

Are economics a key to dating *Urdeuteronomium*? A response to Sandra Lynn Richter

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Abstract

While welcoming Sandra Richter's suggestion in a recent *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* article that economics should be integrated in the study of Deuteronomy, a number of points in her argument to date *Urdeuteronomium* in the Iron Age I–II transition are inaccurate or based on contestable assumptions and arguments from silence.

Keywords

Ancient economics, barter, Deuteronomy, Khirbet Qeyafa, Khirbet Raddana, risk aversion, silver, *Urdeuteronomium*

In a recent *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* (JSOT) article, Sandra Richter focuses on the embedded economic realities of *Urdeuteronomium*, harvesting clues she argues can point to the provenance of the core of the book, defined as 4.44–27.26.¹ Any reading of Deuteronomy through an economic lens is a welcome move after a century

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1. Sandra Lynn Richter, 'The Question of Provenance and the Economics of Deuteronomy', *JSOT* 42 (2017), pp. 23–50.

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of theological readings and Gustav Hölscher's view that the 'laws' of Deuteronomy reflected some utopian ideal never meant to be implemented.² The case she makes—that economically speaking, the life envisioned for the community of Israel in the core of the book is consistent with the archaeological reality of the late Iron I or early Iron IIA period in the central highlands of Cisjordan—rests, however, on a number of points that are inaccurate or based on contestable assumptions and arguments from silence. We shall therefore begin by summarizing her article and proceed then to challenge or critique these points and question her conclusions, while nevertheless working with her understanding that *Urdeuteronomium* comprised Deut. 4.44–27.26.

In §1 Richter begins by pointing out that the usual social locations for the production of the book of Deuteronomy are either Hezekiah's or Josiah's political reforms against the backdrop of the threat of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, an exilic or post-exilic setting as a 'utopian work of imagination', or a setting in the Persian period 'as an attempt to synthesize the scribal traditions shared by the Judeans and Samaritans in a quest for compromise between the two communities'.³ In this light, the author assumes that investigating the social background *via* economics can shed new light on the dating of the historical core of the book. Although she recognizes with Nathan MacDonald that 'Deuteronomy is not straightforwardly a mirror of its moment of composition',⁴ nonetheless, she argues that the embedded economic realities of Deuteronomy can provide a safe ground for detecting its provenance and dating.⁵

Using archaeological data, §§2–4 sketch the economy 'on the ground' in the central hill country during the Iron I period (ca. 1200–980 BCE), the Iron II A (ca. 980–840 BCE) and B (ca. 840–732/701 BCE) periods, and finally the Iron IIC (ca. 732/701–586 BCE) period. Richter thereby signals clearly that some portion of the Iron Age provides the only suitable framework for investigating the provenance of the core of Deuteronomy, although in a footnote in her conclusion she states that space prevents her from projecting her findings into the Persian period. She then notes the impossibility of this era as the time of composition due to the devastated countryside with a dearth of family farms, the use of coinage for taxation and commerce, and 'the equally ubiquitous nature of the redistributive elements of the Persian imperial economy'.⁶ In §5, she returns to the central question: Which of the previously sketched Iron Age economies is best reflected in the ancient core of Deuteronomy? To answer this, she focuses on five topics she believes will be able to offer a coherent synthesis of economics in the Iron Age.

Beginning with 'Vocabulary for Trade, Merchandise, Retailer, and Customer' (§5a), the absence of vocabulary for merchandise/retailer and customer, identified with various forms of *rkl* and *mkr*, leads her to conclude that Deuteronomy was aware of local, but not international, exchange.⁷ Moving to 'Mechanisms for and Materials from International

2. Gustav Hölscher, 'Komposition und Ursprung des Deuteronomiums', *ZAW* 40 (1922), pp. 161–255.

3. Richter, 'Provenance', p. 24.

4. Richter, 'Provenance', p. 25.

5. Richter, 'Provenance', p. 25.

6. Richter, 'Provenance', p. 50, n. 101.

7. Richter, 'Provenance', p. 38. On pp. 39. 44–45 however Richter admits the use of *mkr* in Deuteronomy.

Trade' (§5b), she concludes that the single reference to the camel in the dietary laws and not in a context of international trade (14.7), to ships in the larger book in 28.68 but not in a context of commerce, and the absence of any reference to permanent markets (*hūšôt*) and imported fish, referenced elsewhere in the post-exilic community in Neh. 3.3; 12.39; 13.16; Zeph. 1.2; 2 Chron. 33.14, all point to the lack of any hint of international trade in Deuteronomy. In addition, the non-appearance of the *šeḡel*, of the expression 'weighing out (*nāṭīl*) of silver', of the term for scales (*mō'znayim*), in spite of the reference to stone weights in Deut. 25.13–15, point to the use of a barter system as the primary basis of exchange. The tithe brought in a basket in chapter 26 supports the view that the use of precious metal as a fungible is 'at best ancillary in *Urdeuteronomium*'.⁸

