



## COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

### THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Thesis title:

*Exegeting the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7) and the Good Shepherd Discourse (John 10:1-16) in Light of Insights into Caprine Husbandry Practices of first-century Judea and Galilee.*

Abstract:

Few forms of exegesis privilege class as a heuristic category. The study contends that by doing so we can arrive at the most accurate assessment of the historical context of certain parables of Jesus. Towards this end, the study uses Mode of Production theory, and its adaptation by Roland Boer, as its main theoretical foundation. In having greater understanding of the means of production attendant to contexts of certain parables, we can understand issues of class dynamics and class tension which often feature centrally in these. In applying this same hermeneutic of class to the parables generally, and to what might be termed the pastoral parables of Matthew 18:12-14/Luke 15:4-7 and John 10:1-16, we are able to understand Jesus' parables as a form of codification (in the Freirean sense), and as illustrative both of the hidden transcript (as articulated by James Scott), as well as of actual forms of resistance exercised on the part of the peasantry.

Keywords:

Mode of production; means of production; class; parable/*mashal*; first-century caprine husbandry; sheep; goats; animal economy; temple economy; peasant-agrarian economy; bandits/banditry; latifundialism/latifundialisation.

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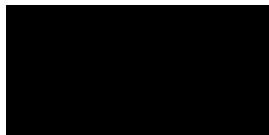
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

A.J.:	<i>Antiquitates Judaicae (Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews)</i>
APB:	<i>An Anglican Prayer Book, 1989</i>
BDAG:	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
B.J.:	<i>Bellum Judaicum (Josephus' War of the Jews)</i>
ESV:	<i>English Standard Version</i>
Gos.Thom:	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>
KJV:	<i>King James Version</i>
LXX:	<i>Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)</i>
MT:	<i>Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible</i>
MNI:	<i>Minimum Number of Individuals</i>
MPT:	<i>Mode of Production Theory</i>
NASB:	<i>New American Standard Bible</i>
NISP:	<i>Number of Identified Specimens</i>
NJBC:	<i>New Jerome Bible Commentary</i>
NRSV:	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>
RSV:	<i>Revised Standard Version</i>
SBL:	<i>Society for Biblical Literature</i>
SNTS:	<i>Society for New Testament Studies</i>
UBS4:	<i>United Bible Societies Greek New Testament, Fourth Edition</i>

## DIAGRAMS:

*Diagram 1 – The Sacred Economy*

*Diagram 2 – The Ancient Mode of Production*

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION OF RESEARCH

### 1.1 Theoretical Orientation

One of the most contentious areas within New Testament studies in recent years relates to the precise mechanisms of first-century Palestinian economy and the effects this had on the population. This contention likely emanates as much from the political dispositions of New Testament scholars as it does from available data for the period. It is difficult to free oneself from such orientations, let alone to always be conscious of them. Additionally, it may be legitimate to say that some scholars regard the issue as an ethical one and therefore their stances as being ethical stances, which further complicates matters.

One of the implicit aims of this study is to attempt to provide a thorough, historically accurate, exegetically responsible framework for understanding the parables of Jesus. A framework is a lens through which we interpret information and data. Therefore, the choice of one particular framework over another automatically prejudices the outcome of a study and thus already is a value-laden enterprise.<sup>1</sup> There is no avoiding this. All a responsible exegete can hope to do is to articulate a framework, and the reasons for choosing it, as clearly as possible. The reader must then decide on the validity, or persuasiveness, of the outcome.

The more direct aim of this study is to better understand and exegete Matthew 18:12-14/Luke 15:4-7 and John 10:1-16 in relation to the vicissitudes of first-century caprine husbandry. This is a tall order for the simple reason that relatively little is known about the mechanisms of first-century caprine husbandry in Judea and Galilee in comparison to the vegetal agricultural sector. This is one of the lacunae this study seeks to address. In light of this, data and information, to say nothing of an adequately thorough theoretical framework, assembled from various fields is required. The study consults scholarship as divergent as that on ancient banditry to archaeological data on faunal remains. An underlying assumption of the study is that a more detailed and articulate theoretical framework allows for more precise inferences based on available information and data.

Regarding the study's theoretical framework, a central contention is that a most helpful means of interpreting data of a socio-economic nature is to use *class* as a heuristic category. As Robert Myles notes in his introductory chapter to *Class Struggle in the New Testament* (2019), the proposal to use class as a biblical hermeneutic is not new. It was suggested as much as twenty years ago by Norman Gottwald.<sup>2</sup> Myles credits Gottwald with making "a case for the analysis of class as an important interpretive category within the study of the ancient world." (Myles 2019, 1) While the application of class as a heuristic category is therefore not new it

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<sup>1</sup> Citing studies which demonstrate the importance of choosing certain theoretical models, West says "theory, method, and data are inseparable." (West 2011, 511)

<sup>2</sup> Gottwald, N. K. "Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies," *JBL* 112, No. 1. 1993.

is still quite contested, and therefore not very common in the field of biblical studies.<sup>3</sup> Part of what the study advocates therefore is a more regular and explicit use of class as a biblical hermeneutic or heuristic category.

Objections have been raised to the rigidity of class in such capacity. An objection frequently cited is its supposed failure to account for varying status levels in antiquity, where “status” is considered by some scholars a more helpful concept (2019, 1).<sup>4</sup> A recurring motif in this study is the division within the field of the New Testament, perhaps in biblical studies more generally, on matters of economy. Terms which are used to describe this division, and camps associated with it (see below), can be both helpful and unhelpful.

Generally, one side of the debate seeks to ‘maximise’ aspects of ancient economy, usually on the basis of seeking parity with modern neo-liberal orientations and assumptions, and sometimes using archaeological data; while the other side of the debate seeks to ‘minimise’ aspects of ancient economy, sometimes on the basis of Marxist-influenced positions, and often relying on sociological models.<sup>5</sup> The discussion contained in the various contributions to *Class Struggle in the New Testament* is a caricatured or condensed version of this debate represented by the opposition between the heuristic concepts of *status* and *class*.

As Myles states, the “traditional Marxist” definition of class is “as signifying one’s relationship to the means of production” (2019, 2). He goes on therefore to say that “[c]lass within the Marxist tradition is necessarily a relationship.” (2019, 2)<sup>6</sup> One’s class is not conferred on the basis of essentially or inherently inferior qualities, although it may be perceived this way. By saying that class is relational we are emphasising the fact that class is defined by one’s *relationship to* the means of production. But class too necessarily and inevitably implies *class conflict* where “class, when divorced from struggle, becomes a superfluous category” (2019, 7). Thus there is a two-fold relational aspect to class: one’s relationship to the means of production and one’s relationship to other classes.

The conflation, or even association, of status with class is unhelpful for two reasons. Firstly, it suggests that there is an a priori cultural valuation pertaining to class which somehow plays a role in determining class. While such valuation may arise due to ideological factors, class itself is determined on an acultural (i.e. non-valuative),

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<sup>3</sup> While Crossley, in his concluding chapter to *Class Struggle in the New Testament*, celebrates a “context...[which is] certainly present for a wider acceptance of class-based analysis” he says that “nonmaterialist identity politics still hold sway.” (2019, 246)

<sup>4</sup> Crossley, a contributing author to *Class Struggle*, says that this tension was particularly pronounced at an SBL annual meeting in 2017 dedicated to the discussion of class as a heuristic category (Crossley 2019, 244).

<sup>5</sup> The terms “maximalist” and “minimalist” pertain to the debate though usually more strictly in the field of archaeology. See, for example, Osiek (2002, 96). A disadvantage of these two terms is already evident in that they implicitly characterise the difference in ancient and modern economy in terms of scale. Polanyi had previously introduced the notion of ‘embeddedness’ (and by implication, ‘disembeddedness’) which, in contrast, addresses qualitative aspects of economy and economic difference (Polanyi 1944, 57, 272).

<sup>6</sup> “This relationship is intimately connected to the relations of production in which men and women engage in the processes of economic production and are further defined...through property relations or as labor relations.” (2019, 2)

economic (therefore relational) basis. The second and related reason the notion of status is unhelpful, which is pointed out by Boer and Petterson (2019), is that it contributes to the individualising tendencies of neo-liberal, or neo-classical, approaches.<sup>7</sup> As soon as socio-economic relations are individualised, the relational aspect of class evaporates, and it ceases to function as a heuristic category. Class therefore should not be understood as a socio-cultural category, though it may be invested with socio-cultural valuation a posteriori. Instead, it is primarily a socio-economic (relational) category.

In her contribution to the same volume, Sarah Rollens implicitly raises the question: to what extent does class consciousness determine class (Rollens 2019, 170-171)? The subject which Rollens' chapter deals with is the concept of a 'retainer class,' popularised on the basis of Lenski's work. Rollens (2019, 180-181) surveys a number of scholars who have used the concept where most see members of a retainer class as closely aligned or complicit with the ruling elite. However, her contention, given that this class would have included scribes, is that the so-called retainer class is also the "locus" for the production of the New Testament (2019, 180), a point made by Boer and Petterson, both in this volume (2019) and in their *Time of Troubles* (2017).

