

In search of an economic remnant of resistance: 3 Reigns 24:12p-t

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This article attempts to discern an economic narrative remnant amidst the dominant ethno-religious narrative concerning the division of the united monarchy. Historical-critical comparison of the MT and LXX highlights the source-critical dimensions of the stories of the division of the united monarchy after the death of Solomon. This is clearly a moment of ideological contestation, as the four variant accounts demonstrate. However, within each of the larger 'division of the kingdom' narratives, there is an economic narrative remnant. The focus of this article is on identifying and delimiting this economic narrative remnant within each of the two variant accounts in the MT and the two variant accounts in the LXX. Having identified these four variant narratives, literary-narrative analysis is used in order to delimit an economic narrative remnant (1 Ki 12:1–18, 2 Chr 10:1–18, 3 Reigns 12:1–18, and 3 Reigns 24:12p-t), with a special emphasis on 3 Reigns 24:12p-t. The article then turns to a preliminary socio-historical ideo-theological analysis of 3 Reigns 24:12p-t, in order to situate this variant remnant socio-historically. Finally, the article argues that this particular economic-oriented remnant narrative (3 Reigns 24:12p-t) provides critical resources with which to engage aspects of South Africa's contemporary post-colonial economic struggle.

Contribution: The article identifies an LXX source text within a textual variant, 3 Reigns 24:12p-t, and argues that this source text offers a unique and early emphasis on economic contestation in the division of the ancient Davidic-Solomonic kingdom.

Keywords: 3 Reigns; 1 Kings; economics; ideology; redaction; LXX.

Introduction

Biblical scholars have always been aware of the tendency in biblical literature for older traditions to be reused to address the needs of new situations. ... This practice has, in fact, been seen as a natural order of things in the internal hermeneutics of the Bible. (Mosala 1989:101)

South African biblical scholar Itumeleng Mosala makes the above assertion, drawing on the work of his South African compatriot Ferdinand Deist (1982:65; Mosala 1989:101), as well as on the work of Gerhard Von Rad, whose biblical-theological analysis resonates here rather well with Mosala's own worries about the final redactional form of the Bible. Von Rad makes the point that in the re-use of older texts, 'the factual historical data [of the older traditions] can no longer be separated from the spiritualizing interpretation, which penetrates everything' (Mosala 1989:101; Von Rad 1975:118).

The author's argument in this article, following Von Rad and Mosala, is that the final form of the biblical text is ideo-theologically predisposed, through redaction and translation, to recast or co-opt socio-economic struggles in ethno-religious forms of discourse (Boer 1996:165–168; Brett 2019:22). However, again following Mosala, the author will argue 'through struggle with the dominant forces inscribed in the text itself, the oppressed and exploited people today can seek to discover kin struggles in biblical communities' (Mosala 1989:188). Mosala does not offer a way of doing this kind of collaborative interpretation, by which socially engaged biblical scholars and users of the Bible from poor and marginalised communities interrogate biblical text collaboratively. However, extensive work has been done over the past 30 years by the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research, in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, along these lines. We have become increasingly overt about the Bible as the site of ideo-theological struggle. This article asks how we might take this work even further by placing variant versions of the same text alongside each other and inviting ordinary readers to work with us in analysing the presence of economically marginalised sectors within these texts.

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Mosala is sceptical about any more than a minimal presence and voice of the poor and marginalised sectors of the ancient world in the final form of biblical texts. He explains the 'struggle' that is necessary to forge a contemporary African socio-economic biblical hermeneutic as inhabiting the tense space between actual 'kin struggles in biblical communities' and 'the dominant forces inscribed in the text itself', which have often so thoroughly co-opted the presence of the oppressed and exploited that their voices are 'experienced as an "absence"' (Mosala 1989:188, see also 152). As his own work on Micah demonstrates, however, a remnant presence can always be found. Whilst the actual discourses of 'the oppressed and exploited peasants, artisans, day labourers, and underclasses' of ancient biblical communities 'are entirely absent in the signifying practice' of the final form of the biblical text, 'something of their project and voice has almost accidentally survived' in the redacted version that co-opts their presence (Mosala 1989:152).

Such a 'project' is evident, the author argues, in 3 Reigns 24:12p-t. 1 Kings 12:1–18, 2 Chronicles 10:1–18, 3 Reigns 12:1–18 and 3 Reigns 24:12p-t are clearly related texts, but how they are related, whether through redaction or translation remains a topic of debate amongst biblical scholars (Schenker 2000, 2008; Sweeney 2007). Similarly, whilst most biblical scholarship concerns itself with how this textual unit fits within the story of Jeroboam (Barrera 2020b; Cohn 1985; Frisch 2000; Schenker 2000, 2008; Sweeney 2007, especially chapters 2, 3 and 5), the author's concern is quite different, for he argues that Jeroboam's presence is an element of ethno-religious co-optation, which is used to deflect from the economic dimensions of the narrative. Whilst recognising the consequences of these debates for his study, his starting point prioritises the question of which of these versions offers the clearest account of economic contestation.

