed a star, which appeared to the Mhani clan, down the east coast of Africa. They settled, again under Hamisi's leadership, between what are now Kenya and Tanzania in a place that they again named Sena. The Bakari clan led them further south to what is now Mozambique, but following an epidemic they dispersed, moving inland and variously north and south over centuries as circumstances dictated, sometimes in large groups and sometimes small, always as traders and often reuniting in newly established settlements, each associated with a different clan's leadership. In Raulinga's telling, most of these

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settlements were in what is now Zimbabwe, although they traveled and settled throughout precolonial Southern Africa, and this was centuries before national divisions as we know them were thinkable: at Chiramba they were led by the Seremane clan, at what we know as Great Zimbabwe they were led by Tovakare/Thobakgale, at Shabani they were led by Mhani, at Dumbe they were led by Sadiki, and at Mbelengwa, where they became known as Lembas for the first time, they were led by the Hadji clan.

In Raulinga's Lemba oral history, then, origins were multiple, movements were multidirectional, interaction with others was constant, the past was organized around places of settlement and which clans were leaders in each place, and "Lemba" was a matter of becoming, over time, through these processes and places.

As an alternative analytic to that of "being" or "being from," "becoming" works against narratives that naturalize belonging and its constitutive exclusions. It explicitly rejects the idea of singular origins and instead emphasizes how identities are formed and re-formed over time, in relation to multiple places and events, and in conversation with interested others. In contrast to the claims of genetic ancestry, this aligns with decades of research by historians and anthropologists that has illuminated the contingent, changing, and inventive processes at work in what can appear to a contemporary observer to be primordial, unchanging distinctions among groups of people.[45] It also resonates with regional histories in which key moments of group consciousness emerged out of migrations, social relations, and shifting patterns of leadership.[46]

My use of "becoming" emerges from these literatures and from Raulinga's and other Lemba people's accounts of their histories. It also draws from Stuart Hall's (1990) use of the same term to theorize black diasporic identity and from Donna Haraway's (2008) notion of "becoming with."[47] Hall emphasizes identity, power, and positioning: for him, it is how we talk about the past that makes possible our identities in the present. Haraway moves beyond narrative and also beyond the human: she shows that human and nonhuman actors are co-constituted not only discursively but also materially (Haraway 2008).[48]

As Raulinga's oral history makes clear, becoming Lemba is not only a story about leadership and migration, but also about the agency of place in shaping a people, from the hills that marked migratory histories in the distant past to places like Sweetwaters and Kgoshi Mpaketsane's village that were contested in the present. Origins here are journeys, and it is the movement and the sacred landscapes, both found and made, that shape who Lemba people continually become.

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African Semites: Race, Religion, and the Puzzle of Lemba Origins

Genetic ancestry posits some populations as unchanging and therefore sources of baseline data, and others as historically complex migratory puzzles that can be solved by separating out in percentages the admixture of supposedly pure components. If geneticists are puzzle solvers, the Lemba are puzzle makers, in two senses: They have provided biological material to geneticists, thereby offering pieces of the global genetic puzzles that researchers have aimed to solve; and their origins have been regarded as a puzzle for over one hundred years. The Lemba do not fit neatly into racial *or* religious orders of things, not for geneticists, and not for their research predecessors.

Writing in 1908, Swiss missionary ethnologist and naturalist Henri A. Junod had this to say: "The strangest . . . phenomena is the presence of the Balemba in Spelonken and Selati districts: a Bantu tribe scattered amongst the Basuto and Bathonga of those parts, exactly as the Jews amongst European nations. . . . Living and thriving by means of industry, moreover bearing strong Semitic characteristics, is it not enough to awake the interest of the ethnologist and to puzzle him greatly?" (Junod 1908, 276).

Writing in 2000, Tudor Parfitt echoed Junod's puzzlement, as well as his excitement about the possibility of solving it by the methods available to him. Describing the Spurdle and Jenkins study, he writes: "Unknown to me, in the latter stages of my work, a fellow Welshman, Professor Trefor Jenkins . . . had the idea of trying to solve the mystery of the origin of the Lemba by collecting genetic material from the tribe" (Parfitt 2000, 344). Referring to his own collaboration with geneticists, Parfitt explains: "It was clear to me that the tantalizing results produced by Jenkins's research left a number of questions unanswered. To say that the Lemba had 'Semitic' genes did not solve the riddle of their religious origin. . . . We discussed whether genetics could help us determine what religion the Lemba had traditionally practiced" (Parfitt 2000, 345–346).