What are the implications of this given this class's supposed allegiance with the ruling elite? Rollens does not dismiss the use of class as a heuristic category, even by its traditional definition of a *relation to the means of production*. Yet her focus is on the retainer class, and here she is perhaps guilty of understanding class as being constituted by class consciousness which, she says in the case of a retainer class, is far too diverse (given the various professions which comprise it) to constitute a single class consciousness (2019, 182). But she maintains that to understand the retainer class in the traditional and strict sense of their relation to the means of production prematurely precludes members of the retainer class acting against the ruling elite and in favour of lower exploited classes which, she wishes to maintain, was a distinct possibility (2019, 184-185).

Though it may seem like an oversimplification, and not dismissing Rollens' contention outright, the aspect of the general ideological lens of the New Testament being that of the elite, or a retainer class, highlights the importance of historicity, in the sense that an adequate, or informed, understanding of the historical context of Jesus' ministry is important. This goes hand-in-hand, and is informed by, an understanding of the means of production attendant to this context, which leads us to the next step in the theoretical orientation of this study.

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<sup>7</sup> Referring to certain biblical scholars (probably of a neo-classical bent) who dismiss the heuristic value of class in favour of concepts (like 'status') which individualise economic relations Boer and Petterson say "[h]ere, of course, we have the nub of the problem, because class as a socioeconomic concept receives its fundamental meaning from the relation of a given group to the means of production and their position in the relations of production. Once this framework disappears, class loses its point of reference." They then go on to say "[w]e thus do not subscribe to the vulgarization of class to signify identity or status, but rather to a concept revealing socioeconomic relations, such as property, exploitation, and struggle." (2019, 139) In other words, as a heuristic category, class rarely speaks to the individual. Its heuristic value is derived precisely from its ability to characterise social (and economic) relationships.

Practically, employing class as a heuristic category concerns three areas. Firstly, we need to ascertain as much socio-economic information and data for the period in question as possible (this might be thought of as the historical component). Secondly, when it comes to the subject matter itself, i.e. biblical texts under examination, we need to have an eye for what might be termed 'socio-economic markers'. These are references in the text which may point to historical phenomena of a socio-economic nature. Finally, that we have employed class as a heuristic category means that a central question asked when considering the first two areas is: how do various groups of people, viz. classes, relate to each in other in terms of the attendant socio-economic features or phenomena of first-century Palestine? A simple definition of class, as we have seen, is the relation in which certain groups of society stand to the means of production and, as a result of this, to each other.

To determine this and to understand the means of production in this way one is hard-pressed to find a more suitable approach than an application of Mode of Production theory (MPT). Indeed, one might say that the only way to gauge accurately a society's means of production is by way of MPT. Old Testament scholar David Jobling says, for example, that "[t]he greatest theoretical debt which Biblical Studies owes to Marxism...is the understanding of historical modes of production (MPs)" (Jobling 2005, 192). The concept of *mode of production* can be defined variously, which we will consider later, but I have found its most extensive and helpful adaption, in the context of biblical studies, to be that of Roland Boer (2015) and Roland Boer and Christina Petterson (2017). These two volumes therefore provide the theoretical backdrop against which the study is set.

In the context of MPT, it is fair to say that some responses of certain classes to changing means of production constitute class antagonism or class conflict. Banditry, in the sense first proposed by Eric Hobsbawm (2000, second edition), can be seen in this light, i.e. as a symptom of, and sometimes response to, increasingly extractive means of production. Hobsbawm's social bandit has however come under serious fire in recent years and not without reason. Another major theoretical contribution to this study is scholarship on banditry which seeks to modify Hobsbawm's position. The reason for considering banditry at length, apart from it being a common symptom of changing or disintegrating modes of production, is that the phenomenon features centrally in the world of the New Testament and specific reference to it is made in one of the texts under discussion.

Finally, an adequate appraisal of the purpose, function and meaning of Jesus' parables is not achievable based on a reconstruction of socio-economic conditions alone. The parables constitute a unique type of discourse which is notoriously oblique. We are helped by theorists of peasant-society who shed light on discourse-function in such societies, notably James Scott (1990). In this vein, the study sees the parables of Jesus as constituting a form of resistance, in and of themselves, as well as illustrative of particular types of historical resistance. In the final instance, using the same methodology, and in light of insights gained on caprine husbandry from the field of archaeology, we exegete the pastoral parables which are the ultimate subject of this study.

## 1.2 Contextual Exegesis

Contextual forms of exegesis, such as Draper's Tri-Polar Model (2001) and West's Contextual Bible Study (1993), emphasise three aspects or moments in the hermeneutical process. Part of the reason for this emphasis was to highlight the role of *context* in biblical interpretation. In other words, where for the greater period of modern biblical criticism western scholars had assumed objectivity and universality in their interpretations, contextual exegesis claimed that all forms of exegesis are contextual because all are done from a certain context. Whereas Draper's model emphasises three "poles" in the exegetical enterprise, one might think of Western scholarship prior to the advent of contextual exegesis as positing only two poles, that of distantiating (undergirded by the historical-critical method) and appropriation (arriving at a meaning or interpretation of the text). A third pole of contextualisation asks overt and explicit questions about how one's context bears on both the hermeneutical enterprise and the text itself. Because every context is different, questions are brought to bear on the text which give each exegesis a degree of uniqueness.<sup>8</sup>

Contextual forms of exegesis are helpful in tempering the conviction with which we assert our interpretations of biblical passages. At the advent of contextual exegesis two aspects upset or unsettled western exegetes. The first was the notion that there could be multiple valid interpretations of Scripture, which undermines or at least problematises conventional notions of inspiration so central to the Reformation and Enlightenment projects. The second aspect, which subtly differs from the first, was the admission that western interpretation was not the only valid form of interpretation. Part of what this study contends and indeed, what certain forms of contextual exegesis contend, is that one's class position and one's understanding of class is a significant factor in one's interpretation of Scripture. In this vein, for western exegetes to admit the validity of certain forms of contextual exegesis involves a moral pronouncement on issues of class and, in particular, on their own class position. This is one of the main reasons why still today so many western exegetes eschew class as a heuristic category.

My own methodological approach in undertaking exegesis of the passages cited in this study involves the following assumption: in order to gain a reliable and responsible historical understanding of the text, one must first arrive at a reliable and responsible historical understanding of the text's context. Once more, it is the contention of this study this cannot be properly done without taking fully into account the class dynamics of the context in question. If we can appreciate this position, we can begin to understand why so much emphasis is placed on theory in this study.

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<sup>8</sup> Likewise West's model of Contextual Bible Study emphasises "behind the text" (historical-critical), on the text (perhaps corresponding to appropriation although the overlaps with the next aspect), and in front of the text (representing one's context).

### 1.3 Parable Studies and Research Questions

In considering modern historical approaches to parable studies, we should begin by noting that Adolf Jülicher's *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (1888) initiated a paradigm shift within parable studies. His work and that of his successors, notably C. H. Dodd (1935) and Joachim Jeremias (1954), resulted in the rejection of an allegorical interpretation of the parables of Jesus and a greater appreciation of their socio-historical context, thus marking the beginning of a 'material turn' in parable studies.<sup>9</sup> It is now assumed, at least within approaches using a sociological hermeneutic, that the Synoptic parables contain socio-historical markers or references, for example, the day labourers of Matthew 20, the tenant farmers of Mark 12, the debtors of Luke 16. Such references are not incidental or inconsequential but indicative of socio-economic phenomena pertinent to the context, i.e. in the examples cited, wage labour, agricultural tenancy/latifundialism, and usury or systems of indebtedness. Such markers therefore inform our understanding of class relations within the first century, i.e. who stood in what relation to the means of production and who in turn benefitted as a result.

While such markers are replete in the Synoptic tradition, it is less common to find them in the Gospel of John, perhaps partly because parables do not feature as prominently in John, perhaps partly because John has been regarded as less historically reliable than the Synoptics. It is surprising then to find two such potential markers among the parabolic material of John 10. Although παραβολή, the Greek word we usually translate in English as "parable," is not used in John 10, παροιμία, a semantically related word, is used which the NRSV translates as "figure of speech" (John 10:6).<sup>10</sup> While there is lack of consensus as to whether this material can rightly be called *parable*, many notable scholars see it as such (see below for discussion).

The trend in Historical Jesus studies has been to see John as less historically reliable than the Synoptics. Funk et al.'s (1988) volume from the Jesus Seminar captures the position well. The dating of John is later than the Synoptics while, at the same time, both the form and content of Jesus' teaching differ markedly in the fourth Gospel. In other words, the two different presentations of Jesus, that presented in the Synoptics and that of John, cannot simultaneously be correct, and because the Synoptics are dated earlier and enjoy multiple witnesses (Matthew, Mark, Luke, Gos.Thom. and Q) John is regarded as less historically reliable (Funk et al. 1988, 11).<sup>11</sup>

There has in recent years been growing appreciation of the historicity of aspects of John, represented in certain traditions about Jesus, i.e. not necessarily in relation to what Jesus said or taught but, for example, aspects of Jesus' relationship to the Baptist in conversation with how this is presented in the Synoptics (Coloe 2009, 48-

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<sup>9</sup> Kloppenborg had supposedly said this of Crossan's work on the parables (Van Eck 2016, xvi).