Comparative narrative variant analysis

In his 1960 commentary on Kings, James Montgomery (1960) says of the Hebrew text of Rehoboam's reply to the people in 1 Kings 12:11, 'the story phrases his reply in the metrical form:

11. My father loaded upon you a heavy yoke,
And I will add to your yoke;
12. My father chastised you with rods,
And I will chastise you with lashes. (p. 250)

Montgomery comments in a similar vein on 1 Kings 12:16, saying that this verse 'repeats like a national anthem the lyric outcry of the earlier rebels against the dynasty (2 Sm 20:1), with an additional line:

- What portion have we in David?
Neither have we inheritance in Jesse's son.
To your tents, O Israel!
Now see to thine own house, O David! (Montgomery 1960:250)

Whilst Montgomery does not follow these metrical and lyrical observations into form-critical reflections, the author intends in this article to pose the question of form, reflecting on both dimensions of form-critical analysis, the literary form of this 'text' and its possible socio-historical class location (Sparks 2013:331). A comprehensive, Mosala-like Marxist analysis (Boer 1996:113–114, concerning resonances with Mosala's work) has been done on the variant narratives of the division of the kingdom by Roland Boer, where he uses Frederic Jameson's Marxist method in a systemic and systematic manner to analyse 1 Kings 11–14, 3 Reigns 11–14, 3 Reigns 12:24a-z and 2 Chronicles 10–13 (Boer 1996:100–101, where Boer explains his choice of these texts). The author's focus, however, is on a textual sub-unit within this narrative. The author begins with the Masoretic Hebrew version in 1 Kings 12:1–18 because this is the familiar final form that most ordinary readers engage. This starting point is important to the author, for he intends to include ordinary readers as dialogue partners once he has done the preliminary textual work that is the focus of this article.

The Hebrew text variant 1 Kings 12:1–18 is distinctively different from its immediate literary-narrative context (1 Kings 11–14), particularly when read from an overtly socio-economic ideo-theological perspective. In a biblical study's third-year undergraduate module, in a section on 'The Bible and Economic Matters' (West & Zwane 2020), the author has given students 1 Kings 11–14 (in Hebrew, English, and in their own preferred African language translations) and asked them to identify and distinguish two distinct but intersecting narratives: an ethno-religious narrative and a socio-economic narrative. The students, the majority of whom are from poor and marginalised African contexts, always identify 1 Kings 12:1–18 as 'about' economic matters. Indeed, most students comment on how decisively different this textual unit is within its larger literary context although they differ on how to delimit the narrative unit.

One does not need to adopt the Marxist method to see and hear the socio-economic contestation within this text. Whilst there are ethnic allusions (vv. 2–3 and 16) and religious interjections (vv. 15 and 17), the emphasis throughout this narrative is resolutely economic. The story, and it is a fairly coherent narrative, is about economic exploitation and an attempt by exploited workers to seek economic change through resistance, protest, negotiation and finally revolt. Whilst the exposition (1–3) appears to be about matters of monarchic succession, the complication (4–15) and resolution (16–18) make it clear that the narrative is focused on economic matters. The plot moves, in fairly typical narrative terms, 'from a situation of (relative) stability' (ruling class succession), 'through a process of tension or destabilization' (contestation concerning the economic system between the economic elite and the exploited classes), 'to a new situation of (relative) stability' (revolt by the forced labour) (Walsh 2009:14). The characters have a clear 'class' identity, and spatial and temporal settings are used to emphasise contestation between the ruling classes and the exploited classes. A preliminary narrative analysis of the final form of

the literary unit offers us a fairly clear glimpse of economic struggle.

The textual unit the author has delimited has a plausible narrative beginning and end. In narrative terms, it has an exposition (1–3), complication (4–15) and resolution (16–18) (Aristotle 1967:30; Clines 1998:5). Discerning a narrative beginning in 12:1 seems reasonable, given the shift in genre from the formulaic literary unit that precedes it (11:41–43). The story then ends, as it began, with Rehoboam. Rejected by the people, the king flees. The chariot that brought him to Shechem (1) to be made king is now used to return him to the centre of the city-temple-state economic system, Jerusalem (18), an economic system that has been resisted and rejected by the people.

