JBL 121/4 (2002) 601–616

THE CIRCUMSCRIPTION OF THE KING: DEUTERONOMY 17:16–17 IN ITS ANCIENT SOCIAL CONTEXT

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The portrait of the king in Deuteronomic law (Deut 17:14–21) presents a distinctive view of kingship and royal authority. The role of a Deuteronomic king is carefully limited in ways that seem to reflect ideological interests. Various literary, redactional, and general social studies of "the law of the king" have identified key components. In particular Deut 17:16–17 sets limits on a king's behavior that appear especially intriguing if only because they are so antithetical to usual assumptions about royal actions. But a social-scientific approach can set this part of the law into the social contexts of ancient agrarian monarchies and empires. The task of this article is, then, to ask: When we use social-scientific theories to examine the ideological circumscription of the king in Deut 17:16–17, what insights can be gained about the power politics of the social group espousing that ideology in the social context of the ancient world? Several preliminary remarks on issues of redaction, background and significance, and method are necessary.

I. Preliminary Issues

Redaction

The focus of this article will be two verses within the law of the king, Deut 17:16–17, more specifically, vv. 16aα, 17aα, and 17b. These lines limit the king's ability to acquire horses, wives, and riches. A compositional and redactional study of the law of the king is beyond the scope of this article, but we can

This article is a major revision of a paper presented at the SBL annual meeting in 1999 for a joint session of the Biblical Law section and the Deuteronomistic History section. The theme of the session was "Royal Authority in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History."

assume the generally accepted views on such issues. Most commentators note the similarity in vv. 16aα, 17aα, and 17b, and many place them in the earliest Deuteronomic or proto-Deuteronomic layer of composition.[1] Scholars then make various proposals on Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic additions that eventually created not only these two verses but the whole law of the king and the section of laws on the offices (Deut 16:18–18:22). Commentators also propose various dates for the redactional layers ranging from pre- or proto-Deuteronomic or Deuteronomistic development to exilic composition or redaction.[2] Along with many scholars, we will assume that the lines in question, if not other parts of the law of the king and the laws on offices, are part of a pre-exilic, Deuteronomic composition.[3] This assumption places the examination of

[1] Among other commentaries, see Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979); Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Deuteronomium* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982); Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox, 1990); Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11* (AB 5; New York: Doubleday, 1991); Eduard Nielsen, *Deuteronomium* (HAT; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995); Ronald Clements, "Deuteronomy," *NIB* 2:271–538. See also more specialized studies, e.g., on the law of the king: Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972; repr., Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992); F. García López, "Le Roi d'Israel: Dt 17,14–20," in *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft* (ed. Norbert Lohfink; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985), 277–97; Gerald Eddie Gerbrandt, *Kingship According to the Deuteronomistic History* (SBLDS 87; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); Udo Rüterswörden, *Von der politischen Gemeinschaft zur Gemeinde* (BBB 65; Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987); Norbert Lohfink, "Distribution of the Functions of Power: The Laws Concerning Public Offices in Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22," in *A Song of Power and the Power of Song: Essays on the Book of Deuteronomy* (ed. Duane L. Christensen; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 336–52 (originally, "Die Sicherung der Wirksamkeit des Gotteswortes durch das Prinzip der Schriftlichkeit der Tora und durch das Prinzip der Gewaltenteilung nach den Ämtergesetzen des Buches Deuteronomium (Dt 16,18–18,22)," in *Testimonium Veritate* (ed. H. Wolter; Frankfurter Theologische Studien 7; Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1971), 144–55; Gary N. Knoppers, *Two Nations under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies*, vol. 1, *The Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam* (HSM; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); idem, "The Deuteronomist and the Deuteronomic Law of the King: A Reexamination of a Relationship," *ZAW* 108 (1996): 329–46; Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford, 1997); J. G. McConville, "King and Messiah in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John Day; (JSOTSup 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 271–95; Gary N. Knoppers, "Rethinking the Relationship between Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History: The Case of Kings," *CBQ* 63 (2001): 393–415.

[2] A related significant issue is the relationship between the view of kingship in Deuteronomy and in the Deuteronomistic History. The view that at least vv. 16aα, 17aα, and 17b are preexilic suggests that they either precede or are contemporary with Deuteronomistic portrayals of kingship. But the issues are complex and outside the scope of this paper. See especially Gerbrandt, *Kingship*; Knoppers, *Two Nations*; McConville, "King and Messiah"; and Knoppers, "Rethinking the Relationship" and the literature cited in those works.

[3] See, e.g., Gerbrandt, *Kingship*, 103–8; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 270–71; García López, "Le

the implications of Deut 17:16aα, 17aα, and 17b within a monarchic political situation in the seventh century B.C.E. when Judah was largely dominated by Assyria.[4]

Background and Significance

There are various theories as to the background and significance of the limits placed on the king in Deut 17:16–17. Numerous scholars point out that these limits (and much of the law of the king) have a historical background in the sustained prophetic critiques of royal authority and royal abuses of power. A related proposal is that the origin of the limits is in the actual experiences of Israel with its kings, their powers and their excesses.[5] Against this understanding of the historical background, discussion of the law of the king, as a whole and within the laws on offices, reveals two aspects of the significance of these laws. (1) Deuteronomy 16:18–18:22 is significant because it places all authorities in the nation under the authority of Yahweh and within the covenant character of law for the nation. (2) The laws on offices provide for a balance of

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Roi," 282–87; Rüterswörden, *Von der politischen Gemeinschaft*, 89–93; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 55–57; and McConville, "King and Messiah," 276–81. Thomas C. Römer summarizes: "There may be quite a consensus in critical scholarship about the seventh century B.C.E. as the starting point of deuteronomism" ("Transformations in Deuteronomistic and Biblical Historiography," *ZAW* 109 [1997]: 2).