<sup>10</sup> All quoted bible verses are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>11</sup> "In the first group of sources (the Synoptics, Q and Thomas) Jesus is a sage whose discourse is confined to proverbs, maxims, and parables, while in John Jesus is a philosopher, lecturer, and mystic." (Funk et al. 1988, 11)

49).<sup>12</sup> It seems reasonable that although John 10:1-18 may not conform to a 'typical' Synoptic-style parable we may at least understand it in terms of "parabolic discourse" (Perkins 1990, 968), and where these seemingly present socio-historical or socio-economic markers, we should assess these in light of our current knowledge of the socio-historical landscape of first-century Judea and Galilee.

Conceding for the moment that John 10:1-18 may rightly be deemed 'parable,' together with Matthew 18:12-14/Luke 15:4-7, these may be regarded as *pastoral parables* given the motifs of shepherding and sheep/goats at their centre. While many of Jesus' parables reflect and relate the vegetal agricultural sector of first-century Judea and Galilee, these parables pertain obviously to the sector of animal husbandry. Comparatively less is known about the animal husbandry sector of first-century Judean and Galilean economy and the degree of exploitation within it. In John 10, we find general references to shepherding or sheep but we also hear of "bandits", "thieves" and "hired hands" (John 10:1, 13), which may represent socio-economic phenomena dating to the first century, viz. banditry and wage labour. A similar approach can be undertaken for Q's parable of the lost sheep (Matt 18:12-14/Luke 15:4-7) which refers to ownership or charge of one hundred sheep, which therefore may also imply the use of wage labour.

In the case of the parable of the lost sheep, if it is true that the majority of first-century Judean and Galilean peasants were subsistence farmers of what significance is one person owning, or having charge of, one hundred sheep? The protagonist of the parable nevertheless leaves the flock unattended and vulnerable while in search of a single lost sheep which seems counterintuitive. In contrast, in John 10, we hear of the hired hand, or wage labourer, fleeing as soon as danger is present. Questions arise as to the means and mechanism of sheep husbandry reflected in these parables as well as around ownership and employment or labour.

Of the Old Testament passages which refer to antiquitous sheep husbandry, Zechariah 11 is potentially the most informative, though there are other texts which can be explored.<sup>13</sup> While the content of Zechariah 11 is prophetic and therefore ultimately symbolic, the contention of this study is that it may provide data as to the means of ancient caprine production.<sup>14</sup> We see in Zechariah 11 reference to "worthless shepherds," as well as an obscure phrase rendered by the NRSV as "sheep merchants," and finally the prophet in Zechariah 11 assuming the role of a hired shepherd and being paid wages for his services.

The socio-economic analysis of ancient Southwest Asia (in which an application of sociological models has proved helpful) enables us to better understand socio-economic conditions attendant to first-century Judea and

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<sup>12</sup> See further findings of the SBL's John, Jesus and History Group published by Anderson, Just, Thatcher [Eds] (2009). Anderson (2021) also calls for a Fourth Quest for the historical Jesus which is inclusive of John in light of the potentially valuable historical data John contains.

<sup>13</sup> Most notably Exodus 22:13, Amos 3:12, and Genesis 30:25 ff.

<sup>14</sup> The validity of Zechariah 11 in this regard is also dependent partly on its dating where this study favours a much later dating than is conventionally assumed for reasons which will later be provided.

Galilee. This study goes to some length in reviewing theoretical contributions made toward constructing an adequate socio-historical and socio-economic picture of first-century Judea and Galilee. Because of this, the study is 'theory heavy' but what this achieves is a framework to better perceive class relations in the parables of Jesus, particularly those of the pastoral parables and of animal husbandry in first-century Judea and Galilee.

#### 1.4 Outline of Thesis

By way of introduction to the subject of parable research, chapter two reviews modern scholarship on the parables showing how few studies consider their socio-economic aspects. It therefore provides detailed summaries of the approaches of Ukpong and Herzog, two notable exceptions to this tendency. Kloppenborg's work is also reviewed who, though his orientation differs to that of Ukpong and Herzog, also considers questions of a socio-economic nature. Chapter two also tries to take account of the relationship of Jesus' parables to later rabbinic parables in discerning the type of metaphor and imagery used in the latter, where this is often agrarian, and thus discern similarities between them.

We then delve into the central theory of the study in chapter three where, at its broadest level, I have used the two volumes by Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017) which incorporate Mode of Production theory, Soviet-era Marxist scholarship, and *Régulation* theory. To supplement this, I have considered Mode of Production theory more generally in secular scholarship and theorists who have used it within biblical studies.

The work of Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017) employs Mode of Production theory which sees or understands modes of production as both presiding over and materially defining certain epochs. Both of these volumes also posit subsistence-survival as the institutional form (their terminology is explained in detail later) most fundamental to modes of production throughout antiquity, where this shapes many of the day-to-day realities of society. It informs concepts like risk aversion, *anachoresis*, and the perpetual shortage of labour, which the elite constantly sought to appropriate. In light of this, it is fair to say that the work of Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017) is the most pervasive of all the theoretical contributors in this study.

However, chapter four deals with theory around peasant-agrarian societies where aspects of this work are both of a more general and a more particular nature than that covered by Boer and Petterson. The aim of this chapter is to illustrate specific features of first-century Judea and Galilee in light of MPT so as to begin to understand the dynamics of class antagonism attendant to these societies. One might say that whereas, as Mode of Production theory, Boer and Boer and Petterson's work deals with the overarching mode of production, that of theorists in chapter four speaks to some additional specifics of the means of production for the period.

Following this, the fifth chapter considers banditry as both symptom and/or manifestation of such class antagonism. The reader may immediately judge this to be a Hobsbawmian position, yet the chapter is tempered

by considering opponents of Hobsbawm's approach, including the likes of Shaw (1984), Grünewald (2004) and Blumell (2008), in examining banditry from within a Graeco-Roman context. In light of this, Hobsbawm's model of the social bandit is tempered and tweaked, and yet this does not detract from its heuristic value as we will see later. Together, chapters three, four and five comprise the strictly theoretical component of the thesis.

Chapter six incorporates aspects of archaeology, only some of which is theoretical. Unlike social-scientific approaches which employ models, archaeology purports to use hard data, though it is the interpretation of such data which is often contested. Nevertheless, the section seeks to gather data to inform our understanding in two areas. The first concerns latifundialism. Arguably, the presence of estates in first-century Judea and Galilee allows us to make tentative inferences about the means and mode of production in the agrarian sector and therefore also as to the nature of class dynamics. Part of what the study aims to establish is the nature and extent of caprine exploitation in first-century Judea and Galilee. One hypothesis is that if there is high levels of exploitation in the vegetal agricultural sector, attendant levels may have been present in the animal husbandry sector. This leads us to the second area of focus in terms of archaeological data, that pertaining to animal husbandry. This is in the form of archival records from Neo-Babylonian temples, which provide insight into the precise mechanisms of ancient caprine husbandry attendant to temple complexes, as well as caprine faunal remains at Jerusalem. As Sapir-Hen, Gadot and Finkelstein indicate in their study, the examination of faunal remains helps us make inferences about patterns of extraction and consumption (2016, 104).

The thesis builds to something of a crescendo at this point but before we can make the final step of exegesis there is a chapter which incorporates theoretical aspects on *discourse* in peasant-agrarian societies. Whatever else we understand the parables of Jesus to have been, they were a form of discourse within a peasant-agrarian society. Chapter seven considers the obvious contributor in this field in the form of James Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990) and, to a lesser extent, Robert Redfield's *Peasant Society and Culture* (1956). There are primarily two ways in which the parables can be understood in light of Scott's position. The parables can be understood both as a manifestation of the hidden transcript themselves, and thus as a form of resistance in and of themselves, but also as illustrative of historical examples of resistance. The study is augmented by a third position which seeks to understand the parables from the perspective of their Jewish heritage and, in this vein, are considered both from the context of Jewish prophecy and Semitic magic.

Chapter eight finally undertakes exegesis of the texts in question, Matthew 18:12-14/Luke 15:4-7 and John 10:1-16. At this point there are both Old Testament passages and Rabbinic writings deemed relevant to the subject material and so these are considered in conjunction with the New Testament passages. By this stage we should be able to make significant inferences, and hopefully draw meaningful conclusions, based on the NT

texts in question. The ninth chapter draws the study to a close and suggests areas of the further research and exploration.

### 1.5 Research Methodology

In the course of my previous studies, I attempted to engage an exegetical model pioneered by my former supervisor Prof. Jonathan Draper. Since this is an exegetical model, it could also be seen more broadly as a hermeneutical model, where I attempted to scrutinise the moments within the larger hermeneutical process. One of my inklings pertained to the dynamism of the three poles or stages proposed within the Tripolar model, *distantiation*, *contextualisation*, and *appropriation*. Part of the function of the Tripolar approach is to be more overt, to have a greater clarity, about the various stages of the exegetical and hermeneutical process which then ideally qualifies one's exegesis as a more academically rigorous or responsible enterprise. Such an approach or methodology will be used here with the acknowledgement that while the three poles might not always consist of distinct and separate stages, they constitute nodes of orientation by which we are able to more clearly discern and scrutinise the exegetical process.