The exposition presents the primary characters, 'Rehoboam' and 'all Israel' and the initial plot impulse 'to make him king' (1). Alongside these primary characters and the inauguration of the plot, 'Jeroboam' is introduced as a secondary character, somewhat awkwardly in terms of the syntax (2). Jeroboam's presence in the narrative (vv. 2–3, 12, 15) tends to be awkward from a narrative perspective. The awkwardness is syntactic in verse 2, and his role is unclear in verse 3, with the 'all Israel' of verse 1 being the agents who summon him. In verse 12, which is also somewhat awkward syntactically, Jeroboam is present but is ignored by Rehoboam who addresses 'the people' (13). Although present in the interpolation (15b), this presence disrupts the temporal setting of the economic narrative. As Adrian Schenker notes in his narrative analysis of this textual unit, 'Jeroboam is not a protagonist in the account' (Schenker 2000:227). Although 'the people and Jeroboam speak in unison' in verse 3, 'subsequently, reference is only made to the people; in vv. 5, 15 and 16 by the narrator, in vv. 6, 9 and 13 by Rehoboam, in v 7 by the older counsellors, in v.11 by the young ones' (Schenker 2000:227). Furthermore, in verse 16, 'the people are referred to as "all Israel", thus forming an *inclusio* with v. 1' (Schenker 2000:227), emphasising that the contestation is between Rehoboam and the people.

With Jameson, cited by Boer, the relationship between these two sets of characters is a good example of how 'class is essentially a relational concept' (Boer 1996:76), for as Jameson argues, the 'constitutive form of class relationships is always that between a dominant and a laboring class' (Jameson 1981:83–84; cited by Boer 1996:76). What is also clear at the narrative level is that the relationship between these two character sets is oppositional and conflictual, which is resonant with the socio-historical class analysis within biblical studies associated with the pioneering work of Norman Gottwald, in which social class is theorised in relation to mode of production (Boer 1996:114–116; Gottwald 1979, 1985, 1993;). Although further socio-historical work on this textual unit is required (see below), there are indications even at the narrative level of conflictual class relationships between the people and the king forged by a tributary mode of production (4, 10–11, 14, 18) and perhaps a hint of the memory of 'the elders' of an earlier communitarian mode of production (6–7).

A close and careful literary-narrative reading of 1 Kings 12:1–18, which the author has sketched (see also Boer 1996:152–155), clearly offers the kinds of glimpses Mosala acknowledges. However, such glimpses can be misleading, as Mosala warns, precisely because ancient class struggles have been ideo-theologically co-opted by dominant classes and the textual production processes they control. Signs of just such ideo-theological co-optation through interpolation or what Boer refers to as 'commentary' (Boer 1996:139–140) are clearly evident at the narrative level (2, 15, 17). Whilst historical-critical method has been designed to interrogate ancient redaction and translation processes, a methodological point the author is making here is that literary-narrative analysis offers resources with which to make preliminary observations. Literary-narrative analysis of 1 Kings 12:1–18 prompts the reader to ask questions that historical-critical method may then take up. More importantly for his purposes, literary-narrative analysis recognises the remnants of an economic narrative about class struggle.

A similar narrative analysis might be used for the Hebrew text of the Chronicles' version of the story (2 Chr 10:1–18), for the plot and characters and setting are similar, as are the indications of ethno-religious co-optation in verses 2, 15 and 17. However, this version of the story places more emphasis on Jeroboam's agency, making it clear in the exposition that 'Jeroboam returned from Egypt' (2). Jeroboam takes the initiative to return in this version. This version also includes Jeroboam as an implied character, being present with the people when they reassemble before Rehoboam on the third day (12). Whilst in the Kings' version, the narrator is specific that Rehoboam addresses 'the people' (1 Ki 12:12), the Chronicles' narrator includes Jeroboam by using the third person plural suffix in Rehoboam's response: 'And the king answered *them* harshly' (13).

However, Jeroboam's narrative presence is not sustained throughout this version. In verse 15a, it is 'the people' who are foregrounded by the narrator, as in the Kings' version, with Jeroboam only being included in a similar interpolation that follows. In verse 16, the use of 'all Israel' as the subject constructs a similar *inclusio* to the Kings' version with the 'all Israel' of verse 1. As in the Kings' version, this narrative *inclusio* may signal the beginning and end of a narrative unit. The author's economic orientation would accept this although the inclusion of verse 18, in each of the versions, offers a case study of the cycle of violence that state oppression generates and so an argument could be made for the ending of the narrative unit in verse 18.

