

Who wrote the Book of Ruth?

Ezra the scribe complains about dignitaries who impose on him the regulation to expel foreign wives:

The princes came to me saying, "The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, according to their abominations, of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass
Book of Ezra, Chapter 9, verses 1 - 2

Nehemiah, the ruler in charge of the Jewish settlement, admits that he was the one who demanded the establishment of this regulation.

In those days also saw I Jews [that] had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, [and] of Moab.

And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, "Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves." Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying foreign wives? And of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high

priest, son in law to Sanballat the Hellenite: therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites. Thus cleansed I them from all foreigners, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business; And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

Book of Nehemiah, Chapter 13, verses 23 – 31

In the Book of Ruth, characters are given symbolic names: Mahlon and Chilion, (ill and passed away), Elimelech (received the kingdom of God), Naomi (kind to her daughters-in-law), Orpah (turned her back), Ruth (loved), and Boaz (had strength in him). The symbolism of the names indicates that the book is not based on real events. The final verses of the book present the positive contribution of a foreign woman to the people of Israel:

So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

And Naomi took the child, and said it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Book of Ruth, Chapter 4, Verses 13 – 17

The question that arises is who found it necessary to present a positive contribution of a foreign woman to the people of Israel. Ezra the scribe was forced to divorce foreign women against his will, and therefore he is a likely candidate for writing the Book of Ruth.