These genetic inquiries into Lemba origins were just the most recent iteration of similar questions that had been asked for more than a century by those who aimed to define groups of Africans in terms of racial, religious, and tribal categories and to sort these groups out from one another. Yet, the more one knows about African history and histories of racial, religious, tribal, and ethnic formation throughout the world, the stranger it seems that Lemba oral histories, identities, and practices should continue to be so puzzling.

Scholars of Islam in Africa will tell you, for example, that by the eighth century, Muslims from Arabia had crossed the Red Sea to live in and trade from the Ethiopian coast (Levtzion and Pouwels 2000, 5). So why should it be

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surprising that others, including the ancestors of those who became known as Lemba, might have done the same in earlier centuries? They will also tell you that the people of the Swahili coast became majority Muslim over the course of more than seven hundred years, between the eighth and the fifteenth centuries, and that inland traders traveled to the coast and back throughout much of that time (Levtzion and Pouwels 2000, 6).[49] Why, then, would the community known as Sena not have been part of these diverse trade networks?[50]

These African-Islamic mappings help explain why some researchers over the years have rejected the idea that the Lemba might have Jewish origins in favor of what they regarded as a more likely history of descent from Muslim traders.[51] But it is anachronistic to assume that the clear distinctions that are common today between Jews and Muslims (and between Jews and Christians, for that matter) have such deep historical roots. Religious studies scholar Aaron Hughes (2017) argues that medieval Arabia was home not only to Jews and Muslims but also to people whose range of religious practices should be understood as Judeo-Islam.[52] Recent studies of contemporary Islamic practices in Kenya show that bricolage remains a feature of coastal religious life there (McIntosh 2009). Furthermore, Jews and forms of Judaism are known to have had a presence in North Africa since antiquity (Hull 2009).[53] Given the complexities of migration and religious flexibility that could easily account for Lemba oral histories, why has the quest to solve the puzzle of Lemba origins persisted?

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Christian missionaries and ethnologists like Junod observed Lemba practices such as endogamy, circumcision, restrictions against eating pig, and slaughter rituals. They concerned themselves with questions about whether the Lemba, given these cultural/religious features, were really native Africans, Muslims, or Jews, and they speculated about Lemba origins outside of Africa. As Hugh Stayt, the ethnologist invoked by Raulinga, put it more than twenty years later, what most interested him about the Lemba was "their non-Bantu qualities and the problem of their origin" (Stayt 1931, 231).

These were racial conundrums. In the nineteenth century, the figure of the Semite encompassed both Muslims and Jews, who as religious, racial, and political Others, constituted the borders of what it meant to be European (Anidjar 2008).[54] But at the same time, the figure of the black African had consolidated a continentally defined racial order that mapped people onto a hierarchical scale of civilization: Semites were now understood as a subgroup of "Caucasoids," and therefore totally distinct from Africans, who were now understood as "Negroids."[55] The Lemba disrupted these turn-of-the-century

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racial orders because they appeared to have features of each: again, as Stayt put it, their "non-Bantu" qualities pointed to a "problem of their origin."

These missionary and ethnological concerns with racial and religious classifications coincided with and extended projects of colonial administration that sought to govern through racial classification and ethnic mapping.[56] The puzzle of Lemba origins, then, in both its early and late twentieth-century iterations, is less a historical question and more an artifact of nineteenth-century race science.[57] Ultimately, it is a story about racialization.

Racialization as an approach to analyses of race recognizes how racial categories are constituted, how they change, and how people come to be associated with and interpolated into specific forms of racial difference.[58] Consider the racial and religious signifier "black Jew." Here "black" modifies "Jew" such that "Jew" without modification excludes black racial identity. Indeed, within the twentieth century, at least some Jews who were viewed at one time as racially Other have become white in South Africa (Krut 1987; Shimoni 2003), in Europe (Bunzl 2007; Arkin 2009), in the United States (Brodkin 2002), and in Israel (Domínguez 1989). Jewish whiteness rendered black Jews both racially marginal to and subsumed within a larger Jewish collective. Labeled "Semitic" first in the nineteenth century when missionaries understood them in these terms and then again in the late twentieth century when the term reemerged to describe their genetic origins, labeled "black" in both apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, and claimed as Jews in documentaries and newspaper articles and by scholars, the Lemba are enmeshed in multiple racializations, including those that conflate race and religion.