The pole of *distantiation* according to Draper involves a critical distance between oneself as the exegete and the text allowing the text to "be other" (Draper 2001, 152). Draper uses a diachronic and synchronic approach to the text, where the former denotes an historical-critical approach to the context of the text and, the latter, literary or text critical approaches, such as form and redaction criticism, to the content of the text itself. Essentially, it is this stage of the exegetical enterprise which attempts to be the most objective in ascertaining an historical appraisal of the text's context and, if one employs all the means of the historical-critical approach (which do not primarily concern us in this study), all the historical processes which culminated in the final product of the text.

The second pole of the Tri-Polar approach is that of *contextualisation* where the task is to undertake a conscious evaluation of one's own context. In other words, as far as possible, it is to discern one's biases and the context-related questions which one brings to the text. More broadly this is to ask how one's context has shaped the way we approach texts. As undergrad students we were always encouraged, sometimes required, to contextualise our exegesis and our reading of the biblical text, to ask how our context speaks to or asks questions of the biblical text. In this thesis, I have not attempted to "contextualise" the study or my reading of the text in such a particular way. Instead, contrary to mainstream western biblical scholarship and in recognition that the so-called developing world, or two thirds world, faces unique challenges of an economic nature, the study contends that it is important that questions of *an economic nature* be brought to bear on the text.

The third and final stage of the Tri-Polar approach is *appropriation*. The pole of appropriation involves a "fusion of horizons", a term Draper borrows from Gadamer (Draper 2001, 152). It is the "culmination" of the exegetical process in that it specifies how the text is brought to bear meaningfully or not on one's context. It is therefore

the synthetical moment of illumination where the insights garnered from the text and its world are brought to bear on the world of the reader or exegete, such that the view of this world is challenged and changed.

## CHAPTER TWO: UNDERSTANDING THE PARABLES OF JESUS

### 2.1 Introduction

Regarding modern research on the parables of Jesus, we should begin with Adolf Jülicher's *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (1888, republished 1910) as representing something of a paradigm shift. Jülicher's work spelt a death knell for the allegorical approach which had predominated in the West up until that point.<sup>15</sup> It set in motion what Van Eck refers to as the "material turn" in parable studies (Van Eck, 2016), where Jülicher treated the parables as comparisons set in every-day life. Thus, as a secondary consequence, there has since then, but still quite gradually, been a greater appreciation of the historical or material context reflected by the parables. According to Jeremias, Jülicher successfully proved that an allegorical approach to the parables not only lead to erroneous interpretations but was alien to the nature of the parables themselves (Jeremias 1972, 18).<sup>16</sup>

C.H. Dodd was the next notably influential figure in parable studies with his publication of *The Parables of the Kingdom* (1932). Controversially at the time espousing a realised eschatology, Dodd saw many of the parables communicating the immediacy of God's kingdom.<sup>17</sup> Jeremias followed to some extent in his publication *The Parables of Jesus (Die Gleichnisse Jesu, 1954)*. All three of these scholars understood that the allegorical method, started by the Evangelists (cf. Mark 4:13-20), was a corruption of the parables' true or authentic purpose. Jeremias went further by positing that Mark 4:11-12, while an authentic *logion* of Jesus, predated Mark and therefore was adapted for commentary on the parables (Jeremias 1972, 14-16).<sup>18</sup>

In more recent times, Neil Lightfoot's *The Parables of Jesus* (1986), B. B. Scott's *Hear then the Parable* (1989), Crossan's *In Parables* (1992), and Snodgrass' *Stories with Intent* (2008) have all had relatively wide readership. In recent years there has been an increasing number of studies to bring questions of an overtly sociological or socio-economic nature to the parables, though few have sought to develop an entire hermeneutic on such basis. The notable exceptions to this are Justin Ukpong (1996, 2001, 2012) and William Herzog (1994, 2004).

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, the parable which has elicited the most questions of an economic nature is the parable of the tenants (Mark 12:1-11, in its earliest Synoptic form). I say this is unsurprising because it depicts some of the most fundamental changes in the means and mode of production attendant to first-century Palestine. The scholar whose work is most extensive on this particular parable, from an economic point of view, is John Kloppenborg (2008, 2010). While Kloppenborg does not employ a socio-economic hermeneutic, and he

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Brown's discussion of the distinction between parable and allegory (1971, 390-391).

<sup>16</sup> Jeremias writes, "At a very early stage the process of treating the parables as allegories had begun, a process which for centuries concealed the meaning of the parables under a thick layer of dust." (Jeremias 1972,11)

<sup>17</sup> For example, Dodd says that "the "eschatological" Kingdom of God is proclaimed as a present fact, which men must recognize, whether by their actions they accept or reject it." (Dodd 1988 [Rev.Ed.], 36)

<sup>18</sup> A lack of 'secrecy' in light of this about the meaning of the parables mitigates the tendency to interpret them allegorically.

certainly does not use class as a heuristic category, he examines data in ancient papyri of a socio-economic nature, which he then brings to bear on the parables.<sup>19</sup>

Kloppenborg's work is important for two reasons. Firstly, as mentioned, he is one of the few scholars to privilege questions of a socio-economic nature when considering parables, though by a different route. Secondly, his investigation into the presence and prevalence of estates or latifundia (particularly vinicultural estates), in first-century Palestine, is the most extensive of any scholar.<sup>20</sup> The increase in latifundia in the first century CE represents fundamental changes in land appropriation, and therefore also to labour patterns, which signals the larger shift in means and mode of production attendant to first-century Palestine. A point we must consistently bear in mind is that the *modus operandi* of latifundialism, like any other extractive institutional form (see below), is the severance of the subsistence horticulturalist's, or subsistence pastoralist's, relationship to his means of production. At a superficial level, latifundialism appears to be motivated by the acquisition of land. As Boer's work will show, it is not land, but labour, which extractive institutional forms seek in the first instance.

Other notable scholars who have brought economic questions to bear particularly on the parable of the tenants, and who Kloppenborg cites in his study, are David Hester (1992) and Willy Schotroff (1996). Both scholars regard, as central to the parable of the tenants, issues of land ownership and class antagonism.<sup>21</sup> Other studies which consider questions of a socio-economic nature relating to the parables generally are Stephen Wright's chapter in the anthology *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables* (2000), which considers aspects of poverty and wealth in the parables. More recently, South African author Ernest Van Eck has publications (2009, 2016) which apply a social-scientific framework to the parables and therefore highlight some of their material realities.

In his most recent article in this area (2012), the late Justin Ukpong refers to his approach as a "socio-historical and theological reading" (2012, 190). While he does not use the term "socio-economic," or overtly claim the use of *class* as a heuristic category, this is essentially what his approach achieves. Again, although Ukpong says he uses an "inter-contextual hermeneutics," his approach is able to critique the traditional interpretation of Matthew 25:14-30, the parable of the talents, by comparing it with the contextual concerns of modern-day instances of usury in Nigeria and the exploitation this causes.<sup>22</sup> In other words, he is placing the parable in a wider context of

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<sup>19</sup> See also later his treatment, together with Callon, of the parable of the lost sheep (2010).

<sup>20</sup> Part of why vinicultural expansion is important, and especially its effects on labour patterns, is because of the sheer volume of labour required to service vineyards, which was nevertheless seasonal, i.e. it created great peaks and troughs in labour demand. Kloppenborg says that "[t]he expansion of viticulture was especially significant, since viticulture was the most labour-intensive of ancient agricultural pursuits, requiring three times as many workers as olive cultivation and four times as many workers as cereal and vegetable crops." (2010, 287-288)

<sup>21</sup> Hester's study is remarkably similar in hermeneutical orientation to that of Herzog (1994). Though Herzog does so explicitly, and Hester does not mention Freire, both make use of Freirean terminology. Hester, for example refers to "generative themes" and "limit situations" (Hester 1992, 55).

<sup>22</sup> Ukpong says that typical readings of the parable offer a "narrow religious reading of the parable that prematurely invests the parable's narrative world with theological meaning without first investigating the social world that lies beneath." (Ukpong 2012, 190).

class analysis or class antagonism. The “social world that lies beneath” the parable’s surface (2012, 190), which Ukpong focuses on, is constituted by class relations of the real-life scenarios reflected in the parable.

Like Ukpong, Herzog laments the lack of attention in parable research to socio-economic realities.<sup>23</sup> In his *Parables as Subversive Speech*, Herzog adopts a Freirean approach which sees Jesus as a pedagogue among the peasantry of first-century Galilee (Herzog 1994, 25). The parables function along the lines of Freire’s process of codification where they are articulations of situations of oppression or injustice which possess both a “surface structure” and a “deep structure” (Herzog 1994, 29). There is a meaning or picture which readily presents itself and another revealed upon greater analysis or scrutiny.<sup>24</sup> The “decodifying” of the parable by Jesus and his hearers facilitates their conscientisation and liberation from forms of oppression (1994, 29).

Herzog also makes use of James Scott’s theory of resistance. While Herzog might see the parables principally as codifications à la Freire, they are also a form of coded speech. In other words, they form part of Scott’s “hidden transcript” which is disclosed in a public setting. Quoting Scott, Herzog says this as “a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors” (Scott in Herzog 2000, 225). This insight provides a different perspective on the parables which will come to light through the course of the study, suffice it to say for now that it goes some way in explaining the obliqueness of the parables. In other words, the reason for the parables’ seeming obscurity was not primarily because they contained some hidden theological truth or mystical meaning but that, as part of the hidden transcript, they were designed to be veiled to the eyes of the authorities.