[4] While the written text of Deut 17:16aα, 17aα, and 17b will be taken as an expression of Deuteronomic ideology, positing a written format for the expression of an ideology is not strictly necessary to the task. One could posit a group within Judah's elite classes in the seventh century that promoted such an ideology without a written expression of it because ideologies can be propagated through other material means, such as monumental architecture and ceremonial events. An examination of the role of literacy and writing in the expression of ideology, though beyond my task, is a significant, related topic. See Elizabeth DeMarrais, Luis Jaime Castillo, and Timothy Earle, "Ideology, Materialization and Power Strategies," in *Agency, Ideology, and Power in Archeological Theory, Current Anthropology* 37 (1996): 15–31; and Mogens Trolle Larsen, "Introduction: Literacy and Social Complexity," in *State and Society: The Emergence and Development of Social Hierarchy and Political Centralization* (ed. John Gledhill, Barbara Bender, and Mogens Trolle Larsen; London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 173–91. For examples of articles that understand this type of expression of ideology in ancient Israel, see Carol L. Meyers, "Jachin and Boaz in Religious and Political Perspective," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 167–78; and Keith W. Whitelam, "The Symbols of Power: Aspects of Royal Propaganda in the United Monarchy," *BA* 49 (September 1986): 166–73. For works that focus on Assyrian influence through figurative and cultural forms, see Jane M. Cahill, "Rosette Stamp Impressions from Ancient Judah," *IEJ* 45 (1995): 230–52; and Christoph Uehlinger, "Figurative Policy, Propaganda und Prophetie," in *Congress Volume: Cambridge 1995* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup 66; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

[5] See, e.g., Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 270; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 147; Clements, "Deuteronomy," 418, 427; see also Knoppers, "Deuteronomist," 331–34; and McConville, "King and Messiah," 276–81, who both provide a discussion of the issues and related bibliography.

powers among the leaders, which limits the power of all the offices, particularly the king, so that the laws work together as a "constitution" for the nation.[6]

For many scholars, the law of the king, more specifically, is significant in placing theological/ideological (if not actual) limitations on kingship. Scholars discuss three broad limitations. (1) The law markedly reduces the powers of the king and thereby the possibilities of abuse of power. (2) The law places kingship within the covenantal and community character of Israel as enjoined upon it by Yahweh. (3) The law reminds the king that the full allegiance and loyalty of the whole community, and in particular the king himself, are to be given to Yahweh.[7]

The specific clauses in the law of the king in Deut 17:16–17 concerning horses, wives, and wealth also are seen by scholars to have various types of significance. All three prohibitions fit generally within an intent to limit royal powers and thereby abuse, and to enjoin royal allegiance to Yahweh. The limit on horses signifies a limit on a professional standing army as opposed to popular militias and has related implications concerning Yahweh's leadership in "holy war." It also entails a limit on foreign entanglements and alliances to secure horses for military purposes. The limit on wives signifies a move to limit foreign entanglements and in particular to limit temptations to apostasy that accompany such marriages outside the community of Israel. The limit on wealth signifies a limit on commerce with foreign nations and/or a limit on the king's accumulation of power and status above other Israelites.[8]

What is striking about all these discussions is how much they are oriented to understanding the background and significance of vv. 16–17 (and the law of the king by extension) almost exclusively in an internal Israelite context. As reviewed above, the law and these verses are taken to originate in Israel's historical experience with its kings and/or in prophetic critiques of kingship. The theological/ideological significance of the law and these verses is the limitation set on royal behavior within the community of Israel and under Yahweh's covenant, granted that for some scholars this does limit foreign entanglements symbolized by military, trade, or marriage alliances. Almost absent from these discussions is any recognition that, in the time period during which elements of the Deuteronomic law of the king were being developed (the seventh century

[6] Although these authors differ on redactional issues, see in particular Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 141; Lohfink, "Distribution"; Preuss, *Deuteronomium*, 137; and Clements, "Deuteronomy," 417.

[7] Again, although these authors differ on redactional issues, see Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 253–54; Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, 272–73; Lohfink, "Distribution," 348; Gerbrandt, *Kingship*, 110; Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 147; Knoppers, "Deuteronomist," 332; and Clements, "Deuteronomy," 425–26.

[8] See Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 255–56; Lohfink, "Distribution," 349; García-Lopez, "Le Roi," 292–93; Gerbrandt, *Kingship*, 111–12; Rüterswörden, *Von der politischen Gemeinschaft*, 91; and McConville, "King and Messiah," 276.