A narrative awkwardness remains concerning Jeroboam's characterisation and role, even though there is some integration of his character in the action in this version. A clear class contrast between 'the people' and 'the king' is somewhat mitigated by Jeroboam's presence as the only named representative amongst 'the people'. The more integrated but still awkward presence of Jeroboam deflects from the class contestation between king and people. Similarly, whilst demanding that the king treat the people

with dignity and respect but avoiding confronting the king with the people's demand for economic concessions, the elders are more complicit in the Chronicles' version than in the Kings' version (compare 1 Ki 12:7 and 2 Chr 10:7).

In the Greek Septuagint version, 3 Reigns 12:1–18, a significant feature of the narrative is that Jeroboam is not a character in the exposition (1). There is an interpolated reference to 'Jeroboam' (15), but the reader of this narrative unit is unaware of this character and so the interpolation is even more evident. If the main clause of the interpolation is an attempt at invoking a religious rather than an economic argument, then the subordinate clause reference to Jeroboam may be an attempt to invoke an ethnic argument. However, even this allusion has no other resonance in this narrative variant, for the reference to 'Judah' in each of the other versions (1 Ki 12:17 and 2 Chr 10:17) is absent in this version.

After the king has rejected negotiations concerning the economic system, the people revolt (3 Reigns 12:16), and the king immediately retaliates by sending 'Adoniram who was over the levy' to quell the rebellion (Pietersma & Wright 2009:309). The absence of the interpolation we find in each of the MT versions (17) makes the violent revolt a more integral component of the narrative. The story, in this version, is about economic contestation between 'all Israel'/'the people' and 'King Roboam'/'the king'. The inter-ethnic narrative elements are absent, except for the narrative aside to 'Jeroboam' in 3 Reigns 12:15 (compare 1 Ki 12:15 and 2 Chr 10:15). In this version, this narrative aside is the only awkward narrative moment.

The economic story has a clearer narrative flow and a more precise identification of the contestation in the 3 Reigns 12:1–18 version than in the 1 Kings 12:1–18 version, which in turn emphasises economic systems more than the 2 Chronicles 10:1–18 version. However, it is the fourth narrative variant, 3 Reigns 12:24p–t, that offers the most concise and clearest narrative of economic conflict. This version of the narrative has a rather different exposition, for the starting point is not Roboam but the people. The situation of relative stability is the people's demand for economic change (24pa). The complication unfolds in three movements. First, Roboam delays his response (24pb). Second, Roboam rejects the counsel of the elders (24q–ra). And third, Roboam turns to for counsel and then accepts the counsel of 'those who had been brought up with him' (24rb–s). The shape of this narrative is different. The resolution, however, is similar to the other versions. When the people hear Roboam's refusal to institute economic change, they caucus with each other and then revolt, rejecting Roboam as both a ruler (*ἄρχοντα*) and a leader (*ἡγούμενον*) (24t). The form of the verb (participle present middle accusative masculine singular) suggests that in the people's verdict, this is a person who does not have the capacity to lead.

Significantly, this version ends here. The narrative does not end with retributive violence, as in the other versions, but with a three-fold collective judgement (24ta): the recognition

of and resistance to an exploitative economic system (24tb); the call to their own organisational system (24tc) and the rejection of a leadership that is incapable of hearing the cry of the people for a reformed economic system (24td).

This version of the narrative has no indications of ethno-religious co-optation. The contestation is resolutely and consistently a class conflict between an economic elite and the exploited workers. The exposition of this version offers a more detailed account of the economic system than the other three versions, although each of the others includes details of an exploitative economic system. Although considerably shorter than the other three narratives, this narrative includes in the exposition (24p) two indications of economic oppression: *ἐβάρυνεν τὸν κλοιὸν αὐτοῦ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐβάρυνεν τὰ βρώματα τῆς τραπέζης αὐτοῦ* (he made burdensome his collar on us and he made burdensome the food of his table). The monarchic economic elite is the subject of both sentences, and the verb is repeated in each sentence. What connects the two sentences is an analysis in which there is a direct systemic relationship between the objects of the sentences. The economic logic is that the exploitation of the people is because of an economy of extraction. The food of the king's table is taken from the labour of the people. The king has excessive food because the people do not have sufficient food. An economic 'system' connects the king and people.