In §5c, 'Taxation and Tribute', Richter concludes, from the expectation that both the taxes and tribute the people were to take to the central cult place were to be paid in kind in *Urdeuteronomium*, that the taxation system was 'non-monetary and in part, reciprocal—designed to cement kinship networks'.⁹ References to the option of paying the tithe in silver in Deut. 14.22–27, as well as other references to silver payments in Deut. 21.14; 22.19, and 23.20 and to the sale and purchase of slaves are labelled exceptions, additions, or special cases.¹⁰ In §5d, 'Kings, Chariots and Horses', she notes the absence of references to a professional native army in Deuteronomy, with the exception of 20.19–20, before moving to the final topic, 'Public Works', in §5e. Here she presents the premise that 'Monumental architecture, fortifications and public storage facilities' are a 'principal material witness' to a centralized and redistributive economy. The reference to the 'house of YHWH' in Deut. 23.19 could refer to the Tabernacle. The absence of the *hômā* in *Urdeuteronomium*, in spite of a single, anomalous use in 28.52 cf. 57, demonstrates the lack of evidence for such public works and a concomitant monarchic redistributive economy. Admitting the distinctive phrase 'in your gates' might imply monumental architecture, Richter enlists the help of Frese's 2015 article to conclude that references to gates cannot be construed as evidence of the existence of any fortified urban centre or fortified city typical of a centralized economy in the book.¹¹

Three conclusions are drawn in §6. First, *Urdeuteronomium* presumes a 'rural, isolated village economy' that was unaware of any centralized authority or imperial taxation system but was dependent on agriculture. Second, such an economy would be incompatible with any profile of the economy of the Iron IIB period except in certain isolated parts of the central highlands and everywhere in the IIC period but would fit within the Iron I and early IIA periods. Third, the possibility of dating the core of Deuteronomy (4.44–27.26) to the Neo-Assyrian period is 'unrealistic at best'.¹² *A priori*, leaving aside any Neo-Babylonian or Persian dating, and by countering any Neo-Assyrian date through her economic analysis, the only proper context and dating of the historical core of the book remains the Iron I, or IIA.

8. Richter, 'Provenance', pp. 39-40.

9. Richter, 'Provenance', p. 41.

10. Polanyi's 'first general capacity' for money payment, common to ancient unstratified economies, is used by Richter, 'Provenance', p. 40 to interpret references to silver payments in Deut. 22.19-29 and 23.20.

11. Richter, 'Provenance', 45–47. Daniel A. Frese, 'A Land of Gates: Covenant Communities in the Book of Deuteronomy', *VT* 65 (2015), pp. 33-52.

12. Richter, 'Provenance', p. 50.

To determine the date of Richter's *Urdeuteronomium*, it is necessary to understand what likely function its implied author intended as well as who would have been its intended audience. This is not addressed in Richter's article, which naturally leads to the question: Why is an economic reading of the text key to its dating? She nowhere suggests or implies that the purpose of the document is to generate a set of binding economic regulations within the Iron Age I or early Iron IIA community of Israel. Indeed, if its purpose was not primarily to regulate trade, financial transactions, credit, interest payments on investments and the establishment of trading consortiums and associations, then her arguments from silence concerning the failure of terms for international traders to appear carry no force, as is the case also with the absence of references to camels, ships, and imported fish in the document. We need to understand what she thinks its original function would have been. In addition, according to her view of an autonomous, village-centred reality in the Iron I and also in the Iron IIA, when royal influence was first developing but took some time to impose centralized control and regulation, one wonders who she thinks wrote this text in the reality of that period. Were families or village elders training people to write and be familiar with literary conventions that continued in use from the Late Bronze Age so that someone from one of these villages could have crafted such a document? Would the abecedary from 'Izbet Sartah, the inscription on the jar rim from Khirbet Raddana or the inscriptions from Khirbet Qeiyafa support such a view?

Richter's profiles of the Iron Age economies rely on somewhat oppositional caricatures of a village/subsistence economy of the Iron I and IIA and an extractive, palatial economies of the Iron Age IIB and C:¹³ rural vs urban; reciprocity vs exploitation; subsistence/barter economy vs extractive economy, agricultural intensification, industrialization and export; a dearth of public architecture vs fortifications, water systems, large silos, and corvée; limited interaction with Canaanite centres and harbours vs career merchants and markets; and scarce metals and exchange in kind vs silver used as standard of exchange. Instead of collecting clues to see which side tips the scales, Richter seems to be bent on proving that *Urdeuteronomium* took shape in the early phases of the Iron Age. Elements pointing to an integrated 'international' economy are considered exceptions or later additions.

Understanding the nature of economic life in the Iron Age from archaeology

An examination of the results of surveys in the central Cisjordanian highlands as well as published material from the excavations might have alerted Richter to the complex nature of the configuration of Iron I settlement, and tempered her idealized view of the inhabitants at this time as egalitarian, self-sufficient subsistence farmers without local

13. Echoes of Moses Finley's famous *The Ancient Economy* are found in the so-called 'social-scientific' exegesis of biblical texts. See for instance R. Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2015); R. Nam, *Portrayals of Economic Exchange in the Book of Kings* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). For a nuanced evaluation of Moses Finley's work, see M. Jursa and S. Tost, 'Greek and Roman Slaving in Comparative Ancient Perspective: The State and Dependent Labour in the Ancient Near East and in the Graeco-Roman World', *Imperium and Officium Working Papers* August 2014, available at <http://iowp.univie.ac.at/sites/default/files/IOWP_jursa:tost_state&labour.pdf>.