B.C.E.), Judah was either a vassal of the Assyrian empire, was briefly attempting to free itself from that empire, or was attempting to avoid/react to the Babylonian empire. While this article will not seek to discount the theories on vv. 16–17 that have been noted so far, it will attempt to expand the understanding of the internal social dynamics implied in the limitations on kingship in Deut 17:16–17 and to place the background and significance of these verses within the larger social context of the Assyrian empire.

Method

In order to achieve the ends just noted, a social-scientific approach is necessary to focus on the patterns of interaction among the social actors involved, be they kings, elites, or empires. This approach will be complemented by the historical study of ancient Israel and Assyria, particularly utilizing recent work on political and ideological relationships within the Neo-Assyrian empire. In addition, because what is at issue in a law about kingship is a conceptualization or ideology of kingship rather than the action of particular historical kings, the methods used must also be sensitive to the function of ideology in social power relations.

Building on the discussions of recent decades about ancient Israel's social world and institutions,[9] we will use systemic and comparative theories from the social sciences, including macrosociology and anthropology.[10] Within systemic and comparative social-science theories on states and state development, two recent approaches have been especially helpful for examining social power relationships and the impact of ideology on those relationships within ancient social contexts. Both the theory of dual-processual evolution and that of core-periphery relations are extensions and refinements of theories on early and developing states, which have been familiar in biblical scholarship especially on early Israel.[11] The usefulness for our task of these two recent theories stems

[9] The bibliography on sociological studies is extensive; for collections of relevant articles, see *Community, Identity, and Ideology: Social Science Approaches to the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Charles E. Carter and Carol L. Meyers; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996); and *Social-Scientific Old Testament Criticism* (ed. David Chalcraft; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). For a review of the field, see A. D. H. Mayes, "Sociology and the Old Testament," in *The World of Ancient Israel* (ed. R. E. Clements; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 39–63.

[10] See, e.g., Gerhard Lenski, Patrick Nolan, and Jean Lenski, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology* (7th ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995).

[11] On dual-processual evolution, see especially Richard E. Blanton, Gary M. Feinman, Stephen A. Kowalewski, and Peter N. Peregrine, "A Dual-Processual Theory for the Evolution of Mesoamerican Civilization," in *Agency, Ideology and Power in Archaeological Theory, Current Anthropology* 37 (1996): 1–14; and Thomas Fillitz, "Intellectual Elites and the Production of Ideology," in *Ideology and the Formation of Early States* (ed. Henri J. M. Claessen and Jarich G. Oosten;

from their attention to several relevant factors: ancient monarchic societies, complexity within social systems, and ideology as a societal component.

An ideology as a part of a culture's socially constructed and shared meanings[12] has a dual function: to provide cognitive meaning, "a more fundamental dogmatic dimension," and to provide practical guides to action, "a more pragmatic, operative dimension."[13] Thus, ideology is a "focussed expression of different shared meanings and different interpretations of the same meanings as they are related to specific socio-economic and political interests."[14] A conflict about an ideology, or between variant ideologies, within a particular social setting will mirror conflict among or between social actors who have their own interests in power, wealth, status, and so on.[15]

To take these clauses in vv. 16–17 as a part of an expression of royal ideology is thus to propose that we see these lines as an expression of a particular "worldview" that had concomitant social, economic, and political implications and to propose that the ideology was fostered by a group of elites within seventh-century Judah. What is common to all the studies of agrarian states is the pattern of struggle among elites for control of the apparatus of government—either as a "state apparatus" or, in the form most common to agrarian societies, as the monarchy.[16] Thus, the circumscription of royal authority

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Leiden: Brill, 1996), 67–83. On core-periphery relations, see especially Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas D. Hall, *Core/Periphery Relations in Precapitalist Worlds* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991); Edward M. Schortman and Patricia A. Urban, "Core/Periphery Relations in Ancient Southeastern Mesoamerica," in *Living on the Edge*, *Current Anthropology* 35 (1994): 401–13; *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World* (ed. Michael Rowlands, Mogens Larsen, and Kristian Kristiansen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and *Resources, Power, and Interregional Interaction* (ed. Edward M. Schortman and Patricia A. Urban; New York: Plenum Press, 1992).

[12] A variety of definitions of "ideology" have been used in sociological literature, and a number of conceptual debates have arisen. See, e.g., the discussion in Henri J. M. Claessen and Jarich G. Oosten, "Introduction," in *Ideology*, ed. Claessen and Oosten, 1–23.

[13] From Myron J. Aronoff, who uses Geertz and Berger and Luckman to formulate his definitions (Myron J. Aronoff, "Ideology and Interest: The Dialectics of Politics," in *Political Anthropology Yearbook I* [New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980], 4).

[14] Ibid., 8

[15] Ibid., 25.