The extractive dimension of what Boer refers to as 'the sacred economy' is emphasised here, specifically the tribute regime of extraction (Boer 2007:41–43). Boer is insistent, however, that it is the 'regime of allocation' within the 'theo-economics' of such ancient Near Eastern economic systems that predominates (Boer 2007:39). The people's confirmation that 'if you will ease up on us, then we will be subject to you' (24p) indicates that the people recognise the deity's role in allocation through the power of those delegated to make decisions concerning allocation (Boer 2007:39), including the king. The people also recognise, however, that such delegated power is not absolute. The power of the king, in this case, must demonstrate a just allocation and extraction regime. The reason for the people's resistance in this narrative is because Salomon has 'captured' the state for the benefit of the ruling class. As Boer is at pains to point out, 'the state arises in a tension between the village commune and the temple-city complex' (Boer 2007:36). In terms of class contestation, the state arises in the conflict between the ruling elite and the village commune (Boer 2007:37); indeed, argues Boer, 'this is the primary form of conflict between different social strata that may be called "class"' (Boer 2007:43). Although tribute is not the determining feature of the sacred economy, in Boer's analysis, 'tribute is the point at which the main tension of the sacred economy shows up', precisely because of 'the way that it was justified in terms of an allocative ideology' (Boer 2007:41, 42). The author would go further and argue that 'the economic' sphere becomes more apparent as a conceptually separate sphere when the regime of extraction becomes the dominant regime.

Significantly, the people's demand for reform, based on their own economic analysis of Salomon's excessive extraction,

evident in his excessive consumption, exposes the systemic exploitation that resides at the heart of theo-economics.

As with any economic system, there is a fundamental tension, and that is between allocative and extractive economics, which manifests itself in the conflict between the village commune and temple-city complex. In the sacred economy extractive economics undermines the economics of allocation. Here we come up against the necessary limit of the sacred economy, a limit that enables the sacred economy to function but also hobbles it from full realization. For the imposition of control over and extraction of vital necessities from the village commune by the temple-city complex, and then a similar mix of control and extraction by a much larger empire undermined the logic of the regimes of allocation at the heart of theo-economics. (Boer 2007:44)

The people's analysis in the exposition is taken up into the complication. In this version of the narrative, the elders are described quite differently, as 'the elders of the people' (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ) (24qd). Roboam summons the elders of the people, who reiterate that the people collectively have spoken. The attempt by Roboam to divide 'the people' does not work; the elders affirm that 'the people' have already spoken.

The contours of the conflict become clear in Roboam's response (24r). In rejecting the elders' implied advice that he hear the demands of the people, it is clear that Roboam has already rejected the people's demand for economic reform. Unable to use their own elders against them, Roboam turns to those who have a vested interest in the economic system, 'those who had been brought up with him'. Like Roboam, they are the beneficiaries of economic extraction. They put into words, the structure of the complication suggests, what Roboam wants to say to the people; there is a contrast between voices that are 'not pleasing' and voices that are 'pleasing' (24r-s). An ingredient of what might be called econo-patriarchy (West 2020:113–116) is that subordinate males derive their own related internal versions of hegemonic masculinity from the dominant masculinity, thereby affirming the dominant form (Carman 2019:311–316; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005:834–835, 844, 848). 'The lads' (τὰ παιδάρια) provide him with a hyper-masculine logic with which to justify a logic of economic exploitation. He is a bigger and better 'man' than his father (24r). His econo-patriarchy will be more virulent than his father's.

The resolution in this version of the story is immediate but muted. The implied reader hears the direct speech of 'the lads who grew up with him' as the final spoken words of the complication. Roboam is not given direct speech. The narrator elides his voice, reporting on his behalf. The narrative effect is that the implied reader has a clear sense of the narrative point of view. This point of view is confirmed by the voice of the people (24t). Roboam 'is not for a ruler or for a leader'. The final word is given to the people. Significantly, before the people speak, it is reported that they caucused: 'all the people as one man said, each to his neighbour'. In this version of the story, 'the people' are an organised formation with their own internal discipline. They speak only after they

have been caucused. The ending that resonates most clearly with a narrative in which the people's voices are foregrounded is 12:24t, for here we hear the cadences of resistance:

There is no part of us in Daudid,
neither inheritance in the son of Issai;
to your coverts, O Israel,
for this person is not for a ruler or for a leader.

Whilst Roboam initiates the resolution, it is the people who determine that a decisive 'shift takes place', 'necessarily', to use Aristotle's narrative terms (Aristotle 1967:31). The people reject the systemic economic trajectory that has its formation 'in Daudid' (24t). This version of the narrative most clearly reflects a story that remembers what Gunther Wittenberg refers to as 'the theology of resistance in Israel' (Wittenberg 1988:23), which according to his analysis has its emergence in David's 'attitude towards Judah after Absalom's death', whereby he realised that 'he needed Judah as his power base', with the result that the northern tribes 'had to bear the brunt of many innovations from which Judah seems to have been largely exempt' (Wittenberg 1988:23). This remnant tells the story of resistance to Davidic-Solomonic economic exploitation.