or interregional trading connection or markets. Very few Iron I highland sites have been excavated, and relying on survey results can be misleading. Nevertheless, they constitute the bulk of the available evidence and so must be used with due caution. In the hill-country of Ephraim and Manasseh, for example, surveys show that in the intermontane valleys, where there had been a walled settlement in the Late Bronze period, in many cases three or four new villages (yielding Iron I pottery) sprang up beside the walled settlement.¹⁴ It is unlikely that these villages would have operated independently of the city-state. Whether they were under the direct political control of the pre-existing and ongoing nearby city-state, functioning as its ‘daughters’, or were autonomous settlements, it is hard to believe there were no commercial contacts between the new Iron I villages which she and others are assuming were ‘Israelite’ and the local Canaanite city-state.

In terms of access to trade suggested by the presence of ‘foreign’ items, new work on Hittite-inspired two-handled small jars traces a trade network for metal ores (dating back to the MB II period) and also spices (by the LB I period) that ran through the Jordan Valley, with branches that ran into the central Cisjordanian hill country. It continued to operate in the Iron I period and likely later as well. Examples of vessels clearly based on this Hittite form have been excavated from tombs at Megiddo, Samaria, Jerusalem, Lachish, and Jericho. In addition, Dalit Regev notes the large quantities of imported finds during the Iron I period at Samaria and Shechem and suggests these were possible trading nodes for the hill country.¹⁵

Evidence from Khirbet Raddana points to the existence of interregional trade or contacts during the late Iron I period or early Iron IIA period in the highlands. Located along the N-S trunk road through the central highlands, Khirbet Raddana was a short-lived settlement, existing from the later part of the 11th century until the beginning of the 10th century BCE according to the traditional chronology,¹⁶ or the mid 9th century BCE according to low chronology.¹⁷ In either case, Khirbet Raddana is considered a typical Israelite village site. The limited excavations conducted there yielded many vessels and goods brought from outside the immediate region, in particular bowls and jugs from as far as the southern coastal plain of Palestine or the western Negev. Therefore, ‘the community at ancient Raddana was not a fully “self-sustained” or “autarchic” community’.¹⁸ On the contrary, it fits the overall profile revealed by excavations elsewhere, that of an elaborate and complex highland social structure in the second part of the 11th century BCE, especially in the Benjaminite region in which Khirbet Raddana is located.¹⁹

14. See e.g. Adam Zertal, ‘The Manasseh Hill Country Survey: The Shechem Syncline’, PhD dissertation. University of Haifa, 1982; Israel Finkelstein, Zvi Lederman, and Shlomo Bunimovitz, *Highlands of Many Cultures: The Southern Samaritan Survey: The Sites* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1997).

15. Dalit Regev, *Painting the Mediterranean Phoenician: On Canaanite-Phoenician Tradents* (WANEM; Sheffield: Equinox, forthcoming in 2020), ch. 3.

16. Zvi Lederman, *An Early Iron Age Village at Khirbet Raddana: The Excavations of Joseph A. Callaway* (Ph.D diss. Harvard University 1999), p. 74.

17. Israel Finkelstein, ‘Iron Age I Khirbet et-Tell and Khirbet Raddana: Methodological Lessons’, in Sidnie White Crawford, ed., *“Up to the Gates of Ekron”: Essays on the Archaeology and History of the Eastern Mediterranean in Honor of Seymour Gitin* (Jerusalem: AIAR and IES, 2007), pp. 107–13 (110).

18. Lederman, *Khirbet Raddana*, p. 77.

19. Avraham Faust, *Israel’s Ethnogenesis* (London: Equinox, 2006), p. 131.

Khirbet Qeiyafa, a single period site overlooking the Elah Valley in the Shephelah, has been dated by its excavators to ca. 1000–970 BCE. According to Richter’s dating scheme, the Iron I period lasted until ca. 980 CE, so this fits exactly within her Iron I–Iron IIA transition when she dates the core of Deuteronomy. With approximately 20% of the site dug, there is evidence of local regional trade with the coastal plain supplied by Ashdod ware produced in that region as well as grinding stones made from beach rocks. Evidence of interregional trade within the southern Levant comes from basalt from the Golan and copper from Feinan or Timnah, while access to internationally produced goods, including Cypriote juglets, Egyptian scarabs and amulets, alabaster vessels, and imported tin, must have reached the site along trade routes moving inland from the coast.²⁰

Barter-based economy

Richter’s distinction between subsistence and command economy in her portrayal of the economy in the central hill country in the Iron Age I/IIA transition is somewhat artificial. In particular, her positing of an isolated society of small farmers where self-sufficient extended families exchange surplus with other groups through reciprocity is highly problematic. Reciprocity based on in-kind exchange of surplus at the local level has a negligible impact, because being subjected to very similar conditions, neighbouring groups have surpluses of the same products at the same time and in similar amounts. Surpluses have value only if they can be sent further afield to find outlets where a demand for such products exists at a significant enough level to compensate for the high overland transport costs of agricultural staples. Hence, the notion of ‘isolated economics’ is almost a contradiction in terms.²¹

What is the case for the marketing of surpluses is even more true for credit. Survival after bad harvests requires securing seeds in November–December from further afield where different conditions resulted in surpluses. This practice allows the area suffering from grain shortage to use their entire grain harvest for self-consumption until the next harvest, or slightly earlier if, as indicated in Josh 5.11, they may roast unripe grain. The need to reduce (rather than ‘diversify’) risk, optimize labour and preserve resources²² remains the same in any period; only the number of opportunities change according to the size of the available market.