[16] Gerhard E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 211; and Keith Whitelam, "Israelite Kingship: The Royal Ideology and Its Opponents," in *World of Ancient Israel*, ed. Clements, 121. For the notion that "kingdom" is the appropriate term for ancient monarchies, see Paul Garelli, "L'État et la Légitimité Royale sous l'Empire Assyrien," in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (ed. Mogens Trolle Larsen; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979), 319. Different studies have defined the conflict as the struggles of local versus state institutions (Donald V. Kurtz, "The Legitimation of Early Inchoate States," in *The Study of the State* [ed. Henri J. M. Claessen and Peter Skalník; The Hague: Mouton, 1981], 177–200), or as the struggles of kinship-based groups versus ruling elites (Shirley Ratnagar, "Ideology and the Nature of Political Consolidation and Expansion: An Archae-

implied in Deut 17:16–17 was probably not the only definition available, and conflict over how to define kingship involved both conceptual and practical elements. Since all groups in a situation of ideological conflict claim theological validation and legitimation for their views, the various definitions of kingship each probably claimed to be upholding "true" nationalistic and Yahwistic interests.[17]

II. Internal Social Dynamics

We begin a social-scientific examination of the "internal" implications of vv. 16aα, 17aα, and 17b by asking what are the meanings of the prohibitions against excessive horses, wives, and wealth, focusing on the "practical" or "real-world" function of the ideology—what this ideology claimed about what a king could or could not actually do in political and economic terms. Dual-processual theory was developed in reaction to evolutionary theories of state development that use a "simple stage typology to account for variation among societies of similar complexity."[18] Instead, this theory investigates "the varying strategies used by political actors to construct and maintain polities"[19] that may not show a linear, evolutionary development but rather may show cycles of change, growth, contraction, and varying patterns of elite control of the state.

Dual-processual theory identifies two broad types of power strategies used by elites in agrarian states. In the first, called an exclusionary strategy, "political actors aim at the development of a political system built around their monopoly control of sources of power."[20] In competition among elites for wealth, status, and power, or in competition of elites against a major power holder such as a king, an exclusionary political strategy emphasizes the building and exploitation of networks of social, economic, and political connections beyond a power holder's local group to build prestige and power. To develop exclusionary power by networking, political actors exploit, for example, military technology and control, patrimonial rhetoric and systems of ranked clan and descent groups, and trade and control of luxury and prestige goods.[21]

By contrast, the second power strategy, termed a corporate power strategy, aims to distribute, structure, and control power within limits set by an elite

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ological Case," in *Ideology and the Formation of Early States,* ed. Claessen and Oosten, 170–86), or as the struggles of rulers versus commoner communities (John Gledhill, "Introduction: The Comparative Analysis of Social and Political Transitions," in *State and Society,* ed. Gledhill et al., 1–29).

[17] I am indebted to Dr. Marvin Chaney for this insight.

[18] Blanton et al., "Dual-Processual Theory," 1.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 2.

[21] Ibid., 4–5.

structure of corporate governance. "Power is shared across different groups and sectors of society in such a way as to inhibit exclusionary strategies."[22] Not to be confused with an egalitarian or democratic impulse, corporate power strategies emphasize the domination of society by powerful, centralized formations. Ideologically, such a strategy "always involves the establishment and maintenance of a cognitive code that emphasizes a corporate solidarity of society as an integrated whole . . . [and] . . . emphasizes collective representations and accompanying ritual."[23]

Exclusionary and corporate power strategies are not mutually exclusive within any one polity. Both may be pursued by political actors in varying degrees at the same time; or one or the other may be applied to internal or external social relations; or they may be used sequentially as the goals of elites, or the elites themselves, change.[24]

Where do the limits on the king fit within these power strategies? First, horses are principally used for military technology, in the ancient Near East particularly to pull chariots. For elites struggling against a ruler or among themselves, the ability to control military power was the most basic form of force by which to carry out one's own strategies. Kings in particular needed an army that could carry out commands and secure resources.[25] Other elites generally wanted to limit the king's ability to use force, at least against them, while allowing the kingdom to have sufficient defensive power. Because horses required a large expenditure for acquisition, care, and training, the prohibition against horses may represent a limit on the king's ability to control a professional army. Keeping military technology in the hands of either military officers separate from the king's private forces or in the hands of a militarized elite class limited the king's power to enforce his own strategies and decisions over against these elites.[26]

From a sociological perspective, marriage among elites is an arrangement of economic, social, and political import, rather than a romantic matter. The number of wives, their origins in key upper-class families or clans, and the number of children produced, were all matters of royal status. We can highlight the use of marriage by elites, and kings in particular, to gain political advantage or establish strategic political alliances.[27] Limiting a king's ability to arrange mar-

[22] Ibid., 2.

[23] Ibid., 6.

[24] Ibid., 8–12, where Blanton et al. apply the theory to the states of Mesoamerica.

[25] Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 219.

[26] Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 237.

[27] Gideon Sjoberg, *The Preindustrial City* (New York: Free Press, 1960), 149.

riages at will with key families or allies would hamper his use of an important strategic political tool.[28]

In a sense, "gold and silver," or wealth, is the most transparent of the three limitations put on the king in Deut 17. In agrarian societies, control of the apparatus of government brought the possibility of enormous accumulation of wealth, since the whole economy was oriented toward extracting wealth from all productive sources and channeling it to the center, the government, monarchy, elites, and king.[29] A limitation on the wealth of a king translates into curtailing the king's control of the economic surplus by restricting his rights to taxation, trade, rents, fees, plunder and confiscation, and so on. The principal rivals to the king's control of wealth were other elites, particularly the holders of large patrimonial or prebendal estates.[30]

The prohibitions against excessive horses, wives, and wealth in Deut 17:16–17 are specific limitations of the king's abilities to use typical exclusionary power strategies. It appears that the group propagating this aspect of royal ideology knew very well the strategies a king can use to gain power against rivals to the throne and against other elites. The king was not to be allowed to seek exclusionary control through development of a large chariot force, to exploit political connections through marriage alliances, or to use trade networks and prestige goods to accumulate wealth. This sociological perspective thus reinforces the idea that the significance of these verses lies in their limitation of the king's power within the state of ancient Judah. But this sociological perspective also emphasizes, more than most scholars have seen, the internal political struggles inherent in the propagation and application of such an ideological stance. In the background of such limits on kingship stand certain power holders who are acting against other elites to increase their power over the king by limiting his exclusionary powers.