Identifying racial and ethnic origins is at the heart of the contemporary claims of genetic ancestry. But the search for origins reduces history to one point of departure such that it is the only history that matters. For the Lemba, this means that they are positioned as either essentially African or essentially Jewish, depending on where it turns out they are "really" from—an approach that privileges one set of ancestors as more relevant than all others and one historical point as the only significant moment over many possible historical points that they can and do claim.

Lemba people in South Africa were confounding to people because they were racialized in terms of colonial and apartheid law as Native/Bantu/Black, but they also seemed to those who wrote about them as such to be different from other Native/Bantu/Black people in a way that would have removed them from that category if the speculative racializations of Lemba people as Semites/Jews/non-Africans carried more than just rhetorical weight. Indeed, what made it so powerful when people like Professor Mathivha or Kgoshi Mpaketsane

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spoke about Jews as part of Hebrews or even as part of the Lemba was that their alternate reading worked against the racial hierarchies that had historically made Lemba-Jewish connections within South Africa impossible. Their framings took racial and religious complexity for granted such that they undid the perennial puzzle of Lemba origins by unsettling the racial and religious fixities that underwrote it.[59] Lemba people challenge how we define origins and our expectations that origins, however defined, should shape racial, religious, or political belonging in predictable ways.

Jewish Blood, African Bones: Rethinking Indigeneity and Diaspora

On September 9, 2006, I attended my first LCA annual conference. Back in 1997, the year of Professor Mathivha's speech with which I began this introduction, the conference theme, "Cultural Centre Our Home," turned inward at the same time that Lemba people were facing unprecedented international attention. The 2006 theme, "Let's Promote Our Culture as Our Heritage," echoed that of 1997, but the slight difference mattered: the main open-air metal structure and poured concrete floor of the cultural center had now been built on the hilltop, and although completing the building remained a goal, all attention in the LCA was now on exciting new national developments around cultural heritage that promised to include Lemba people in postapartheid national belonging in ways that their legal claims to land and chieftaincy so far had not. While ideas of Lemba indigeneity had begun to take shape through these politics, it now began to emerge more explicitly as a potential avenue of identification and transformation.

The Lemba Cultural Association was now part of a joint effort to rebury thirteenth-century bones from the Mapungubwe kingdom near the South African border with Zimbabwe and Botswana. The bones had been excavated beginning in the 1930s and stored ever since at the University of Pretoria. All presentations at the LCA conference that year were about Mapungubwe, both Lemba historical connections there and updates on reburial plans. Finally, in November 2007, LCA and other Lemba representatives joined representatives from several other "claimant communities," as they were called by the postapartheid South African government, at what was now the Mapungubwe World Heritage Site and National Park. There each claimant community performed burial rituals to lay to rest the bones of their ancestors, the now-recognized-as-indigenous inhabitants of the now-memorialized Mapungubwe kingdom. In that act, Lemba representatives claimed African indigeneity for

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Lemba people, and they were in turn claimed by the South African state as indigenous Africans.

Long-standing scholarly and public interest in the Lemba hinges on the singularity of origins: were they really Africans or really Jews? The question implied that they either descended from Jews whose origins were in ancient Judea, or that their ancestors were black Africans who had mistakenly (or perhaps instrumentally) taken to heart incorrect missionary theories that they might have Semitic histories. This was the question that genetic research purported to answer. Lemba genetic ancestry, expressed by most as having Jewish blood, and their involvement in the Mapungubwe reburial, through which they claimed their African bones, suggest another iteration of the Jewish/African conundrum: how could Lemba people view their blood as Jewish and their bones as African? Such questions are misleading, because they take on others' logics of purity and stasis that Lemba people, in their multiple articulations of belonging, clearly reject.[60]

In this book, I also reject the logics of origins through which one can truly be only one thing or the other, or a mixture of more than one thing that can be broken into constitutive, original parts. Instead of asking after Lemba origins, I therefore ask how Lemba political subjectivities have articulated with genetic ancestry, and what we might learn from Lemba people about how to think against the grain of mutually exclusive concepts of belonging.[61] Doing so unsettles the ways that race, religion, indigeneity, diaspora, and DNA purport to definitively fix assertions of who people really are, where they are really from, and therefore where they really belong.