Credit is invisible archaeologically, except in Mesopotamia, where tablets have survived, but credit holds a prominent place in *Urdeuteronomium* as Richter defines it: debt release (Deut. 15.1–11), interest (Deut. 23.19–20) and security (Deut. 24.10–14). Through loans of silver, grain, work-days or any other currency, debts fostered complex networks of interdependence between debtors and creditors. Somewhat paradoxically, debts were a component of one’s cultural capital.²³ Ever since the early second

20. Yosef Garfinkel, ‘The Iron Age City of Khirbet Qeiyafa’, in Oded Lipschits and Aren M. Maier, eds., *The Shephelah during the Iron Age: Recent Archaeological Studies* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), pp. 115–32 (124–25).

21. Richter, ‘Provenance’, p. 50.

22. Richter, ‘Provenance’, pp. 27–28.

23. On capital, see P. Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital’, in J. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986),

millennium BCE, a major motivation for agricultural lending was to secure a source of labour from the borrower rather than drawing revenues through the charging of interest.²⁴ Hence, credit, a fairly prominent matter in Deuteronomy, is no more able to date the text than the use or non-use of silver. The stated aim of granting loans against interest ‘to rule over many nations’ (Deut. 15.6) is another issue that needs to be tackled. Is this another exception, or is it the hope of an isolated Iron Age I Palestinian highlander who fancies conquering the world?

The weights mentioned in Deut. 25.13–15 are read by Richter as an indication of the use of a barter system because no ‘scales’ (מאזנים) appear in Deuteronomy.²⁵ However, weights are put on one side of a balance, opposite the goods being measured, so the one implies the other. The mention of slaves in her core document in Deut. 5.14, 21; 12.12; 15.12, 17–18; 16.11, 14; 20.11; and 23.16 also sits very uncomfortably with her concept of the egalitarian subsistence system in the Iron I/IIA reality, centred on barter as the primary mode of economic exchange. Is it likely such families and clans owned slaves?

Taxation and tithes

Working from the assumption that taxation payable in currency was an essential feature of a centralized economy typical of Iron IIB and C, Richter considers the tithe in kind to be brought to the *maqom* as evidence of a non-centralized economy typical of Iron I/IIB. She has missed the non-taxational function of the annual tithes in Deut. 14.22–26 that are to be used entirely for feasting in front of the Lord with every other Israelite family. It is only the tithe delivered in kind every third year to the local city that was to be redistributed to the Levite, the *ger*, the widow, and the orphan, all presumably without the means to grow food themselves, that constituted the equivalent of an actual tax. Perhaps the use of the term ‘tithe’ has prompted an automatic association with modern governmental taxation systems. However, as Richter readily admits, the annual tithe was to be consumed by the landowner’s family two out of every three years (14.22–26),²⁶ so this 10% of gross annual yield is no tax at all. One has therefore to account for this most striking element of Deuteronomy’s economy. With or without the addition of Levites, *gerim*, widows and orphans as invited guests (Deut. 16.11–14), the feasting at the *maqom* envisions a pan-Israelite outlook, which contradicts Richter’s purported isolated villages.

pp. 241-58 and the application of this sociological category in A. Berlejung, ‘New Life, New Skills and New Friends in Exile: The Loss and Rise of Capitals of the Judeans in Babylonia’, in I. Finkelstein, C. Robin and T. Römer (eds), *Alphabets, Texts and Artifacts in the Ancient Near East* (Paris: van Dieren, 2016), pp. 12-46.

24. P. Steinkeller, ‘Money-Lending Practices in Ur III Babylonia: the Issue of Economic Motivation’, in M. and M. van de Mieroop (eds), *Debt and Economic Renewal in the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda: CDL, 2002), pp. 109-37. For concrete examples, see L.E. Pearce and C. Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer* (CUSAS 28; Bethesda, Maryland 2014), no. 6 (debt of silver apparently fully settled 29 years later) and no. 11 (442 litres of barley with 20% interest but with no date for repayment, no security and only one witness).

25. Richter, ‘Provenance’, p. 40.

26. Richter, ‘Provenance’, p. 41.

Her attempt to understand the regulations in Deut. 14:22–26 allowing the value of the provisions for the annual feasting at the *maqom* to be converted to silver if one lived too far away to be a secondary expansion misses the necessary economic logic of the feasting context.²⁷ The yearly pilgrimage to a *maqom* distant enough to justify the loss of the annual tithes' purchasing power when converted into silver—the tithes in kind being exchanged for silver on their flooded home market, where their value is at its lowest, and then using that silver to repurchase victuals at the *maqom* flooded by pilgrims—describes the opposite of a local isolated 'village' economy. It presupposes the ability to organize pilgrimages on a supra-regional level in order to foster social and religious cohesion on a pan-Israel level. It also presupposes the use of a third party to shift goods from the local level to the site of the pilgrimage, if not to provide the silver for the transactions, too. Thus, the annual feasting could not work without the ability of those traveling from a distance to receive the value of their in-kind goods in silver before departing so that they could then buy the provisions they needed at the pilgrimage destination site.