III. External Social Dynamics

Historical studies that examine the impact on Israel and Judah of the Assyrian empire in the late eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. form the background for all further work.[31] The destructiveness of Assyria's western military

[28] This dynamic was explored without the use of sociological theory in Jon D. Levenson and Baruch Halpern, "The Political Import of David's Marriages," *JBL* 99 (1980): 507–18.

[29] Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 212.

[30] T. F. Carney, *The Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1975), 61.

[31] Representative works include Morton Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah,*

campaigns and the vassal status of Judah during much of the period, with the conditions that status entailed, such as payment of tribute, are well established. Numerous studies have also examined the effects of the political and cultural concomitants of Assyrian hegemony, particularly regarding the influence of genres of ancient Near Eastern and Neo-Assyrian treaties and oaths on biblical literature. These studies have focused on Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic writing and on covenant forms and theology, covering topics ranging from the generalized study of treaty and oath formulas and structures and their impact on the Deuteronomic stream of tradition, to strict verbal parallels such as those between Assyrian and Deuteronomic curses.[32] Although the influence of ancient Near Eastern treaties on the form and theology of covenant in Deuteronomy is generally accepted, some issues remain.[33] Recent articles have studied further the use of Assyrian literary genres and specific verbal parallels to biblical literature.[34] Eckhart Otto has explored the far-reaching impact of the ideological, social, and economic changes that accompanied Assyrian hegemony on Deuteronomy, both on its principal conceptualizations in reactualiz-

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and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E. (SBLMS 19; Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars Press, 1974); Moshe Elat, "The Political Status of the Kingdom of Judah within the Assyrian Empire in the 7th Century B.C.E.," in *Investigations at Lachish: The Sanctuary and the Residency (Lachish V)* (ed. Yohanan Aharoni; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Institute of Archeology and Gateway Publishers, 1975), 61–70; Benedikt Otzen, "Israel under the Assyrians," in *Power and Propaganda,* ed Larsen, 251–61; Ehud Ben Zvi, "Prelude to a Reconstruction of *Historical* Manassic Judah," *BN* 81 (1996): 31–44; and Roy Gane, "The Role of Assyria in the Ancient Near East during the Reign of Manasseh," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 35 (1997): 21–32. Also see such varied studies as Mario Liverani, "L'Histoire de Joas," *VT* 24 (1974): 438–53; Moshe Weinfeld, "Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital: Ideology and Utopia," in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism* (ed. Richard Elliott Friedman; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 75–115; K. Lawson Younger, Jr., *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (JSOTSup 98; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990); Antti Laato, "Second Samuel 7 and Ancient Near Eastern Royal Ideology," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 244–69.

[32] The bibliography is extensive, including such representatives works as William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 77–87; R. Frankena, "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon and the Dating of Deuteronomy," *OtSt* 14 (1965): 123–54; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomic School*; idem, "The Loyalty Oath in the Ancient Near East," *UF* 8 (1976): 379–414; D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (2d ed.; AnBib 21A; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978); A. D. H. Mayes, "On Describing the Purpose of Deuteronomy," in *The Pentateuch: A Sheffield Reader* (ed. John W. Rogerson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

[33] See Gary N. Knoppers, "Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants and the Davidic Covenant: A Parallel?" *JAOS* 116 (1996): 670–97 and bibliography there.

[34] William Hallo, "Jerusalem under Hezekiah: An Assyriological Perspective," in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (ed. Lee I. Levine, New York: Continuum, 1999), 36–50; Bernard M. Levinson, "Textual Criticism, Assyriology, and the History of Interpretation: Deuteronomy 13:7a as a Test Case in Method," *JBL* 120 (2001): 211–43.

ing older laws within a revolutionary reform program and on particular expressions and laws.[35]

Perspectives from the social sciences can augment such scholarship. In recent years, sociology has seen the development of a theory of core–periphery relations, that is, of relations between a dominant, core state and the secondary, peripheral states on its borders.[36] This theory has identified a number of variables that must be taken into account in describing core–periphery relations. These variables include differentiation among societies at different levels of complexity, the nature of the hierarchical relationships where domination between societies exists,[37] the existence of multiple power centers or cores in a system,[38] the different modes of production, kinship, tributary, and so on, in the related states,[39] and the variables along which core–periphery relations are measured.[40] The most important factors include military, political, economic, and ideological relationships between the core and the periphery. Scholars have furthermore identified three principal variations in the political-economic structure of core–periphery systems. These are (1) a dendritic political economy, where goods flow directly from the periphery to the core; (2) a hegemonic empire, in which the core dominates its periphery by military force but does not necessarily incorporate the peripheral states directly; and (3) the territorial empire, in which the periphery is incorporated into the political system of the core through direct conquest, military occupation, and assimilation.[41]

The theory suggests that the Neo-Assyrian empire and its core–periphery relations can be characterized as a system in which the core dominated the periphery in certain specific ways through direct and indirect rule but which did not fully assimilate its outermost peripheral states into the core.[42] Assyria

[35] Eckart Otto, *Das Deuteronomium: Politische Theologie und Rechtsreform in Juda und Assyrien* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999).