James Clifford has argued that diasporas, nation-states, and indigenous claims can be understood as defined against one another as "zones of relational contrast" (Clifford 1997, 254). Indigeneity testifies that those who claim it are original people, not just the first inhabitants of a given place, but substantively constituted through it. Diaspora offers connection and a form of rootedness to those who locate their belonging not only where they are but also in a place where they or their ancestors were before—especially in circumstances where migrations were not freely chosen and return is not possible. Genetic ancestry, with its assertions of continental, racial, and ethnic origins "coded" in "non-coding" haplotypes, promises to sort out one from the other, and to reconstruct the pathways through which all people came to be in the places they call home. Each of these ways of knowing belonging suggests a fixity: one is either indigenous or diasporic, of a place or strangers in a place, and DNA, in this logic, can settle open questions about contested origins once and for all.[62]

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Lemba people and their histories and subjectivities call into question the stability of these political and scientific global mappings. Their actions and identifications as both genetic Jews and indigenous Africans complicate what we think we know about indigenous and diasporic belonging and about Jewish and African histories and futures. They also open new questions about the evidentiary claims of genetic data.

Genetic Afterlives

Participants in genetic ancestry studies make sense of and build upon the data that derive from their bodies, often years after findings have been published and researchers have moved on to other questions. If we want to understand the growing importance of DNA as a form of knowledge that is also a form of making political claims, we must attend to *how* genetic ancestry matters and how its meaning can change in different contexts. This is what I mean by "genetic afterlives." These are new sites of genetic knowledge production that can spark a rethinking of what constitutes genetic evidence, who produces it, and for what reasons.[63]

The concept of genetic afterlives builds on a point of convergence between anthropological and STS approaches to scientific knowledge: that facts are produced rather than discovered, and that such production is social and relational.[64] Donna Haraway's (1988) concept of situated knowledges is foundational here. Haraway argues that because one's perspective can only ever be partial, objectivity and indeed the quality of scientific research are strengthened by one's ability to make the particular partiality of their perspective explicit. Furthermore, these necessarily partial perspectives cannot be all-encompassing.[65] Building on these core insights, I suggest that both genetic ancestry studies and related analyses are missing the perspective of the people who are recruited as research subjects: the people whose bodily materials constitute the data that ultimately make genetic ancestry research possible. Including these perspectives offers otherwise unavailable insights into how history, politics, and culture matter in any analysis of the significance of DNA and genetic knowledge.

Alondra Nelson's work exemplifies the kind of shift in focus, from production in laboratories to wider circulations, that I think is necessary to really grasp the contemporary significance of genetic ancestry specifically and of DNA in general. In *The Social Life of DNA* (2016), Nelson shows that DNA circulates not just biologically through reproduction, but also socially and legally. She points to African Americans' use of direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry testing to access genealogical histories that were violently obscured by the

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slave trade and generations of enslavement in the United States, as well as the use of DNA in efforts to establish legal standing for descendants' lawsuits against institutions that directly profited from their ancestors' enslavement. There is some resonance between these consumers and the former research subjects to whom I attend in this book. For example, both find genetic ancestry compelling as a means of achieving forms of justice, and consumers of personal genetic ancestry testing services such as those Nelson writes about are also in a sense research subjects: in fact, in many cases they authorize use of their DNA in undefined future research when they sign the consent forms that are required in order to purchase their ancestry report.

But there are also some important differences, both between my approach and Nelson's and between the specificity of the people with whom she works and the former research subjects whom I engage here. First, Nelson's approach to circulation does not call into question what constitutes genetic knowledge production: for her, geneticists produce genetic knowledge, and consumers circulate it. We might think of this as a story about scientific knowledge production and its popular circulation. In contrast, the chapters that follow demonstrate that we must ethnographically analyze genetic circulation as knowledge production in its own right. This makes the difference between accepting the fixity of contemporary categories of belonging and destabilizing the ways that concepts like diaspora, indigeneity, race, and religion fix people into (or in some cases, out of) place. Furthermore, the racial geographies and ethnonationalisms that companies both presume and market tend to reverberate in consumer circulations of commercial genetic ancestry. But the former research subjects who are the focus of this book fundamentally challenge such configurations.