Cities and warfare

Richter views the mention of siege war to be conducted by a professional Israelite army in Deut. 20.19–20 as an exception among other such references to professional armies in her core, which otherwise refer to the city-states of the land to be conquered (7.24; 20.1) and the Egyptians (11.4).²⁸ It is difficult to see how she builds her argument. According to her logic, one would expect 20.19–20 to be secondary. However, after admitting that 'the trappings of a professional army' were native to the people in this book, since they are to engage in siege warfare, she goes on to assert that there is no centralized royal authority behind the siege regulations.

In her view, defence walls do not appear in *Urdeuteronomium*, although one reference is present outside her core in Deut. 28.52, and references to 'the gates' only indicate entrances to 'public space'.²⁹ She argues that the phrase 'the gates' does not imply the presence of walls except for low, non-defensive ones encircling domestic dwellings, citing Daniel A. Frese.³⁰ This is a rather forced interpretation of the cases in Deuteronomy. In his dissertation, Frese states that 'the gate' of the Tabernacle courtyard, as a fabric or curtain is an odd usage, and that every usage is in P. Hence, it 'is idiosyncratic, and should not be used to broaden the meaning of *s'r* more generally'.³¹ He also argues that this use of שַׁעַר is a deliberate choice by P and concludes that the use of שַׁעַר in P for the Tabernacle courtyard's opening 'betrays the late and urbanized—not desert-wandering—context of the writer(s) of P'.³² Accordingly, there is nothing in Deuteronomy's core (or frame)

27. Richter, 'Provenance', p. 48.

28. Richter, 'Provenance', pp. 44 and 45 respectively.

29. Richter, 'Provenance', p. 45.

30. Richter, 'Provenance', pp. 45–46.

31. Daniel A. Frese, *The Civic Forum in Ancient Israel: The Form, Function, and Symbolism of City Gates* (PhD. diss., University of California, San Diego, 2012), p. 302.

32. Frese, *Civic Forum*, pp. 302–303. We are leaving his second, and more speculative explanation out. Frese concludes (p. 303): 'If the above analysis is correct, the author of these verses in Exodus may be depicting the Israelite encampment in terms of an Israelite city ... just as

that invites an interpretation of ‘the gate’ as being somewhat similar to the Tabernacle or ‘the gate of the camp’ in Exodus-Leviticus. Richter seems to have misunderstood Frese’s arguments, which do not support her reconstruction at all.

Richter’s vagueness about the status of Deut. 20.19–20 has consequences for the concepts of city and walls. If it is part of *Urdeuteronomium*, the reference to the long-term siege of a city indicates the presence of walled cities. Also, she needs to account for Deut. 9.1, which clearly speaks of the cities, which are going to be dispossessed, as inaccessible. Are the elders of the city in 21.19 and 22.15 and the nearest city in 19.11 references to villages only, to the exclusion of fortified cities? In fact, the ideology behind the entire book presumes that after entering the promised land and conquering the cities there, the Israelites will take them over and live in them.

Finally, Richter’s argument that the Israelite settlements in Deuteronomy (p. 48) are not fortified does not correspond to a number of ‘facts on the ground’ for the Iron Age I / IIA period. Here for some reason, she refers to the entire book, not just her *Urdeuteronomium*, which means that the references to walled cities in 3.4–5 as well as 9.1, 21.19 and 22.15 contradict her claim before even looking at the archaeological material. As noted already, the surveys show walled cities in the intermontane valleys of Ephraim and Manasseh beside which new villages sprang up in the Iron I period. In addition, Amihai Mazar has pointed out that the Iron I sites of Bethel, Beth-Zur, Gibeon, and possibly Shiloh revealed ‘massive city walls associated with “collared rim” jar fragments’ that lead to the inescapable conclusion that ‘during the twelfth–eleventh centuries B.C.E. fortified towns did exist in the central Judean mountains and north of Jerusalem’.³³ Mazar goes on to point out that some smaller settlements followed suit by either erecting a defensive wall, as at Giloh, or by using the outer walls of houses arranged in a continuous line that enclosed a central area, as at ‘Izbet Şarţeh, while others had no protection, such as ‘Ai, Khirbet Raddana, and Tell el-Fûl I (Mazar 1981, 17).

Governmental centralisation

Richter argues that ‘the dominant voice heard through the economics of *Urdeuteronomium* speaks of a rural, isolated village economy dependent on householder economics, unaware of governmental centralisation and imperial taxation ...’.³⁴ The argument can easily be reversed. The writers imagined a world with no governmental centralisation and imperial centralisation precisely because they identified these factors as the main cause of problems in their current reality and considered their elimination a prerequisite for their attainment of wellbeing. Indeed, only a minimal state in the form of an optional Torah-reading monarch who is entirely self-supported is envisioned, while temples are absent, except for the one reference to the *bêt YHWH* in 23.19. That *corvée* and tribute are absent from the book does not mean that they are absent from the world of the writers. On the contrary, their absence might well be a clue to their presence in the real world, against which the writers reacted.

the author of P seems to conflate the spatial significance and terminology of the Tabernacle and the Temple compound’.