[36] Partially developed by theorists interested in modern world systems, core–periphery theory has also focused on ancient and premodern states with an accompanying emphasis on the use of archaeological materials as a source of data. An assumed pattern of domination and development in the core alongside passivity and underdevelopment on the periphery has proven much too simplified. See such studies as S. N. Eisenstadt, "Observations and Queries about Sociological Aspects of Imperialism in the Ancient World," in *Power and Propaganda*, ed Larsen, 21–33; Chase-Dunn and Hall, *Core/Periphery Relations;* Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas D. Hall, "Comparing World-Systems: Concepts and Working Hypotheses," *Social Forces* 71 (1993): 851–86; and Schortman and Urban, "Core/Periphery Relations"; and various articles in *State and Society*, ed. Gledhill et al.

[37] Chase-Dunn and Hall, *Core/Periphery Relations*, 19.

[38] Ibid., 12.

[39] Ibid., 22.

[40] Schortman and Urban, "Core/Periphery Relations," 413.

[41] Robert. S. Santley and Rani T. Alexander, "The Political Economy of Core-Periphery Systems," in *Resources, Power, and Interregional Interaction*, ed. Shortman and Urban, 23–49.

[42] Eisenstadt, "Observations and Queries," 21–33; K. Ekholm and J. Friedman, "'Capital'

represents the type where the process of expansion involved "relatively little restructuring of the basic structural and cultural premises of the conquered and/or conquerors."[43]

Historical scholarship has identified a differentiation between those areas of the periphery that remained in a vassal status and those that became provinces. Vassals retained more local political and economic structures and kept their own population and elites while being placed under explicit requirements, particularly concerning loyalty and tribute. Provinces, on the other hand, were more directly incorporated into the Assyrian political, economic, and ideological structures, with an Assyrian governor and military presence and often major deportations of local populations.[44] In both cases a well-developed administrative system functioned to ensure Assyrian interests in its periphery.[45] These considerations indicate that the Neo-Assyrian empire used aspects of both hegemonic and territorial structures in its core–periphery relationships.

While issues remain about the impact on the periphery of the policies of the Assyrian empire, its relations in the seventh-century in Syria-Palestine can be summarized according to the primary core–periphery variables—military, political, economic, and ideological. Militarily, areas in Syria-Palestine underwent repeated invasions, vassal status, and in some cases permanent occupation, characteristics of a tighter core–periphery bond. Politically, Judah as a vassal would have experienced the typical requirements of loyalty, with the constant threat of more direct assertion of control.[46] Economically, the empire

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Imperialism and Exploitation in Ancient World Systems," 41–58; Mogens Trolle Larsen, "The Tradition of Empire in Mesopotamia," 75–103; J. N. Postgate, "The Economic Structure of the Assyrian Empire," 193–221—all in *Power and Propaganda*, ed. Larsen; Hayim Tadmor, "World Dominion: The Expanding Horizon of the Assyrian Empire," in *Landscapes: Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East: Papers Presented to the XLIV Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Venezia, 7-11, July 1997* (ed. L. Milano, S. de Martino, F. M. Fales, and G. B. Langranchi; Padua: Sargon Srl, 1999), 55–62.

[43] Eisenstadt, "Social Aspects of Imperialism," 22.

[44] Moshe Elat, "The Impact of Tribute and Booty on Countries and People within the Assyrian Empire," in *Vorträge gehalten auf der 28. Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Wein 6-10 Juli 1981, AfO* 19 (Horn, Austria: Verlag Ferdinand Berger & Söhne Gesellschaft, 1982), 244–51; Peter Machinist, "Assyrians on Assyria in the First Millennium B.C.," in *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike: Die nahöstlichen Kulturen und die Griechen* (ed. Kurt Raaflaub; Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1993), 77–104.

[45] Jana Pecirková, "The Administrative Methods of Assyrian Imperialism," *ArOr* 55 (1987): 162–75; and Raija Mattila, *The King's Magnates: A Study of the Highest Officials of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (SAAS 11, Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2000), 161–68.

[46] For discussion and details, see J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 314–406; Gösta W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine from the Palaeolithic Period to Alexander's Conquest* (JSOTSup 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 607–740; Larsen, "Tradition of Empire," 97; and Tadmor, "World Dominion," 56–60.

sought control over trade routes and access to raw materials, allowed certain trade and commercial entities to continue, and relied on tribute as its primary economic strategy on the periphery, all typical of a looser economic relationship with border states.[47] Clearly Assyria depended on its vassals and provinces to produce wealth, and it set up economic relations to ensure that outcome. Any "extra" wealth that an area might produce was by obligation due to Assyria and was not available to the local elites themselves unless it could be "hidden" from the empire.

