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Phil J Botha (University of Pretoria)

“INTO YOUR HAND, I COMMIT MY SPIRIT. YOU HAVE REDEEMED ME, YHWH, O FAITHFUL GOD” (PS 31:6): THE PURPOSE OF PSALM 31 AS A PART OF THE CLUSTER OF PSALMS 25-34 TO EXHORT THE IN-GROUP TO FAITHFUL TRUST IN YHWH

ABSTRACT

Psalm 31 is characterised by a mixture of earnest supplications for help and thanksgiving for having been helped by YHWH. It also contains two of the most memorable declarations of trust in YHWH, with the psalmist entrusting his spirit and his time into the hand of YHWH. This article interprets the psalm as a composition on its own but also within the context of the cluster of Pss 25-34. It argues that the psalm is well-integrated into the cluster, functioning as an acknowledgement to YHWH for having rescued the psalmist from his distress and serving as proof that YHWH is faithful so that the psalmist could use his experience to exhort the in-group to replicate his trust in seeking refuge in YHWH. Although the cluster contains echoes of David’s military struggle with Saul, the primary conflict in the cluster relates to the ethical-moral battle between the humble, poor, righteous worshippers of YHWH and the arrogant, wicked people who tried to shame them in post-exilic Judah.

*Szabolcs-Ferencz Kató (University of Pretoria / Protestant Theological
Institute of Cluj-Napoca)*

**BAAL AND THE BAALS IN THE BOOK OF HOSEA:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

ABSTRACT

The identity and function of Baal and the baals in Hos is a much-discussed issue in the Hebrew Bible. The lexeme occurs in three chapters (Hos 2; 11; 13) and is probably alluded to in Hos 9:10. But who is this Baal? Is he the storm god, a cipher for any foreign deity venerated in Israel, or a canaanized YHWH figure? Is the usage of the word in any way homogeneous? After a brief survey of the positions, I will argue that Baal in Hos 2 seems to be the storm god; the lexeme works as a generic term for the foreign gods in Hos 11:2, and in retrospective discourses (13:1; 9:10) it refers to the Baal cult manifested as bull images. However, even the storm god Baal of Hos is very different from his Canaanite counterpart. Baal in Hos 2 is merely a fertility god without any political or warrior functions.

Tania Notarius (University of the Free State)

**STATIVE VERBS IN UGARITIC:
BETWEEN THE ARGUMENT STRUCTURE AND
SYNTACTIC ALTERNATIONS***

ABSTRACT

This paper laid the foundation of the syntactic and semantic analysis of stative verbs in Ugaritic. The semantic scope of stative verbs in Ugaritic is very broad: on the basis of aspectual properties and argument alignment patterns the author describes adjectival, unaccusative patientive, emotive / cognitive, possessive / locative, and existential verbs. Some verbs demonstrate stative vs dynamic alternations, sporadically deriving passive forms. The impersonal usage of stative verb attests for a dative-Experiencer construction in the language of prose – apparently a diachronically late development which can also be due to the influence of a local Canaanite dialect.

Daniel Vainstub (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

**THE ROOTS DR-DRR-’DR IN BIBLICAL HEBREW:
A NEW EXAMINATION***

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes the discerning of two different original etymons in the biblical Hebrew root דרר. In addition to the one most known, which evolved from the original Proto-Semitic root ’dr meaning “enormous”, there is another one from the original biradical base dr meaning “abundance”. This root, well attested in other Semitic languages, expanded into a triconsonantal pattern by appending an aleph to its head, and thus it resembles in its external form to the first. This interpretation sheds light on some occurrences of the root דרר in the Bible and yields a more accurate understanding of the text in which they appear.

BOOK REVIEW

Portuese, L & Pallavidini, M (eds) 2022. *Ancient Near Eastern Weltanschauungen in Contact and in Contrast: Rethinking Ideology and Propaganda in the Ancient Near East* (wEDGE 2). Münster: Zaphon. 425 pages. ISBN 978-3-96327-186-1 (Book); ISBN 978-3-96327-187-8 (E-book, via ProQuest). €110.00.

A workshop addressing “ideology” and “propaganda” in ancient Western Asia (the ancient Near East) was planned for the 66th *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*. This *Rencontre* had the theme “Cultural Contact – Cultures of Contact”, and was supposed to be held in Mainz and Frankfurt in 2021. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic it was postponed, and was instead held in 2022. The workshop therefore did not take place, and its organizers instead produced the present volume. It includes the contributions which would have been read at the workshop, as well as other submissions which were written specifically for inclusion.

The volume focuses on “ideology” and “propaganda” and how these may – or may not – be understood in the context of ancient Western Asia. The volume begins with an introduction to the topic by the two editors (Portuese and Pallavidini), who state that the intention of the volume is that “it attempts to offer theoretical tools to future researchers for regulating the application of the concepts of ‘ideology’ and ‘propaganda’ to ancient Near Eastern societies. In doing so, it consists of a collection of essays which each evaluates the appropriateness, or inappropriateness, of western-centric terms such as ideology and propaganda through contemporary research methods applied to written, visual and archaeological sources” (p. 15). The introduction does a good job of laying the theoretical groundwork for the volume by detailing the importance of the reception history of the “Ancient Near East”, the origins and definitions of the two terms, “ideology” and “propaganda”, and the analysis of single-case studies and specific historical events.

After the introduction, the volume is divided into three sections: the first, “Mesopotamia” consists of ten contributions which focus primarily (but not exclusively) on the Neo-Assyrian Period, the second, “Anatolia and Egypt” consists of four contributions, and the third and final section, “Syria and the Levant”, likewise has four. These comprise of philological, archaeological and art historical studies, and thereby cover a wide range of sources, and

the contributions which deal with visual sources are generally well illustrated.