33. Amihai Mazar, ‘Giloh: An Early Iron Age Settlement Site near Jerusalem,’ *IEJ* 31 (1981), pp. 1–36 (17).

34. Richter, ‘Provenance’, p. 49.

Silver

Contrary to the economic context of 2 Kings where money is used for everything from wheat to wages and foreign tribute, Richter argues that ‘in *Urdeuteronomium*, silver for tithe and taxation is found only in the interpolation of Deut. 14.24–26’.³⁵ To dismiss this passage as an interpolation, she points out that Deut. 12.20–24 and 14.24–26 ‘immediately follow and reiterate a law with the same content and much of the same specific language’.³⁶ That a passage is a doublet does not automatically imply that it is secondary. Deut. 14.24–26 may be a *lex specialis* following the *lex generalis* of Deut. 12.21–24 without implying that it is a later interpolation.³⁷ Or Deut. 12.20–24 could be an interpolation from Deut. 14.22–24, in which case the passage dismissed by Richter is the earlier one. That distant farmers can bring the value of their yearly tithes in silver rather than in kind is a major hurdle for Richter’s thesis and one which is not easily removed.

As the only imported item in the list of 1 Kgs 10.28–29 (*sic?*³⁸) that makes an appearance in Deuteronomy is iron, Richter states that the use of precious metal for trade ‘is at best ancillary in *Urdeuteronomium*’.³⁹ Iron, however, was never used as a standard of exchange; silver had been used to set value equivalence for goods in kind in the ancient Near East since the Middle Bronze period. It was the standard of exchange in the Old Assyrian trading colonies in Anatolia (ca 1950–1750 BCE), for example.⁴⁰ The conversion of tithes into silver (Deut. 14.24–25) is dismissed as belonging to ‘some different or later scenario’ because it constitutes a doublet of Deut. 12.21–24.⁴¹

The use of silver as bullion or as coinage does not imply the discontinuance of payment in kind since borrowers of every age have every interest in reimbursing loans in the same currency in which it was contracted in order to avoid price fluctuations. Even in the highly monetized and urbanized Neo-Babylonian economy, a third of the tablets issued in rural areas such as āl-Yāhūdu, Bīt-Našar, āl ša Tubyama and Adabilu, concern barley. Another third concern dates and only a sixth mention silver. Silver debts could be reimbursed in silver or in barley, silver and agricultural products being clearly interchangeable.⁴² Therefore, the use or non-use of silver is not a reliable criterion to identify

35. Richter, ‘Provenance’, p. 43.

36. Richter, ‘Provenance’, fn 70, referring to S. L. Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: lešakkēn šemo šām in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), pp. 41–52 and 60–63.

37. E. Otto, *Deuteronomium 12,1–23,15* (HthKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2016), p. 1,312.

38. We find no mention of iron in the list of 1 Kgs 10.28–29.

39. Richter, ‘Provenance’, p. 40.

40. M. T. Larsen, *Ancient Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015). K. R. Veenhof, ‘Silver and Credit in Old Assyrian Trade’, in J. G. Dercksen (ed.), *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1999), pp. 55–83. J. G. Dercksen, ‘On the Financing of Old Assyrian Merchants’, in J. G. Dercksen (ed.), *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1999), pp. 85–99.

41. Richter, ‘Provenance’, p. 42.

42. Pearce and Wunsch, *Documents*, no. 2 and no. 18 Promissory notes for barley in lieu of silver (587 and 512 BCE); no. 55 Promissory note for silver to be paid in barley (549 BCE). We deplore the fact that these tablets are dispersed in private collections, which encouraged the

the date of *Urdeuteronomium*. Some economic practices that Richter considers as typical of a local and non-monetized economy of the Iron Age I continued in subsequent eras.⁴³

That the ‘minting of coinage in the 7th century’ rendered the barter-based economy in Israel obsolete (p. 49) is problematic on two counts. First, coinage occurs somewhat later, to begin with in Lydia and then in Greece before reaching Israel in the Persian era. Second, monetisation does not render barter obsolete.

Though silver also occurs in the penalty for violating a virgin (Deut. 22.19, 29), in the prohibition to sell a beautiful prisoner of war taken as a wife (Deut. 21.14) and in the prohibition to charge interest on loans in silver (Deut. 23.20 [ET 19]), Richter downplays these occurrences of silver as ‘relatively sparse’. As silver loans to foreigners hardly support an isolated barter economy, Richter puts the emphasis on the fact that the prohibition of interest also applies to loans in kind. On the basis of Polanyi’s category of payment as the first general category of money, Richter argues that Deuteronomy’s use of money reflects ‘as-of-yet unstratified economies’.⁴⁴

While Richter aptly mentions wrapped (צָרַר) silver as an indicator of the royal centralisation of the Iron Age II economy,⁴⁵ she makes no mention of the silver which farmers living afar are advised to wrap in their hand (וְצָרַרְתָּ בְּכַסְּךָ) before proceeding to the *maqom* (Deut. 14.25).