The ongoing publication of the state archives of Assyria allows scholars to learn more detail about Assyria's relationships with its vassals. In particular, the seventh-century B.C.E. vassal treaties specify what behaviors and factors were important to Assyria regarding its vassals.[48] These treaties highlight the obligations put upon vassals—not to pursue any disloyal behavior, not to engage in treasonous behavior, not to engage in any revolt or rebellion, not to make any other oaths or treaties—and the positive requirement to pass on any reports of rumors of opposition to Assyria or its king.[49] Assyrian royal inscriptions augment the study of the treaties themselves by showing how royal self-presentation and propaganda viewed disloyalty by vassals. Oath and treaty violations were perceived as breaking the oath of the gods, repudiating oath agreements, sinning against the oath, and breaking the treaty.[50] Actions by vassals that were considered disloyal and were thus treaty violations were described as conspiring with an enemy; rebelling; renouncing allegiance; imploring the aid of another country; plotting with another country against Assyria; plotting defection, uprising, or revolution; and deciding not to pay tribute or suspending

[47] Larsen, "Tradition of Empire," 100; Moshe Elat, "Phoenician Overland Trade within the Mesopotamian Empires," in *Ah, Assyria: Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (ed. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Ephʿal; ScrHier 33; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 21–35; J. P. J. Olivier-Stellenbosch, "Money Matters: Some Remarks on the Economic Situation in the Kingdom of Judah During the Seventh Century B.C.," *BN* 73 (1994): 90–100; Seymour Gitin, "Tel Miqne-Ekron in the 7th Century B.C.E.: The Impact of Economic Innovation and Foreign Cultural Influences on a Neo-Assyrian Vassal City-State," 61–79; and William G. Dever, "Orienting the Study of Trade in Near Eastern Archaeology," 111–19, both in *Recent Excavations in Israel: A View to the West* (ed. Seymour Gitin; Archaeological Institute of America Colloquia and Conference Papers 1; Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt, 1995).

[48] "Treaty of Esarhaddon with Baal of Tyre," text and translation by R. Borger; "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon," text and translation by D. J. Wiseman, both in *ANESTP*, 533–39; A. Kirk Grayson, "Akkadian Treaties of the Seventh Century B.C.," *JCS* 39 (1987): 127–60; Simo Parpola, "Neo-Assyrian Treaties from the Royal Archives of Nineveh," *JCS* 39 (1987): 161–89; Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (SAAS 2, Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), 161–89; Bustenay Oded, *War, Peace and Empire: Justifications for War in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (Weisbaden: Reichert, 1992).

[49] Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, xv–xxv and xxxviii–xxxix.

[50] Oded, *War, Peace*, 87-99.

[51] Ibid.

annual tribute.[51] Above all, the extant treaties witness the fanatical insistence on loyalty from vassals in the period. "[I]mposing oaths of loyalty on defeated nations was a cornerstone of Assyria's strategy of gradual territorial expansion."[52]

Ideologically, Assyria understood itself to be the center of the world order that was established for Assyria and its king by the gods. This order was to be maintained by the king and the apparatus of government.[53] The non-Assyrian world was a region of chaos, disorder, and disobedience that was to be tamed and transformed by Assyrian hegemony.[54] Thus, Assyrian imperialism in relation to its periphery had deep ideological justifications for the imposition of order by warfare, conquest, control, deportation, and the entire administrative and economic structures of its provinces and vassals.

Core–periphery theory identifies how such military, political, economic, and ideological domination by a core can have an impact on the formation and development of ideology within a peripheral state. Even where direct imposition of various kinds of control, such as ideological coercion, are not used, peripheral states often adjust their behavior and thinking to the core's requirements and values. Motivations of elites within the periphery for this adaptation to the core can include fear about consequences and/or a calculation of benefit for themselves in the situation.[55] Recent work has modified the view that terror was the primary motivation among vassals for submission to the Assyrian empire. There is evidence that Assyrian policy regarding its periphery included an awareness of "benefits" that could be extended to vassals and provinces, such as security for local rulers and elites[56] (albeit that the periphery might have chosen other "benefits" if given a true unencumbered choice). Certain factions among the elites within provinces and vassal states sought cooperation

[52] Parpola, "Neo-Assyrian Treaties," 161.

[53] The ideology of the Assyrian empire has been studied extensively in recent years. See, e.g., A. Leo Oppenheim, "Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires," in *Propaganda and Communication in World History*, vol. 1 of *The Symbolic Instrument in Early Times* (ed. Harold D. Lasswell, Daniel Lerner, and Hans Speier, East-West Center; Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979), 111–44; Mario Liverani, "The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire," 297–317; Paul Garelli, "L'État et la Légitimité sous l'Empire Assyrien," 319–28; and Julian Reade, "Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art," 329–43, all in *Power and Propaganda,* ed Larsen; H. Tadmor, "History and Ideology in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," in *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons in Literary, Ideological, and Historical Analysis* (ed. F. M. Fales; Oriens antiqui collectio 17; Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1981), 13–33; Machinist, "Assyrians on Assyria"; Tadmor, "World Dominion."