The issues with this volume stem from its development. Usually when proceedings of workshops are published, the contributions within the volume are informed by each other and are in dialogue with each other. This is not the case with the present volume, where each chapter seems like an individual article. The editors state in their introduction that “Common themes are interwoven throughout the volume, and each paper presents a specific case-study that augments, complements or complicates the others’ findings, giving further food for thoughts on the application of Western terminology to ancient Near Eastern cultures” (p. 21). There are, indeed, common themes, as can be expected when there is a definite, defined scope, but the contributions do not obviously engage with each other. This likely would have been different if the workshop had taken place, as the authors would then have had the opportunity to reevaluate their own arguments in the light of their colleague’s contributions. Without the workshop, this was understandably impossible. Still the contributions are not always clearly related to each other, or, indeed, to “ideology” and/or “propaganda”. This could have been addressed by a final chapter in which the editors analysed and synthesized the overarching arguments. The volume suffers from not having such a concluding chapter.

Throughout the volume, the role of the sender, the message, and the (intended) audience for both “ideology” and “propaganda” is stressed. For example, Pallavidini (p. 257) argues that “In the case of propaganda, the elements that have to be considered are: the content of the messages, the techniques employed to convey the messages, the audience, and the purposes, since propaganda never aims to an auto-referred celebration of the king but it has practical political objectives”. While the sender constitutes the political elite, usually the ruler, this leaves room for debate about the role of the message and the audience. Many of the arguments over whether or not something can be considered “propaganda” focus on the audience, as stated by Karlsson (p. 246), “The *receiver* component is the one centred on in the debate on the relevance of the term propaganda in ancient Mesopotamia” (Karlsson’s emphasis. See also, for example, Galter’s discussion on “The question of audiences” pp. 88-91). As a counterpoint, my comments will therefore focus on the message.

Not only the message, but also how the message is conveyed need to be taken into consideration. For example, Bonatz analyses the use of monsters (i.e., hybrid creatures) in Middle Assyrian seals and Neo-Assyrian palace

reliefs. These monsters should portray the same message, but Bonatz concludes that “monster depictions in the context of Middle Assyrian seal art can be considered propagandistic; in the context of Neo-Assyrian palaces, they are definitely not” (p. 158). Similarly, Galter (p. 91) notes that “we still have no reference to a public reading of royal inscriptions and that the texts themselves never address a broader public”. Both of these examples indicate that the manner in which a message is conveyed or spread impacts who the audience(s) are, or can be.

But the message itself should also be addressed. For example, both Montesanto and Coppini clearly demonstrate that changes in the pottery assemblages can, and do, reflect changes in social, economic and political circumstances (see Montesanto’s conclusion, “the contextual study of the material culture can be used to address questions related to the interactions between the Late Bronze Age empires and the local population in the Northern Levant, focusing on the selective integration in the local pottery typology of non-local types to understand the impact that these empires had on social habits and local identities” p. 378). However, what the changes in ideology are, is not clear. What is the message? Without the message, can these changes in pottery assemblages really be considered to be reflective of propaganda, or to *be* propaganda? The problem with using pottery as indicative of propaganda goes further. Coppini (p. 388) justifies the use of pottery for investigating propaganda by stating that “especially for the Middle Assyrian period, pottery is always and uniquely related to the state”, and it may therefore be reflective of that state. However, she later hypothesizes “that potters were not controlled and employed economically by the state apparatus” (p. 396). If the potters who produced the pottery were therefore not connected to the state apparatus, would they have been spreading the message of that state? In other words, would they have been involved in the spread of ideology, and propaganda? Similar questions can be asked of Gordeziani and Tatišvili’s analysis of changes in burial customs of Hittite rulers and their families.

Coppini (p. 387) acknowledges some of these problems when she states that “Propaganda in material culture is a misused and over-used term, primarily when referring to studies about ancient political entities”. However, this can be contrasted with Artemov’s assertion that “contrary to material remains, events recorded or literary motifs used in written sources, the ‘ideology’ (as something existing only in the minds of people) is not accessible to us in any direct way, because it was never explicitly formulated. It has to be reconstructed on the basis of texts whose

interpretation is often far from clear, and I wonder whether, in many a case, the ‘ideology’ we ascribe to them is not the fruit of our own imagination” (p. 82). Wagner-Durand (pp. 218-219) echoes this sentiment, “ancient propaganda is not about modern perception”.

This modern perception is at the crux of the problems with studying “ideology” and “propaganda” in ancient Western Asia. These two terms themselves have a reception history where their meanings have changed. This history is briefly explored by Portuese and Pallavidini (pp. 18-20) in their introduction where they note the potential problems with using the terms for the study of the “Ancient Near East” (itself a problematic term). Other issues regarding reception history are also raised by other contributions. For example, Di Paolo (p. 54) notes that studies have historically been Eurocentric, with Europe serving as the “silent referent”, in which it “functioned for a long time as a universal signifier, in that it assumed the superiority of Western cultural values over those of non-Western societies” (pp. 53-54). Nadali (pp. 36-37) likewise points out the prevalence of colonialism and the accompanying racism and xenophobia in analysing the cultures of ancient Western Asia, and how terms like “empire” and “ideology” may have negative connotations when referring to these cultures, but positive connotations when referring to Western cultures, despite whatever the reality for any given specific culture may be.

Despite the issues of this volume which stem from the postponement of the 66th *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* and the cancellation of the proposed workshop which would have formed the basis of this volume, it offers interesting and thought-provoking analyses on “ideology” and “propaganda” in ancient Western Asia. There is still much to be added to the debate. The volume also reminds us of something fundamental which we too often overlook: it reminds us to be mindful of the words we use and how we apply them.

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