Qahal-YHWH

To downplay any clues of an integrated economy in *Urdeuteronomium*, Richter omits the *qahal-YHWH*, which, according to Deut. 23.7–8, includes some Edomite and Egyptian members. In fairness, this point is commonly ignored in Deuteronomy scholarship because it constitutes a thorn in the flesh for readings of Deuteronomy that identify the construction of ‘a distinctive Israelite identity in avoidance of non-Israelites’ among the book’s concerns.⁴⁶ Should these two verses be removed as an addition or considered an anachronism?

The Edomite brother in this *qahal-YHWH* can, in fact, be read as the key to the brotherhood mentioned throughout the Deuteronomic core, which distinguishes between brothers and Israelite neighbours (Deut. 15.2 (brother and neighbour); 19.4–5.11.14; 22.24; 23.25–26; 24.10 (neighbours only)). The distinction between brothers and neighbours may be dismissed as irrelevant by claiming that brothers and neighbours are synonyms, as is the

traffic of unprovenanced material. See T. Alstola, ‘Review of Pearce-Wunsch 2014’ in *OLZ* 111 (2016), pp. 326–29 (327).

43. See M. Jursa, ‘Silver and Other Forms of Elite Wealth in Seventh Century BC Babylonia’, in K. Kleber and R. Pirngruber (eds), *Silver, Money and Credit. A Tribute to Robartus J. van der Spek on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday on 18th September 2014* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2016), pp. 61–71 (63).

44. Richter, ‘Provenance’, p. 43.

45. Richter, ‘Provenance’, p. 32.

46. So C. L. Crouch, *The Making of Israel: Cultural Diversity in the Southern Levant and the Formation of Ethnic Identity in Deuteronomy* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 197–99 who considers the admittance of the Egyptian secondary and of the Edomite as the result of the assimilation of Israelite norms following a long period of residence within Israelite settlements.

case in the NRSV where, of the thirty occurrences of the term אָח in the Deuteronomic core, only one is rendered ‘brother’.⁴⁷ Yet, whenever the text does not clearly refer to blood brothers (Deut. 25.5–10), tribal brothers (Deut. 18.2–18) or brothers-in-arms (Deut. 20.8), the Deuteronomic core uses the word ‘brother’ in economic contexts (Deut. 15.2–11; 23.8; 24.14). Therefore, instead of including all Israelites and only Israelites, the *Volk von Brüdern* in *Urdeuteronomium* includes some Edomites, possibly also some Egyptians, but not necessarily every Israelite.⁴⁸ Even the frame maintains Edom’s special place (Deut. 2.4,8) as a brother.

‘Brother’ is a standard designation for a Neo-Assyrian business partner in joint-ventures, such as the Babylonian *harrānu* companies.⁴⁹ At Elephantine, the term ‘brother’ was used to address business partners independently from any shared ethnicity at Elephantine.⁵⁰ Earlier on, a brother designated a foreign ruler of equal rank in Bronze Age diplomacy.⁵¹ Hence, the Deuteronomic brother can embrace far more than a fellow Israelite, especially the regulatory commands that concern economic matters in *Urdeuteronomium*. Any suggestion that *Urdeuteronomium* was produced in an isolated highland economy needs to deal with the brotherhood, which includes Edomite and possibly third-generation Egyptian brothers.

Conclusion

Richter’s article provides a fresh approach to the origins of *Urdeuteronomium* but, before any date might be suggested, a more comprehensive analysis is needed of the material in these chapters, including a consideration of its purpose and intended audience. The assumption that what is characteristic of Iron I-IIa is uncharacteristic of certain later periods cannot be taken for granted, especially when the focus is on rural areas. The

47. A fact deplored by W. S. Morrow, *An Introduction to Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), p. 247.

48. Contrary to the claim to the contrary in L. Peritt, “Ein einzig Volk von Brüdern”: Zur deuteronomischen Herkunft der biblischen Bezeichnung “Brüder”, in D. Lührmann and G. Strecker (eds), *Kirche: Festschrift für Gunther Bornkamm zum 75. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1980), pp. 27–52 reprint in L. Peritt, *Deuteronomium Studien* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), pp. 50–73. See P. Guillaume, ‘Who are My Brothers? Deuteronomic Brotherhood and the Peritt Fallacy,’ in D. V. Edelman *et al.* (eds), *‘Hard Core’ Deuteronomy* (forthcoming).

49. M. Jursa, *Aspects of the Economic History of Babylonia in the First Millennium BC* (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2010), pp. 206–18. K. Radner, ‘Die beiden neuassyrischen Privatarhive’, in P. Miglus, K. Radner and F.M. Stepiñowski (eds), *Ausgrabungen in Assur: Wohnquartiere in der Weststadt, Teil 1* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016), pp. 79–133.

50. For instance, the letter TAD 1:A3.10 Berlin 23000 concerns non-Judeans who own a boat, or shares of a boat, in partnership. Spendata son of Fravatipata addresses Hori son of Kamen and Peṭemachis as his brothers, showing that, in Aramaic, the term brother was applied to anyone with whom one had established business dealings or ties, forming a personal economic network. See B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt* (Winona Lake, IN; Eisenbrauns, 1986–1999), pp. 48–49.

51. A. Tugendhaft, ‘How to Become a Brother in the Bronze Age: An Inquiry into the Representation of Politics in Ugaritic Myth’, *Fragments* 2 (2012), pp. 89–104.

growth of urban centres in the highlands in subsequent periods did not fundamentally transform conditions in the countryside. Agricultural exports did not compete with or discontinue subsistence farming.