Situating 3 Reigns 12:24p-t socio-historically

A detailed socio-historical reconstruction of the ancient contextual location of each of these versions of the narrative is beyond the scope of this article. The author's emphasis in the previous sections has been to use literary-narrative analysis to obtain a 'glimpse' of ancient class conflict within each of the variant versions and to indicate the kind of economic system, in broad sociological terms, that this narrative might reflect. His argument in this section is twofold. First, he concurs with Adrian Schenker that LXX 3 Reigns 12:24a-z likely represents a narrative form that is 'prior' to the Masoretic 1 Kings 11–12; 14 (Schenker 2000:230). Second, he offers the hypothesis that the stark economic contours of his delimited text, 3 Reigns 12:24p-t, suggest that this narrative unit may retain a narrative of the inter-class contestation that contributed to the collapse of the united monarchy, which has been reworked repeatedly to fit more ethno-religious agendas, whether through redaction or translation.

The author finds Schenker's analysis and argument persuasive, but he must emphasise at the outset that his focus is not on LXX 3 Reigns 12:24a-z as a whole, but on what he is arguing is an economic source fragment, 3 Reigns 12:24p-t. Fortunately, although Schenker's primary interest is in what he refers to as 'The History of Two Ambitions' (HA) as a whole (Schenker 2000:214), he recognises that in order to decide on whether the MT depends on the HA or vice versa, '[a] useful criterion seems to be the study of the relationship between the cycle or the whole and its components' (Schenker 2000:217). Schenker is therefore attentive to the narrative components of the HA, amongst which is the literary unit of

interest to the author, what he refers to as ‘the assembly of Schechem (1 Ki 12.1–16 or 1–19; HA §§n-u)’ (Schenker 2000:218).

Schenker’s fairly careful narrative analysis finds, indeed, ‘a tension’ between the assembly of Schechem narrative unit and the larger narrative ‘framework’ of the MT account. 3 Reigns 12:24n-u (as Schenker delimits it) explains:

[T]he rejection of the Davidic dynasty by the tribes of Israel ... by the intransigence of the king and the arrogance of his young counsellors. This is precisely the object of the narrative. The arrogance of power causes its own ruin. That is what this story wants to show. (Schenker 2000:228)

‘But’, he continues:

in the MT, its cause is different. Verse 15 states it in explicit terms. It is the effective prophetic word of Ahijah of Shiloh, 1 Kgs 11:29–39, and behind it the Lord, who has decided to punish Solomon, 1 Kgs 11.11–13. Thus the hard-line rigidity of Rehoboam and the arrogance of his young ministers are not the cause of the rejection of David and his house by Israel. They are only its occasion. (Schenker 2000:228)

In contrast, Schenker goes on to show, within the alternative narrative of 3 Reigns 12:24a-z that the Schechem assembly (12:24n-u) narrative unit ‘conforms perfectly to the context of the whole’. ‘The only cause of the revolt of the Israelite tribes against King Rehoboam’, Schenker continues, ‘lies in what the account itself indicates: the intransigent rigidity of the king and the pride of his young wolves’ (Schenker 2000:228–229). He is able to conclude, therefore, that:

[W]hereas the account of the Schechem assembly in the MT is somewhat in tension with its broader context, the same episode recounted by the HA is homogenous with the overall context. (Schenker 2000:229)

The narrative of the assembly at Schechem (12:24n-u), as Schenker delimits it, fits more coherently within the narrative of 3 Reigns 24a-z than it does within the 1 Kings 11–14.

Schenker uses this kind of narrative analysis, and the minimal signs of Deuteronomistic redaction (Schenker 2000:256; see also Barrera 2020a:87), to make an argument for the precedence of the 3 Reigns 12:24a-z variant ‘and the MT as a rewriting of it’ (Schenker 2000:230; his analysis dialogues in detail with the argument of Zipora Talshir, who uses similar analysis to argue for the priority of the MT, Talshir 1993). He concludes his extensive analysis by stating that 3 Reigns 12:24a-z ‘seems to be an original account, reworked for an edition preserved in the MT’ (Schenker 2000:256). In a later article, in dialogue with Marvin Sweeney (2007), Schenker returns to these variant editions, making the argument that ‘3 Kgdms 12:24a-z and 3 Kgdms 11–12 are parallel or synoptic texts presenting the same narrative matter in two specific arrangements’, and that ‘we should probably place 3 Kgdms 12:24a-z, because it is further away from the MT than is 3 Kgdms 11–12’, as ‘the beginning of that literary and textual history’ (Schenker 2008:370). Furthermore, he continues:

Because of this distance between the Greek narrative and the MT (or its proto-Masoretic forerunner), after some time a recension took place and 3 Kgdms 11–12 was created and added because the need was felt to present an account more similar to the proto-Masoretic text, i.e. the Hebrew text of the time of this recension. (p. 370)

Schenker recognises that as ‘these two Greek narratives were translations of two Hebrew *Vorlagen* ... we have to reckon with a literary development and history of the Hebrew text behind that of the Greek texts’ (Schenker 2008:371) although he does not go into this in detail.