As a preliminary example of such an approach, if we look at the parable of the so-called wicked tenants, it has a two-fold meaning: on the one hand Jesus describes a feasibly real-life situation, a dire situation, to be sure, since those tenants must either have been very brazen or very desperate. At a literal level, and this is likely the level at which its first hearers would have understood it, the parable describes a situation of sedition or protest or sabotage which, were it to actually have occurred, would likely have resulted in a severe reprisal for the tenants. It nevertheless gives vent to the hidden transcript and codifies sentiments of the peasantry.

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<sup>23</sup> Herzog says that within the brief history of modern parable studies “[t]he fate of the social world or social scripts glimpsed in the parable was [always] the same: they were ignored or, after cursory examination, neglected. The parable thus generated a discourse that was finally unrelated to the material details of its story world or narrative. The notion that language, even the language of Jesus, once lived as part of a social, political, economic system, which gave it birth and provided its resonance, was foreign to the enterprise of interpreting the parables.” (Herzog 1994, 22). The import of the work of Ukpong and Herzog is that this “social world,” or the “material details,” or the “social, political, economic system” which birthed the parables are not just relevant to their interpretation but precisely that upon which a more authentic interpretation of the parables depends.

<sup>24</sup> Ukpong had maintained something similar saying that while parables are plurivalent they “have meaning on at least two levels: [o]ne is the historical/social level whereby it expresses what ought to be the proper human relationships in society, or is a critique of societal and individual attitudes and practices in the light of the values of the kingdom[; t]he other is the eschatological level, whereby the eschatological implication of our actions, that is, the God-human relationship at the end time, is expressed.” (Ukpong 1996, 192)

Thus, at one level, the point of the parable is obvious – the fate of any tenant who behaved in such a manner would have been likely annihilation or, alternately, life as a fugitive on the run. In this sense, the parable is an affirmation of the public transcript. It is an affirmation of the power of the dominant and the futility of challenging this power. But as the authorities themselves realise (and in this sense the parable is actually a breach of the public transcript) the parable is ultimately a critique of the Jewish administration. Like Nathan's parable of the ewe lamb, when the hearer convicts the wrongdoer in the parable he inadvertently convicts himself. For at the 'hidden' level of meaning, the religious and administrative authorities are actually the tenants.<sup>25</sup> The historical context in which to interpret the parable is made all the more clear when one considers that the parable is patterned after Isaiah's vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7) which itself is related in the greater context of a scathing critique of latifundialism.

When we place parables in a framework which reflects their original means of production, there is often a swapping of the actants and referents to produce its double meaning. This swapping of actants and referents is aided by the terse, koan-like pronouncement Jesus sometimes appends to a parable, e.g. "the first will be last, and the last will be first" (Matt. 20:16), or "to those who have, more will be given, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away" (Matt. 13:12), or "many are called but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14). In the case of the parable of the tenants, the Jewish elite were also the custodians of the latifundia and would have been the very class in the parable sending delegations to reap profits which the peasantry had toiled for. And yet in the greater, or ultimate, application of the parable the Jewish administrative elite now become the tenant farmers, overseeing "God's vineyard," and in light of their implied ill-treatment of God's servants and messengers, they await a grizzly fate.

The swapping of the actants and referents, and what is also sometimes a reversal of meaning, is also achieved by assuming different class positions, given the tendency of owners of the means of production to automatically identify the so-called protagonist with God, themselves with the protagonist, and therefore themselves with God. To my knowledge, both Boer (2017) and Kloppenborg (2010) problematise the habitual identification of the owner of the means of production (in a parable) with God. This is an ideological tendency and an attempted justification (whether conscious or not) for a particular way of viewing and understanding a given parable. If modern, wealthy, propertied people hear the parable of day labourers, for example, they invariably, usually automatically, fall into the trap of firstly, sympathising and identifying, with the vineyard owner and, secondly, identifying the vineyard owner with God. The self-justification and legitimation of the parable's orientation is already set. This discloses part of the tricky effect of a parable, as well as a contributing factor to their

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<sup>25</sup> In as much as there is this two-fold meaning dynamic in the parable, as Herzog points out, as an expression of the hidden transcript, it is also likely a vicarious enactment of revenge for members of the peasantry (1994, 115).

polyvalency, i.e. that they function in different ways, with different meanings, not least as traps.<sup>26</sup>

A person's class, or social positioning (when not sufficiently conscientized to this) predetermines the reading of a parable which, if you are wealthy and propertied (and again insufficiently conscientized), is normally an incorrect reading. There is an additional syntagmatic feature of the parables which contributes to this effect and in itself functions as something of a 'micro' trap. As is well known, many of the parables begin with an introductory formula "The kingdom of God is like," from the Greek "ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς" (Mark 4:26); Matthew's is normally along the lines of "Ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν" (Matthew 13:31; 33). So whereas Mark uses ὡς ("as" or "like"), Matthew uses ὅμοιος, also conveying likeness but perhaps with a greater sense of equivalence.<sup>27</sup> So if we take Matthew's version of the parable of day labourers, for example, which begins with the same formula "Ὁμοία γάρ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν..." (Matthew 20:1) our tendency, and the potential trap, is to understand by this formula simple equivalence, where that equivalence is, in the first instance, between the so-called protagonist mentioned at the outset of the parable and God. Keener (1999, 530 [Epub]) is among those (and he cites Smith and Jeremias) who reminds us that this formulaic introduction, whether Mark's or Matthew's, does not invite us to identify God with the protagonist of the parable, but indicates that the kingdom of God/heaven is like the situation depicted in the parable.

## 2.2 Ukpong

Having offered this preliminary introduction let us consider the work of Ukpong and Herzog more closely. In his treatment of the parable of the shrewd manager,<sup>28</sup> Ukpong identifies the problem of historical interpretations which gloss over socio-economic dynamics in their identification of the 'main character' in certain parables with God (1996, 190, 193). At the outset, Ukpong explains his use of his inculturation biblical hermeneutic which privileges the contextual concerns and experiences of West African peasant farmers (1996, 189-190).

He explains that the inculturation biblical hermeneutic is not a "discipline" but a "hermeneutical process" (1996, 190). In the case of the parable of the shrewd manager, Ukpong chooses to read the parable from the perspective of West African peasant farmers (1996, 190). This means that the parable is read from a context of class antagonism and exploitation, where the reading and interpretation rendered are from the perspective of the exploited class, and not from the perspective of the monied or elite classes, which has typically been the orientation of western scholarship. Ukpong had earlier cited the usually automatic tendency of western

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<sup>26</sup> Incidentally, the Greek σκανδαλίζω, in the New Testament meaning "to give offence," e.g. of the Pharisees toward Jesus (Matthew 15:12) is related to σκάνδαλον, which Thayer's lexicon defines as "the movable stick or trigger ('trigger') of a trap, trap-stick; a trap, snare" (Thayer 1896, σκάνδαλον). Cf. *BDAG*'s entry which offers the definition "a device for catching something alive, trap" (*BDAG*, 823).

<sup>27</sup> Matthew popularises the formula though, as we know, substitutes heaven (οὐρανός) for God (θεός).

<sup>28</sup> Ukpong, J. 1996. "The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-13): An Essay in Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutic" *Semeia*. 73. pp. 189- 210.

scholarship to identify the owner of the means of production with God. This is obviously because most western scholars themselves occupy an ideological position aligned with the owners of the means of production. Ukpong later writes, "The economic system within which [the manager] operates is not critiqued, because to do so would mean critiquing the social and economic foundation of the rich man." (1996, 194)

Additionally, in the case of the parable of the shrewd manager, Ukpong sees Luke as disparaging of riches and rich people and critiquing these on a number of occasions e.g. the parable of Lazarus, the query of the rich ruler, the story of Zaccheaus etc. (1996, 198) In line with this general orientation, Ukpong claims that the parable of the shrewd manager is similarly critical of the rich man (1996, 197-198, 201, 205). Because of Ukpong's hermeneutical position, he interprets the manager to be in a position of exploitation, along with those in debt, to the master of the manager (1996, 205). Ukpong maintains that the master's description of the manager as "unjust" reflects the perspective of the exploiter, a perspective which is perverted by his privilege and power. According to Ukpong, the manager is described as unjust because, in his eyes, it is unjust to deprive the master of money that is rightly or legally due to him (1996, 203-204).

We need not agree fully with the details of Ukpong's interpretation yet what is of importance is his overall hermeneutic which allows him to bring questions of class antagonism and class conflict into sharper focus. It is probably fair to say that Ukpong establishes a hermeneutical bridge in which the context of West African peasant farmers is paralleled with that of first-century Galilean peasant farmers. From a sociological perspective, one rightly imagines these contexts to have some similarities, although Ukpong himself is not overly concerned to establish historical objectivity. He writes in conclusion:

*"This perspective of reading has led to the conclusion that the rich man in the story is not the benevolent grand personage he is often thought to be, but an exploiter. The reading has also concluded that the manager of the estate is not the villain he is often thought to be, but the hero of the story, for having acted on behalf of the exploited peasant farmers."* (1996, 208)

Whether the manager in the parable deserves such an adulatory commendation is uncertain (though also a slave he may occupy something like the category of "big peasant" who also stood to gain from relationships of exploitation). But again we need not agree with Ukpong's exact findings. What is important is that his exegesis of the parable of the shrewd manager more than sufficiently indicates that, as is often the case when socio-economic concerns are foregrounded, the actants and referents of the parable are swapped so that there is an inversion of protagonist and antagonist and thus oftentimes also an inversion in overall meaning.