Richter's approach appears to adhere too closely to Boer's theoretical model based on the opposition between subsistence regimes, extractive palatine regimes and plunder regimes.

While Boer rightly argues that 'religion was woven into every facet of ancient economies',⁵² is it likely that the somewhat stereotyped differences between these regimes made Iron Age IIB conditions in the Palestinian highland sufficiently different from conditions in Iron Age IIA to leave clues reflecting such differences in Deuteronomy? Boer himself claims that village communes headed by their council of elders (Deut. 19.12; 21.3) were a creative adaptation to ever-changing conditions and ensured the resilience of kinship-households and subsistence survival.⁵³ In this case, the creative adaptation of these village communes would have survived the changes between Iron Age I and Iron Age II, making little difference on the ground or in the text.

As already indicated, the rural vs urban opposition presumed in this study should be replaced by more adequate models. Richter's conclusions about the populace living on small family farms, about a mixed economy and about family life can hardly be taken as evidence for dating the core text of Deuteronomy. In the period up to the 7th century BCE, and probably even later, there was no dichotomy between independent villagers and local, non-monetized exchange of goods in the rural area on the one hand, and tenant farmers or day labourers, urban citizens, market exchange and international trade, on the other. It is hardly credible that the regulatory commands concerning the family in the core should refer exclusively to the rural *bet'ab*.⁵⁴ The manumission regulation may not refer to the rural environment exclusively, as agriculture may have been a normal way of life even for town-residents. The idea of permanent markets and massive changes from subsistence to redistributive economy should be reassessed historically.⁵⁵

In fact, the issue of date ought to be put on hold until more appropriate tools for this task than the standard critical methods are elaborated.⁵⁶ A collection of *huqqīm* and *mišpātim* constituting *mišvōt* such as the one set out in *Urdeuteronomium* is difficult to date because its creators believed it to be eternally valid. Therefore, the question of purpose should take priority in the agenda of Deuteronomic research for the time being.⁵⁷

52. R. Boer, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2015), p. 8.

53. Boer, *Sacred Economy*, pp. 103-104.

54. Richter, 'Provenance', p. 47.

55. J. David Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2001), pp. 79-80; 135; 138-141.

56. For a parade example of over-confidence in the ability to date Deuteronomic redactional layers, see C. Levin, 'Rereading Deuteronomy in the Persian and Hellenistic Periods: The Ethics of Brotherhood and the Care of the Poor', in D. V. Edelman (ed.), *Deuteronomy-Kings as Emerging Authoritative Books: A Conversation* (ANEM 6; Atlanta: SBL, 2014), pp. 49-72.

57. As suggested by P. R. Davies, 'The Authority of Deuteronomy', in D. V. Edelman (ed.), *Deuteronomy-Kings as Emerging Authoritative Books: A Conversation* (ANEM 6; Atlanta: SBL, 2014), pp. 27-47 (27).

Before attempting to date or even locate the text in one or more specific socio-historical settings, one ought to decide whether or not the society portrayed in *Urdeuteronomium* reflects actual conditions or an ideal picture of Israel imagined by literati who lived under very different conditions, which they considered unacceptable. In this case, the kind of Israel depicted in *Urdeuteronomium* would reflect conditions almost exactly opposite to the conditions that prevailed when it was imagined, just as a photographic negative reverses the colours. A text imagining an idyllic Israel without king, taxes, silver and mandatory *corvée* labour is far more likely to have been produced in an Israel with king, taxes, silver and *corvée* or in a post-monarchic, provincial setting, where loss of native kingship and imperial presence that demanded taxes in kind or specie and *corvée*. If the notion of utopia is rejected for *Urdeuteronomium*, the rural, isolated village economy dependent on households and unaware of centralization and imperial taxation begs the questions of audience and ideology. On the surface, these traits could equally apply to a post-monarchic period, when the writer would deliberately ignore an imperial provincial context in favour of a vision of the religious community of Israel revolving around a central temple.

Though she wants *Urdeuteronomium* to arise in isolated villages, Richter has to assume a unified 'Israel' in the central hill country to match *Urdeuteronomium's* contents, whatever its delimitation and convenient late interpolations. How could a society of isolated farmsteads and simple villages generate the notion of an 'all Israel' in the service of the one deity Yahweh (Deut. 5–6), invent a common past of salvation from Egypt and wandering through the desert (ch. 8), and a nationwide religious unity and practice (if ch. 12 is included in *Urdeuteronomium*), not to mention chapter 16? In other words, how could authors who do not know of any state- or nation-wide economy write about a unified religious 'Israel' in a time when no such entity existed?

The issue raised here resembles the one that led Martin Noth to argue that there was a religious-socio-political entity of 'all Israel' connected in the amphictyony. Religious ideas, even when utopian, do not appear without some connection with the socio-political and economic realities on the ground. To be sure, these arguments lay outside the economic perspective used by Richter, but they do follow Richter's sound advice not to separate economic matters from other categories such as political, religious and socio-logical concerns. We sincerely hope that her advice will be taken up to supplement religious readings of Deuteronomy.

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