I aim to understand genetic evidence from the perspective of people who have been part of genetic ancestry studies as research subjects for three reasons: to take seriously the knowledge practices of people who are more often understood as vulnerable subjects than as political actors, to better situate genetic ancestry in relation to colonial and postcolonial politics of race, ethnicity, and citizenship, and to move away from scientist/nonscientist or expert/nonexpert binaries when thinking about the source, content, and meaning of scientific knowledge.[66]

There are affinities between my use of "afterlives" and the ways that the term has opened productive spaces for others looking to account for and make sense of disparate kinds of lingering effects. Saidiya Hartman, for example, names the ongoing devaluation of black life "the afterlife of slavery," a label she also takes as her own to mark how in living, she is a reminder of the dead and is at once stranger and kin to the descendants of others who were captured in

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the Atlantic slave trade and those in West Africa who were not (Hartman 2007, 6, 18). Gastón Gordillo, drawing on Walter Benjamin, writes of the "afterlife of destruction" in which rubble is actively reused while also being haunted by histories of past violence—and ruins, in contrast, enact erasure and in doing so become dead (W. Benjamin [1968] 2019; Gordillo 2014). Nancy Rose Hunt, writing about colonial Congo, posits afterlives as an alternative to "aftermath": whereas the latter implies a singular event, the former are multiple (Hunt 2016). Didier Fassin urges ethnographers to claim the public afterlives of their published research—that is, the ways that their work circulates through author interviews, book reviews, and other media—as ethnography in its own right that can illuminate related and new questions (Fassin 2015).[67]

Hartman's, Gordillo's, Hunt's, and Fassin's use of the term marks loss and remembrances, unexpected openings and new circulations: likewise with genetic afterlives. Fassin's formulation offers a productive distinction from what I mean to account for. For Fassin, public circulations are of interest, whereas I differentiate between circulations of genetic research postpublication in general and that which unfolds among research subjects. We might view the former as a public afterlife in relation to geneticists who author these studies, but my interest here is in how research subjects produce genetic ancestry out of their bodies when their samples are taken, and how they reclaim that foundational authorship in their own postpublication circulations of the studies that rely on their participation.

Now regarded as a powerful form of evidence, DNA is increasingly called upon to make and adjudicate competing claims to rights, resources, and belonging. Therefore, what are fundamentally at stake in the meaning of DNA are political subjectivity and questions of citizenship. We can imagine what this might mean for genetics researchers because we can analyze their published work for signs of their unacknowledged assumptions, desires, and commitments. We can also imagine what this might mean for consumers like those whom Alondra Nelson (2016) writes about, who seek kinship reconciliations and reparations for the institution of slavery's theft of life, labor, and liberty over generations, or like those Kim TallBear (2013) discusses, who, upon learning that some percentage of their genome is associated with Native American ancestry, seek tribal belonging in the absence of mutually claimed kinship. But we do not easily imagine what DNA might mean politically for the former research subjects without whom none of the work of genetic ancestry would have been possible.

Lemba genetic studies have served to illustrate insightful arguments such as critiques of the resurgent essentialisms of DNA-based identity (Nash 2004; Parfitt 2003) and the ways that definitions of Jewishness have shifted in relation to American multiculturalism and Israeli nationalism (Abu El-Haj 2012). But

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these and other invocations of Lemba DNA do not aim to take Lemba agency into account. This makes it possible for readers to assume that Lemba people share geneticists' desires and goals, thus leaving aside an important source of critique of geneticists' global mappings and inadvertently participating in Lemba erasure.

Shifting the focus from geneticists to research subjects, however, is not only a matter of attributing rather than erasing agency. It also enables a broader analysis of forms of political belonging that genetic ancestry opens up and forecloses. These political subjectivities cannot be predicted nor accounted for in even the most thoughtful and thoroughly ethical genetic research designs, because they continue to be moving targets after studies formally conclude.[68] We therefore must locate the meaning and significance of genetic ancestry research in the people who have been part of studies as research subjects. If we take their stories about DNA seriously as genetic knowledge production that is different from but no less significant than the stories about DNA that geneticists tell, then we can better understand how DNA matters socially and politically beyond the now-familiar spaces of laboratories and genetic enterprise.

Genetic studies are world-making projects.[69] Genetic data are not already meaningful, but rather they are made meaningful in relation to both the geopolitical and intellectual contexts in which they are collected, analyzed, and circulated and the conceptual and material tools and technologies that geneticists and research subjects alike use in these processes.[70] My contention is that there are multiple worlds in play in this kind of genetic research that are not necessarily shared among all actors, and if we focus on the knowledge politics of scientists exclusively, it is at the expense of other, often less powerful actors who ultimately must continue to live with genetic ancestry's implications in ways that geneticists are not subjected to.

Genetic afterlives can and should transform our understandings of the possibilities and limitations of DNA as a form of evidence and as a site of social, cultural, and political meaning. To understand contemporary power and politics, we need to understand the emerging political significance of DNA, and to understand the political significance of DNA, we need to attend ethnographically to the people from whom genetic samples derive.