Ukpong's treatment of the parable of the talents has essentially the similar orientation though he has tweaked

his terminology.<sup>29</sup> He refers to his hermeneutical approach here as an “inter-contextual hermeneutics methodology” which he undertakes from a “non-elitist” position (Ukpong 2012, 190). Unlike his treatment of the parable of the shrewd manager, Ukpong seems to pay more attention to the socio-economic conditions of first-century Judea and Galilee from an historical perspective. Citing the work of Malina, Freyne, Friesen and even Ste. Croix among others, Ukpong sees the situation in the parable of the talents as reflecting the broader socio-economic phenomena of indebtedness and latifundialism, where the first two servants worked as agents of their master in issuing high interest loans to peasant farmers (2012, 200-201, 205).

As he had done in his treatment of the parable of the shrewd manager, Ukpong uses a modern and local context of exploitation, in this case money lending in Nigeria, to establish a hermeneutical bridge between the text and his modern context (2012, 190). For those who have heard pastors and priests preach on this parable, the interpretation is uniformly in praise of the two servants who increased their master’s wealth as a template for Christian action to do likewise with the gifts, talents and abilities God has blessed us with. Such orientations are sadly also applicable to New Testament exegetes (2012, 190, 192). According to Ukpong, “[t]hough good and edifying, this is a narrow religious reading of the parable that prematurely invests the parable’s narrative world with theological meaning without first investigating the social world that lies beneath” (2012, 190).

In his treatment of the parable, Ukpong provides further insight into the dynamics of the parables in general, saying that all of them present their hearers with a “parabolic problem,” i.e. “some issue in the society on which the parable focuses and presents a challenge.” (2012, 191) This position bears similarities to Freire’s *codification* where, as we will see in Herzog’s work, each parable is a codification of an issue often centred on exploitation or injustice. Importantly, Ukpong points out that “[s]uch issues are known not from the parable’s text but from the parable’s social world” (2012, 191). In other words, one at least has to be cognisant of the social conditions reflected in the parable to discern the problem it is presenting. One should resist the urge to prematurely invest the parable with theological meaning for this risks blindness to the problem presented.

In his own interpretation, Ukpong situates the parable in what he refers to as the farewell discourse of Jesus, chapters 23-25 (2012, 203). Although he says “the reckoning by the master represents not divine judgment but what was happening in the society at that time,” (2012, 202) given the parable’s positioning in this “farewell discourse,” as well as the scene of final judgement which follows it in Matthew 25, Ukpong seemingly does associate the parable with “woes,” “lament,” “predictions of destruction,” and “final judgement” (2012, 202-203). To my own mind he goes a step too far in identifying socio-economic conditions reflected in the parable of the talents as the same conditions responsible for the plight of those in Matthew 25:31-46 (2012, 204).

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<sup>29</sup> Ukpong, J. 2012. “The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30): Commendation or Critique of Exploitation?: a Social-historical and Theological Reading.” *Neotestamentica*. Volume 46, Number 1, pp. 190-207.

Though this is conceivable the parable could just as well be viewed as self-contained. The “reckoning by the master” is most certainly about divine eschatological judgement. That is the final punch of the parable. The maxim, like others Jesus appends to his parables, “For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away” (Matt. 25:29), has the effect of reversing the meaning of the parable. In fact, as is usually the case, the parable has a dual meaning. In the first instance, it laments the situation of the unjust exploitation of the poor by the ruling class, as Ukpong rightly points out.<sup>30</sup> In this sense, the concluding maxim may be interpreted literally and is a form of lament. In the final instance, however, it is not the poor and fearful exploited who will be judged but their rulers (in Jesus’ context, members of the religious and administrative elite). And so, in the last instance, even the little ‘faith’, ‘mercy’, ‘righteousness’ (which includes justice) which these rulers have will be taken from them, and they shall be the ones thrown into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

### 2.3 William Herzog

We now come to the work of William Herzog, who offers a more detailed treatment of the corpus of Jesus’ parables, in his *Parables as Subversive Speech* (1994).<sup>31</sup> From the outset, Herzog refers to the parables of Jesus as “a form of subversive speech” (1994, 18). He suggests that the main focus of many of the parables is the kingdom (or reign) of God (1994, 19). After undertaking a brief survey of the history of the interpretation of the parables, and highlighting the misguidedness of some of this, Herzog makes the following remarks:

*“The scenes presented in the parables were valued for their theological, ethical, or metaphoric value, and once this was established, the details of the parable were left behind. Given this basic orientation, it mattered little whether one operated with a moral generalization (Jülicher), a single theological theme (Dodd), a variety of theological themes (Jeremias), existential themes (Via), or a philosophy of language and perception (Crossan, Funk). The fate of the social world or social scripts glimpsed in the parable was the same: they were ignored or, after cursory examination, neglected. The parable thus generated a discourse that was finally unrelated to the material details of its story world or narrative. The notion that language, even the language of Jesus, once lived as part of a social, political, economic system, which gave it birth and provided its resonance, was foreign to the enterprise of interpreting the parables.”* (1994, 22)<sup>32</sup>

Part of the point made by Herzog is that, when studying the parables, attention to the social structures of Jesus’

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<sup>30</sup> “The parable is a critique of the rich man and the economic system he represents: a system that renders the poor, poorer and the rich, richer. By extension, it is a critique of present day socio-economic structures of exploitation and oppression.” (2012, 205)

<sup>31</sup> Herzog, W.R II (1994) *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.

<sup>32</sup> Thus we see to that the dehistoricising, desocialising tendencies of neo-classical scholarship which Boer later bewails extend even into parable research.

milieu is essential. Without this, the parables appear in a vacuum, rendering them either meaningless or infinitely multifarious in meaning. Citing Schweizer, Herzog says that every interpreter of the parables, whether explicitly or, not must enlist or apply hypotheses as to the nature of the work of the historical Jesus. This is the paradigm through which the parables will be interpreted (1994, 24). Herzog's own methodology in interpreting the parables is derived from the work of Paulo Freire.

Commenting on the life of Freire, Herzog says that from his work teaching adults amongst the poor in the countryside, "Freire learned to respect the folk wisdom and common language of illiterate people...where [t]hey spoke with a peculiar beauty and expressed deep insights in their own idiom, if one had ears to hear." (1994, 27) Of Freire's work, Herzog says that he "discovered that the peasants had internalized the world of their oppressors...[where, by] "world," Freire meant a "social construction of reality" (Berger and Luckmann 1967), that is, an objectification of the social relations; institutions; class relations; and distribution of wealth, power, and privilege that justified the domination of the elite and explained the deprivation of the poor." (1994, 28)

According to Freirean thought, because most people, peasants included, are immersed in their 'world' (or *social construction of reality*) in an uncritical way we are seldom fully aware of situations of domination, nor are they in a position to do anything meaningful to change them. In terms of Freire's pedagogy, Herzog references his notion of "generative words" which are used to create a "thematic universe" (1994, 28). Herzog contrasts the state-sanctioned literacy programmes designed to imprint the world of the dominant in the minds of peasants with Freire's pedagogy, saying that Freire saw the need to draw on the context, culture and setting, using everyday symbols of the world of peasants and thereby to facilitate conscientisation (1994, 28).

Nora Lankammer, writing for a working group exploring pedagogies in the field of arts education, says "[a] theme (and the image for it) for Freire is generative because it is developed in interaction with the (future) participants of the educational action and allows participants to recognize themselves in a situation and speak about their perception of the world." (Landkammer 2019, 5)<sup>33</sup> Commenting on the decoding process whereby participants deconstruct situations or contexts which are oppressive, restrictive or life-demeaning, and using Freire's words, she says "the process of decoding in the culture circles... [is one of] a "flux and reflux" between concrete situations and the abstract, an iterative process of describing and critically analyzing reality...[where] the images appear only as one instance of a process, which is centrally about the group discovering their own generative themes" (2019, 5). Regarding this process of coding and decoding, Herzog writes that an "important benefit of this process [codification] is that it gives members of the peasantry distance from their culture by

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<sup>33</sup> Landkammer, N. et al. 2019. "Reengaging Freire: Decoding and Re-coding Freire's "Generative Images" and Critical Arts Education" from *Another Roadmap School*, accessed via <https://another-roadmap.net/intertwining-histories/tools-for-education/learning-units/reengaging-freire-decoding-and-re-coding-freires-generative-images-and-critical-arts-education> on 2023/01/06.

objectifying some aspect of it and holding it up for analysis, and because the scene is drawn from their everyday lives, it encourages them to begin social analysis from their own context.” (1994, 29)

To gain a firmer understanding of Freire’s “coding” and “decoding” processes, within the greater process of conscientisation, let us consider briefly some passages from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005 edition).<sup>34</sup> Freire writes concerning the notion of *praxis*, which is central to his methodology of conscientisation, that “[w]ithin the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed—even in part—the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus to speak a true word is to transform the world” (2005, 87). He later says that to “exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*.” (2005, 88) Regarding the overall process of conscientisation (*conscientização*) “[t]he starting point... must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people.” (2005, 95) Freire explains the reasoning behind this which speaks to observations we have already made about the importance of context in parable research, that this should not be divorced from the concrete life situations from which the parables arise.