[54] Liverani, "Ideology," 306–7; Oppenheim, "Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires," 120–21; Machinist, "Assyrians on Assyria," 83–91.

[55] Schortman and Urban, "Core/Periphery Relations," 404.

[56] Giovanni B. Lanfranchi, "Consensus to Empire: Some Aspects of Sargon II's Foreign Policy," in *Assyrien im Wandel de Zeiten* (Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale 39, Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient 6; Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1997), 81–87.

with Assyrian hegemony in order to secure such benefits and increase their own local power.[57]

This sociologically and historically informed model of core–periphery relations in the Neo-Assyrian empire highlights the international considerations that were part of the scene in seventh-century Judah—especially the military, political, and economic dominance of Assyria and its ideology of control of its periphery. The circumscription of the king in Deut 17:16–17 can now be set into this international social context. A king must not multiply horses, that is, must not increase professional military power nor seek other military alliances. This facet of ideology appears to adapt kingship to Assyria's policy of military domination and to specific prohibitions in the vassal treaties (1) against military preparation that would threaten the Assyrian king or his successor, and (2) against any oaths or alliances with Assyria's rivals. A king must not increase wives, that is, must not enter into political alliances through key strategic marriages. This facet of ideology appears to adapt kingship to Assyria's policy of political domination and to specific prohibitions in the vassal treaties against any political disloyalty and against oaths or alliances beyond the established one with Assyria. A king must not increase gold and silver, that is, must not seek exclusionary control of the economic surplus. This facet of ideology appears to adapt kingship to Assyria's policy of economic control of trade and economic wealth and to specific requirements for the payment of tribute.

These findings indicate that the ideology of kingship reflected in Deut 17:16aα, 17aα, and 17b appears to have adapted its own concept of kingship to the necessary requirements of survival for a monarch on the periphery of the major world empire of its time. Externally, within the context of the periphery of the Assyrian empire, the limits on the king deny him strategies to assert military, political, and economic independence and hegemony. They thus support a strategy of acquiescence to the domination of Assyria and an ideology that strictly defines the external relationships of the kingdom.

This social-scientific perspective on the external dynamics of the limits on horses, wives, and wealth adds important considerations that previous scholarship has overlooked about the background and significance of the limits. The external social context is a crucial locus for understanding the genesis and significance of the ideology implied in the limits. These findings indicate that Judah's vassal status had a profound impact on this aspect of royal ideology.

IV. Conclusion

Some of the intriguing implications of both the internal and external dynamics must be considered. When both sets of dynamics are combined,

[57] Ibid., 84–85.

there is a complementarity between them that is required for both approaches used in the paper to be valid. The results indicate that the ideological limits on the king could have proceeded from a particular faction within the social context of preexilic Judah.[58] With an eye to Judah's international relationships, this faction seems to be advocating circumscriptions on kingship so that the nation will maintain a loyal vassal relationship with Assyria. At the same time, with an eye to internal power struggles, the faction also seems to be advocating these same circumscriptions in order to place the king in a less powerful position relative to other elites internally, including the faction itself. In characteristic exclusionary power strategies, this in turn gives the faction further influence over foreign policy. The suggestion that this faction would thereby have received from Assyria support and other "benefits" fits well within the picture developed here.[59]

Further, this addition to study of the background and significance of the limits complements other scholarship.[60] Particularly intriguing is the interaction with the suggestion that these limits enjoin loyalty and allegiance to Yahweh from the king and, by extension, to the whole covenant community. The findings of this article imply that at least one faction found it possible to advocate that the king attempt a careful balance between being loyal to Yahweh and being loyal to Assyria, that is, that the king can be both a good servant of Yahweh and a good vassal to Assyria.[61] That two such loyalties could be proposed by the faction as at least compatible if not fully complementary is an intriguing perspective on the ideology of ancient preexilic Judah.[62]

Other implications of our findings indicate avenues for further study, including integrating these findings with other parts of the law of the king and the laws on offices in Deuteronomy, comparing the portrayal of kingship in the Deuteronomistic History, and comparing the ideology of kingship in the royal and enthronement psalms.

[58] This is an extension of my earlier work, "The Social Location of the Deuteronomists: A Sociological Study of Factional Politics in Late Pre-Exilic Judah," *JSOT* 52 (1991): 77–94. The issues of defining the faction on the basis of Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History, or Jeremiah remain to be settled, given the somewhat different approaches to kingship within these bodies of literature. See the sources cited in n. 2 above. These issues also clearly relate to the idea of "dual loyalty," which is explored below.

[59] See Lanfranchi, "Consensus to Empire," 84–85.

[60] See pp. 603–5 above.

[61] This implication clearly would modify the suggestion by Otto that the adoption and redirection of the Assyrian loyalty oath from Assyria to Yahweh were anti-Assyrian strategies for Judah (Otto, *Das Deuteronomium*, 364–65).

[62] Such "dual loyalties" may not be unique in biblical literature. Immediate and so far unexplored but intriguing parallels come to mind: Isa 30 regarding trust in Yahweh and avoiding an alliance with Egypt against Assryia, narrative sections of Jer 27–29 and 38 regarding loyal Yahwism and allegiance to Babylon, and the status of Nehemiah (and Ezra?) as Persian appointees and loyal Yahwists.