The author’s interest, as he has said, is in the remnant source fragment found in 3 Reigns 12:24p-t, which is how he delimits the economic narrative unit. What Schenker’s analysis offers him is a plausible argument for this being the earliest version of this narrative source. If this is the case, the pronounced economic orientation of this narrative unit is significant. Although Schenker himself does not recognise the economic dimensions of the schism, he is clear that the narrative (both 3 Reigns 12:24n-u and 12:24a-z) ‘does not mention the religious schism that the MT ... recounts in a detailed way’ (Schenker 2000:257). The religious explanation comes later. And so too, he would argue, does the ethnic-tribal. The earliest version of the schism at Schechem is about an economic struggle.

Although not attentive to the economic aspects of the schism, Schenker does note the presence in 3 Reigns 12:24p-t of the sentence in 24p: *καὶ ἐβάρυνεν τὰ βρώματα τῆς τραπέζης αὐτοῦ*, which he translates as ‘He made heavy the maintenance of this table’ (Schenker 2000:248). He cites the analysis of Treballe Barrera, who ‘has shown the significance of this expression’, which is ‘about the taxes of the regions to provide the table of the king with food. It is another contribution that was added to the forced labour and to which the king submitted the Israelites (1 Ki 5.2–3, 7)’ (Schenker 2000:248–249; referring to Treballe Barrera 1980:206–210). He goes on to state, however, ‘But we cannot prove that the HA preserves here an original form that the MT would have suppressed nor that contrary, that the HA introduced it secondarily’ (Schenker 2000:249). Whilst we may not be able to prove that this is original, Schenker’s analysis would tend to offer a plausible argument for priority, and it certainly fits the author’s argument that redactional or recensional re-use tends to minimise economic factors and to foreground ethno-religious factors.

Schenker notes one other economic-related element in 3 Reigns 12:24q, again drawing on Barrera’s work. Again, although Schenker notes ‘the difference between the phrase “elder counsellors of Solomon” (MT 12.6) and “elders of the people”’ (Schenker 2000:249, note 36; referring to Treballe Barrera 1980:210–225), he does not recognise the economic significance of this difference. Barrera does, at least partially, acknowledge an economically related political difference. Schenker is wrong, the author would argue, in stating that, ‘On the *narrative* level, we cannot determine the difference’, but he is correct when he continues, saying, ‘but, according to him [Barrera], there exists a difference at the *institutional*

level and as a result on the *historical level*'. On these levels, he is willing to acknowledge, as he continues his argument, that the opposition that this text 'places between the courtiers of the new king (the "young" counsellors) and the "elders of the people" (the representatives of Israel) would thus be close to the historical reality' (Schenker 2000:249, note 36).

Schenker then goes on to offer his own understanding of how he understands this opposition on the narrative level:

On the narrative level the opposition reveals, both in the MT and in the HA, the typical contrast between the elderly, experienced and moderate counsellors and the young, inexperienced, but all the more intransigent and arrogant counsellors. (Schenker 2000:249, note 36)

For Schenker, the narrative contestation at the heart of the schism is intransigent and arrogant political leadership (Schenker 2000:228), whereas the author has argued that even at the narrative level this remnant narrative unit should be read as locating political economy as the site of struggle that results in the schism. Political leadership is contested, but only because it is implicated in an exploitative political-economic system.

3 Reigns 12:24p-t as a source text fits, the author would suggest, into the economic material culture of the transition from Iron Age IIA (980-840/830 BCE), which evidences 'the beginnings of state formation', to Iron Age IIB (840/830-732/701 BCE) in which there is an intensification of what Roger Nam refers to as 'the redistributive economy' (Nam 2012:106, 117-118). Although a full analysis of the economic contours of the ancient Levant economic landscape in this period is beyond the scope of this article, Nam's analysis of economic exchange in the Book of Kings argues that 'the early state formation of Iron Age II reached a more comprehensive stage of redistribution in Iron Age IIB' (Nam 2012:126). Whilst the Solomonic redistributive state, in Nam's terms, is certainly 'more meagre than the DtrH portrayal' (Nam 2012:133), archaeological and related material culture evidence would support the emergence of a Solomonic redistributive polity in the tenth century BCE (Nam 2012:132, see also 131-139).