Perhaps this is an insight derived from structuralism or the field of semiotics but it indicates how it is improbable if not impossible to gauge an accurate understanding of a parable’s meaning, or that of a larger Gospel, if one has not first come to terms with the structural conditions of the society out of which these emerge.<sup>35</sup> Herzog proposes seeing or understanding the function of Jesus’ parables similar to that of Freire’s codifications. Codifications, however, always attempt to articulate and draw attention to the structural conditions out of which they emerge. If Herzog’s position is valid, i.e. if one attempts to view the parables as codifications, then naturally the structural or, if you like, socio-economic conditions out of which the parables arise are as integral to a parable’s meaning as the surface structure or content of the parable itself.

Freire goes on to speak of “limit-situations” and “limit acts” which both “contain and are contained in” the generative themes (2005, 99). It is the task of a liberating pedagogy to articulate limit-situations in ways which foster and facilitate emancipatory “limit-acts”. Where certain limit-situations are surpassed or overcome this can facilitate the emergence of new generative themes. This process involves what Freire refers to as codifying and decodifying (2005, 102). As an example of a generative theme Freire says “the most fundamental” theme of our current epoch is *domination* which appears with its contrary theme *liberation* (2005, 103). But Freire had also said previously that the “tendency for the themes and for reality itself to be mythicized” can result in situations

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<sup>34</sup> Freire, P. 2005. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition) Ramos, M.B. (transl.) New York: Continuum.

<sup>35</sup> Freire says, for example, that “[t]he language of the educator or the politician...like the language of the people, cannot exist without thought; and neither language nor thought can exist without a structure to which they refer. In order to communicate effectively, educator and politician must understand the structural conditions in which the thought and language of the people are dialectically framed.” (2005, 96)

where such “myth-creating irrationality itself becomes a fundamental theme.” (2005, 102) The mystifying and misleading tendencies of what Marxist theory terms *ideology* and how to respond to this within Freire’s framework of conscientisation is alluded to in the following paragraph. Freire says that:

*“[t]he fact that individuals in a certain area do not perceive a generative theme, or perceive it in a distorted way, may only reveal a limit-situation of oppression in which people are still submerged. In general, a dominated consciousness which has not yet perceived a limit-situation in its totality apprehends only its epiphenomena and transfers to the latter the inhibiting force which is the property of the limit-situation. This fact is of great importance for the investigation of generative themes. When people lack a critical understanding of their reality, apprehending it in fragments which they do not perceive as interacting constituent elements of the whole, they cannot truly know that reality. To truly know it, they would have to reverse their starting point: they would need to have a total vision of the context in order subsequently to separate and isolate its constituent elements and by means of this analysis achieve a clearer perception of the whole.”* (2005, 103-104)

It is to this end that processes of “coding” or codification and “decoding” are aimed. These consist in the articulation or representation of a “limit-situation” which is done “by means of abstraction” (2005, 105) in word or graphic and which may depict some of its (i.e. the limit situation’s) constituent parts. For example, in one of the many codifications used in the 1963 Literacy Training Programme in Brazil, where photos with appended phrases were part of the third stage of coding/decoding in which the literate or iterative component was presented, there is a photograph of two women walking on a dirt road, one using an umbrella and the other with either a jacket or newspaper draped over her head and shoulders.<sup>36</sup> The Portuguese word for “rain” (*chuva*) appears at the bottom of the picture. Such a representation can signify or articulate different things depending on the context. In an arid region, the sign of rain may signal relief from drought. In an equatorial or tropical climate, rain may signal flood and destruction for a poorly constructed favela.

Freire says that ““decoding” requires moving from the abstract to the concrete...[where] this requires moving from the part to the whole and then returning to the parts” while discerning relational or causal links between components in the abstract and concrete, or what Freire describes as “discovery of the interaction among the parts of the disjointed whole.” (2005, 105) He further says that “[t]he coding of an existential situation is the representation of that situation, showing some of its constituent elements in interaction [where d]ecoding is the critical analysis of the coded situation.” (2005, 105) Crucially, Freire says that when “the decoding is well done, this movement of flux and reflux from the abstract to the concrete which occurs in the analysis of a coded situation leads to the supersedence of the abstraction by the critical perception of the concrete, which has already ceased to be a dense, impenetrable reality.” (2005, 105)

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.acervo.paulofreire.org:8080/jspui/handle/7891/656> (accessed on 2023/01/09)

It is in this exteriorization of a community's reality through the process of coding and decoding that the generative themes of communities emerge (2005, 106). Phrases like "critical perception," (2005, 105) "critical awareness," (2005, 106) "critically reflect," and "critical thinking" (2005, 109) are attendant throughout the process of conscientisation. This necessarily precedes meaningful "praxis" which is a community's ultimate "action upon reality" (2005, 106). Freire describes the process of "emergence" from "submergence" or the emergence from being contained by a limit-situation and the new perspective or "awareness" one derives of oneself, one's situation, and one's potential as the start of conscientisation (2005, 109).

Returning to Herzog's application of Freire's thought, he sees the parables as examples of codification and thus primarily aimed at facilitating conscientisation among their hearers. Just as the example of the graphic presenting *chuva* in the literacy programme attempted to articulate a certain limit situation so too, according to Herzog, the parables codify or articulate certain limit situations attendant to first-century Galilean life and the instances of exploitation and oppression arising out of this. The example we will consider momentarily is the so-called parable of the wicked tenants. Conceivably, a generative theme or image is presented in the opening verse of the parable, that of the vineyard. As we will see, the image of the vineyard was a contentious one amongst the peasantry because of its link to various forms of exploitation and appropriation, e.g. latifundialism, wage labour, perhaps as far back as the sixth century BCE (depending on one's dating of Isaiah 5), and would have sounded alarm bells amongst peasant ears.<sup>37</sup>

To my mind there is much value in Herzog's approach not least that it situates and interprets the parables from their socio-historical and socio-economic contexts. The parables as a form of codification in a Freirean sense are not unrelated to the parables as a form of coded speech in the sense of James Scott in that both give articulation to felt injustices. We will explore Scott's work later on. We should not however see the parables exclusively as codifications in a Freirean sense or in the ilk of James Scott. To do so limits a full application of the parables' prophetic function. If we see the parables exclusively as codifications in the senses just mentioned, they bear little relation to the elite of first-century Judea and Galilee when part of their function (of at least some parables) was as a prophetic warning. Codifications in Freire's literacy programmes are designed to serve the peasantry, to facilitate or aid their conscientisation and liberation. In this sense, we can see the subversive nature of Freire's methodology. In the case of the parables, in as much as they are such codifications, they also functioned as prophetic denouncement which was only ever aimed at the ruling elite.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to me, as a South African, how the vineyard still today is a contentious image. The vineyards of the Western Cape historically institutionalised generational alcoholism among labourers on the vineyards, most of whom were coloured, through the notorious "dop" system, i.e. a form of wage labour which paid labourers in alcohol.

<sup>38</sup> This is an enduring feature of the prophetic tradition in which Jesus stood and unless it is interpreted from a Marxist revolutionary perspective, i.e. as a threat of revolution by the peasantry, this aspect of denouncement or critique of the elite does not feature in Freire's codifications.

Let us by way of illustration consider Herzog's treatment of the parable of the so-called wicked tenants which we considered briefly earlier. Herzog himself acknowledges the limitations of an historical-critical approach to the parables and opts to begin with the Markan version (1994, 105).<sup>39</sup> He alludes to some of the seeming implausible aspects of the parable, viz. the continued delegation of servants (and finally son) of the landowner after having been treated so badly, the expectation of the tenants to receive the inheritance on killing the son etc. (1994, 107). He explains some of the reasoning behind what has been the one-dimensional reading of the parable. Partly because of these seemingly implausible aspects the parable was thought to be an invention of the early Church resulting in the tendency to interpret it allegorically. That it invokes Isaiah 5 and the song of the vineyard seemingly also lead to an overly theological or allegorical interpretation (1994, 106-107).<sup>40</sup> As Herzog explains once it has been established that the vineyard owner is God the fate of the tenants is sealed (1994, 107) and they are condemned forever to be the "wicked" tenants.

Herzog compares similarities in the LXX version of Isaiah 5's "song of the vineyard" and Mark 12 and notes resemblances and dissonance. Isaiah 5 sees God speaking in the first person and being the planter of the vineyard (1994, 108). If the context of Isaiah 5 was at the forefront of the minds of Jesus' hearers as he told the parable in Mark 12, and in the minds of subsequent exegetes, perhaps that strengthened the tendency to identify the *ανθρωπος* with God. In any event, as Herzog mentions, "vineyard" for the peasantry of first-century Judea and Galilee would have set off alarm bells with negative connotations. Herzog understands both Mark 12:1 and Isaiah's song of the vineyard as indicative of the process of latifundialisation, including Isaiah 5:7-8, which follows the parabolic material of Isaiah 5 and appears to be a direct reference to this (1994, 109-110).