Overview of Chapters

The chapters of this book ethnographically trace a series of genetic afterlives as they articulate with Lemba political belonging in the forms of citizenship (chapters 1 and 3), diaspora (chapter 2), postapartheid traditional leadership

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and kinship (chapter 4), and indigeneity (chapter 5). Genetic ancestry becomes animated through these forms of political belonging, which I argue must be understood as interrelated rather than separate.

Chapter 1, "Producing Lemba Archives, Becoming Genetic Jews," traces the entangled stories of ethnologists, Lemba informants, and Lemba authors as an ongoing and unequal conversation about the nature of Lemba difference and why that difference should matter. It follows the founding of the Lemba Cultural Association in the mid-twentieth century and unsuccessful efforts by Lemba people to achieve ethnic recognition in apartheid South Africa through labels in passbooks, recognition of chieftaincies, and the hoped-for creation of a Lemba "homeland." The chapter considers genetic ancestry as one among many Lemba archival practices. It examines how genetic ancestry became possible for Lemba people in the 1980s and 1990s, why they decided to participate as research subjects, and with what effects, especially the popularization of the mistaken idea that because the Lemba have genetic links to Jews, they are a lost tribe of Israel. This chapter, then, is the prelife of genetic afterlives: it contextualizes genetic ancestry in relation to other contested knowledges and long-standing projects of belonging.

Chapter 2, "Genetic Diaspora," considers how Lemba people produced genetic knowledge in conversation with published studies; television documentaries that publicized the studies and the Lemba as a lost tribe of Israel; American Jews who, based on this media archive, sought connections to the Lemba as genetic kin; and South African Jews who struggled with how to connect with Lemba people across differences that were at once racial, religious, and historical. Building on concepts of genetic citizenship (Heath, Rapp, and Taussig 2004) and diasporic Zionism (Abu El-Haj 2012), "genetic diaspora" theorizes the contours of diaspora after DNA. Specifically, it provides a means to analyze how genetic knowledge, global politics of Jewishness, and postapartheid politics of race and ethnicity converged in encounters between Lemba people and other Jews. This chapter considers how genetic afterlives facilitate diaspora, but in the process also make possible its undoing.

Chapter 3, "Postapartheid Citizenship and the Limits of Genetic Evidence," analyzes how DNA that was intended to substantiate Lemba-Jewish connections entered into Lemba political and legal struggles for postapartheid state recognition via claims to traditional leadership and land, and how indigeneity began to emerge as a way to describe and achieve these forms of recognitions and rights. It follows Kgoshi Mpaketsane's recognition efforts and explores how genetic afterlives intersected with citizenship as a lived experience in rural South Africa. This chapter shows that genetic ancestry became legible

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as a means to achieve a form of postapartheid ethnic citizenship through its ability to demonstrate difference. However, it also traces how a series of projects of recognition failed. These failures point to the limits of both DNA and indigeneity as technologies through which to achieve recognition, land rights, and sovereignty in postapartheid South Africa.

Chapter 4, "Ancestry, Ancestors, and Contested Kinship after DNA," reminds us that the "populations" that appear in genetic ancestry studies are made up of people who have both collective and personal stakes in relatedness as it is practiced and experienced. This chapter considers Lemba contestations over genealogy and ancestors, arguing that to fully grasp how DNA mattered for Lemba people, it is necessary to analyze instances where DNA might have mattered, but other ways of figuring relatedness mattered more. Nevertheless, these contestations are filtered through the experience of being collectively subject to genetic ancestry research.

Chapter 5, "Locating Lemba Heritage, Imagining Indigenous Futures," ethnographically examines the events leading up to the Mapungubwe reburial, the reburial process, and subsequent Lemba reflections and visits to the site. It traces the political maneuvering that resulted in a joint claim to the ancient bones in the name of an undifferentiated African indigeneity that ultimately required the decision not to perform genetic analyses on the bones, even while the reburial was done in a way that made future study possible. It theorizes what it means to be indigenous in postapartheid South Africa, what it means to be black Jewish indigenous Africans, and how DNA mediates claims to belonging, difference, and authority.

The epilogue considers the reasons behind a recent Lemba moratorium on future genetic ancestry testing. It argues that such a refusal is itself a form of genetic knowledge production and thus an example of genetic afterlives. Together, the examples of genetic afterlives in this book challenge us to rethink what is at stake in truth claims that link bodies and belonging.

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