As Boer has argued with respect to the sacred economy, and as Nam argues with respect to the redistributive economy, specialisation and centralisation were understood to benefit all the people 'in bringing the presence of the transcendent deity near the people' (Nam 2012:137). 'Under monarchic sponsorship', Nam (2012) argues:

[T]he [Book of Kings] text serves as propaganda from a later period to support the vast centralization efforts of ancient Israel. Rather than emphasising oppressiveness and inequity associated with centralization, the DtrH chooses to highlight abundance and dedication to YHWH. (p. 137)

'But', continues Nam (2012):

[E]ven despite ideological intents to promote a eulogistic understanding of Solomon's vast wealth commensurate with his

wisdom and blessing, the text also contains hints of oppression in the redistributive efforts with the terminology of forced labour (סמ דברו and סמ) used to identify 'the oppressive nature of Solomonic redistribution'. (p. 137)

Specifically, 1 Kings 12 shows Nam concurs with me, 'that Israelites themselves are also subject to Solomon's oppressive redistributive measures' (Nam 2012:138).

In reworking older, pro-monarchic material to fit a shifting theological message, different periods of the DtrH give a mixed review to domestic redistribution. 1 Kings 5-8 characterise the centralisation efforts with abundance, equity and devotion to YHWH. But from 1 Kings 9, the centralization is secular, oppressive and eventually results in the schism of the kingdom. Despite this outward ideological intent, the Iron II archaeological evidence suggests a degree of historicity to this redistribution in the centralized building program, and the settlement patterns. (p. 139).

3 Reigns 12:24p-t, the author suggests, represents an economic source text of contestation concerning centralised redistributive exploitation but has in later versions been co-opted and redacted for a range of later ethno-religious ideological agendas. That the narrative unit the author has identified plausibly fits the transition between the Iron Age IIA and IIB economic material context is offered additional support by the argument of Nam that it is only during Neo-Assyrian control over the Southern Levant in the eighth century that there is 'a paradigmatic shift in the Levantine economic structure' (Nam 2012:150), which Nam locates in Iron Age IIC (732/701-605/587 BCE) (Nam 2012:127). 'Neo-Assyrian hegemony over the Southern Levant and the concomitant tributary requirements', Nam argues, 'made redistributive exchange a much more visible mode within 1 and 2 Kings' (Nam 2012:150).

A distinctive feature of this shift is the role of the military. 'In surveying both the archaeological and biblical evidence for redistribution', says Nam, 'one immediately notices that military considerations play a major concern in the development of redistribution' (Nam 2012:151). The absence of an immediate, narratively linked, military response in 3 Reigns 12:24p-t suggests that this narrative variant may well be a source text from the ninth century. The addition of an immediate, narratively linked, military response in 3 Reigns 12:18 then suggests this is a later narrative version, as is 1 Kings 12:18. Although his earlier literary-narrative analysis made an argument that 1 Kings 12:18 and 3 Reigns 12:18 offered a plausible end to this narrative of economic contestation, 3 Reigns 12:24p-t reflects an earlier version in which a centralised military is not yet a distinctive feature of an emerging centralised city-state temple system.

Critical appropriation of 3 Reigns 12:24p-t

The author has been clear from the outset that part of his analytical project is to appropriate these variants for use

within local church and community groups for whom the Bible is a significant and sacred text and for whom economic matters are a primary concern, particularly in post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa (West 2019:2–4). The economic oppression of racial capitalism under apartheid has been replaced in the South African post colony, as Sampie Terreblanche has argued, by democratic capitalism (Terreblanche 2002:14–15). Furthermore, redistributive forms of democratic capitalism during the Mandela and Mbeki administrations have been replaced by elite extractive forms under the Zuma administration, designated as ‘state capture’.

The author’s pedagogical work with Biblical Studies students has demonstrated the resonance between this economic remnant, even in its 1 Kings 12:1–18 MT narrative version. South African and other African students have noted critical resonances between the elite-based extractive economic systems of their own African states and the elite-based extractive economic system represented in 3 Reigns 24:12p-t and its related variants. The author’s argument in this article has been that 3 Reigns 24:12p-t is plausibly a prior version of this narrative remnant and certainly the most clearly economic in its emphasis. Returning this textual variant to Biblical Studies students and the communities and churches from which they come is not only a responsible biblical study’s exegetical practice but an opportunity for socially-engaged appropriation and possibly even social change.

Whilst Boer notes that ‘relatively little attention’ has been given to the value of the LXX ‘in its own right’ with respect to the division of the kingdom narrative/s, he also reminds us that ‘textual criticism opens up questions of political interest and bias’ (Boer 1996:197). It is the author’s concluding argument that textual criticism of this kind has something significant to offer to ordinary African readers of the Bible grappling with systemic economic exploitation in contemporary South Africa.

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