Herzog says that "[t]he opening lines of the parable... describe this process [latifundialisation] and imply a class conflict, in which the class of the "man" converting land into a vineyard is creating [a class of] tenants, peasants displaced from their land and hired back in some sharecropping arrangement." (1994, 109) In this statement Herzog gets to the crux of the matter. It is significant for this reason and because it is something the vast majority of biblical scholars ignore. Class antagonism, which involves the changing ownership of means of production, the resultant dispossession of land by the elite of the peasantry, the effect on traditional labour patterns, and the conflict arising out of this, is what drives the parable. It is the resentment of the newly-created class of tenant-farmers toward the vineyard owner which drives the narrative of the parable.

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<sup>39</sup> While the method is necessary and helpful it should not be an end itself but a means to ascertaining information of a socio-economic nature. Take the various criteria meant to inform whether sayings date to the historical Jesus such as the criteria of dissimilarity, embarrassment etc. These are helpful, for example, in establishing the fact that Jesus died by crucifixion (supported by the criterion of embarrassment). While this has important confessional and doctrinal ramifications in the context of the Church, for our purposes, it is more important that Jesus' execution was commiserate with the crime of *latrocinium* which, again for our purposes, is a socio-economic category. Additionally, the heuristic of class is sometimes more effective in establishing a 'bedrock' layer of tradition, or the 'most historical' version of a parable, because it allows closest proximity to the original material realities of the parable.

<sup>40</sup> In spite of the fact that Isaiah 5 witnesses to the historical reality of latifundialisation.

Herzog in presenting Derrett's (1970) argument shows an interesting interpretational option regarding the legitimacy of the claim of the tenants to the farm.<sup>41</sup> Via Derrett Herzog explains the standard practice of farming vegetables among the available land in a vineyard (i.e. the space between the vines) for the first four years of the vineyard's planting. The first harvest of grapes only matured after a four-year period and to sustain the farm and its tenants some source of subsistence, in the absence of grapes, was required. Levitical law prohibited mixing seeds but this process was allowed until grapes appeared on the vines. According to Herzog, Derrett's argument points to the tenuousness of this four-year period, that there was somehow legal ambiguity as to the ownership of agricultural endeavours. Herzog writes that "the fourth year [would have been]...crucial, because it represents the owner's last chance to [legally] claim the vineyard." (1994, 111)

Herzog concludes his analysis of the parable by saying that it "codifies the spiral of violence by describing a local peasant revolt on a great estate...[which] may have been typical of the brushfires that kept breaking out in the parched economic landscape of Galilee and Judea." (1994, 115) He goes on to say that "[i]f the opening of the parable codifies the daily oppression that leads to the breaking point, then the middle part of the parable provided its hearers with a vicarious experience of striking back: first, the hearers vicariously beat, brutalized, and killed the hated retainers; then, they attacked the son who would inherit what was once their land. It may have been imaginative retribution, but it would still have been satisfying." (1994, 115)<sup>42</sup>

As Herzog himself indicates, whether or not the insubordination of the tenants in the parables is historical, it has a vicarious function for the hearers of the parable, some of whom themselves could have been tenant farmers, thus sharing the resentments of the tenants in the parables. Again, to use Scott's term, the telling of the parable is a prime example of an articulation of the hidden transcript containing what might have been revolutionary, but likely unrealistic, aspirations of the peasant class. As Herzog has pointed out, it is also a codification in the Freirean sense since it brings to collective conscious, crystalises, provides the connecting dots to, situations and systems of exploitation in first-century Judea and Galilee.

## 2.4 Rabbinic Parables

Brad Young's *Jesus and his Jewish Parables* says that the type of "story parables" of Jesus are unique to Rabbinic literature and the Gospels and yet attention is seldom paid to this Jewish context (Young 1989, 1).<sup>43</sup> Due to their obscurity "few interpreters... have been able to agree on an acceptable hermeneutic that can be

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<sup>41</sup> One may assume that from the perspective of the peasantry, having previously owned the land they were now having to work, they still maintained notional ties to the land.

<sup>42</sup> Such "imaginative retribution" comes close to an articulation of what Scott refers to as the hidden transcript which we will consider later. But, again, whether understood from this perspective or that of a pedagogy of the oppressed, the denouncement of the elite landholders which is undeniably a feature of the parable, if not its whole point, does not come through in Herzog's approach.

<sup>43</sup> Young, B. 1989. *Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching*. Theological Inquiries – Studies in Contemporary Theological Problems. Boadt, L. (Ed.) New York: Paulist Press.

applied to the parable.” (1989, 2) In citing the work of Jeremias and Neusner, Young offers a potential reason for the disassociation of Jesus’ parables from their Jewish context. Whereas Jeremias maintained that Jesus was the first to use parables, Neusner maintained that parables were foreign to Pharisaic Judaism (1989, 3). Hence, seemingly, the parables of Jesus were regarded as something of an anomaly.

Rabbi Asher Feldman’s (1927 [2011]) very old but comprehensive study offers us a few insights in our treatment of the Synoptic parables from the perspective of Rabbinic parables.<sup>44</sup> The study, which is now almost one hundred years old, focuses on simile and allegory in the Mishnaic writings of the *Tannaim* period as well as on various midrashim from the *Amoraim* periods which correspond roughly to the first five hundred years after Christ. Feldman’s study is not etiological in the sense of tracing the origin and use of parables (*meshalim*). He in any case is concerned more broadly with simile, of which the parable (*mashal*) and allegory are examples. But he does include a number of examples of Rabbinic *meshalim*, the features of which in some cases closely resemble those of the Synoptic parables. As an aside given that allegory features so prominently within these two periods, and that the Church Fathers are famed for the allegorical interpretations, one wonders whether there wasn’t some confluence of ideas across Jewish and Christian circles or whether they shared a broader cultural milieu in which allegory was popular.

In addition to there being similarities in style and content between some Synoptic and Rabbinic parables, as Feldman himself points out, parables generally reflect the every-day material realities from which they originate and so can provide information as to some of their socio-economic circumstances. He says “Midrashic similes... serve as a useful index of social and economic conditions... especially the case with *Meshalim* or parables which are illustrative in character... [f]or whilst some of the figures employed by the rabbis are probably ideal or reminiscent, the majority constitute a reflection of realities and sights actually beheld by the authors and understood by the audience.” (1927 [2011], 16-17)

There are two chapters of Feldman’s study which are helpful. The first is titled “The field, its cultivation and products,” and treats, as one may imagine, of aspects of the agricultural sector. Feldman illustrates here the predominance of tenant farming for this period, saying that tenant farming “enters to quite a considerable extent into the metaphorical imagery of the Midrash.” (1927 [2011], 39) Regarding the type of tenant farming in place, Feldman says that “[t]he cultivation of the field was frequently carried out not by the owner himself but through a tenant farmer, who either worked as an *Aris*, tilling the owners ground for a fixed proportion of the produce, or as a *Hoker*, paying the landlord a certain rent in kind, irrespective of the yield of the crops.” (1927 [2011], 39) In addition to the tenant-farmer proper, Feldman refers to the “field labourer” who according to his description

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<sup>44</sup> Feldman, A. 1927 (2011). *The Parables and Similes of the Rabbis: Agricultural and Pastoral*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

seems to have occupied the position of a slave. Of these he says “[m]any parables are drawn by the Rabbis from the sphere of the field-labourers, who worked either for the *Aris* or for the landowner himself, sometimes under the landlord’s own direction, but more often under the direction of a steward or manager of the estate.” (1927 [2011], 39)<sup>45</sup>

Feldman’s observations on the socio-economic context indicated by later Rabbinic parables concur with the socio-economic context we will later piece together. We will see that estates are prevalent in first-century Judea and Galilee where these were owned sometimes by absentee-landlords; farmed often by tenant farmers or a form of wage labour, indentured labour, slave labour, or a combination of these; that there were sometimes stewards (often slaves) who oversaw the managing of estates; that frequently additional labor (day/wage labourers) was required where the demand for labour fluctuated particularly in the viticultural sector. It is clear in the examples Feldman cites that the estate owners were members of the elite for they are often referred to as “kings”. Furthermore, the image of the vineyard among the parables and those referencing field labourers tends to predominate which is suggestive of the prevalence or predominance of viticulture (1927 [2011], 44-48).<sup>46</sup>

There is a very interesting parable cited by Feldman, the full quoting of which may be helpful for us. The parable recounts the experience of Rabbis Ishmael and Akiba when walking through Jerusalem:

*“R. Ishmael and R. Akiba happened to walk through the streets of Jerusalem in the company of another man, when an ailing person met them. “My Masters,” said he, “wherewith can I be healed?” “Do thus and thus until thou art healed,” they replied. Whereupon their companion said unto them, ““ And who is it that has so afflicted him?” And they replied: “It is the Holy One, blessed be He.” “What, did you meddle in a matter which does not concern you?” [the companion] asked; “do you prescribe a cure when He smote!” “And what is thy occupation?” they rejoined. ‘I am a field-labourer,’ he replied, “behold the scythe in my hand.” “Who created the vineyard?” they enquired. ‘The Holy One, blessed be He,’ he replied. “What, dost thou interfere in a matter which does not belong to thee? Seeing that He created it wilt thou cut its fruit?” And he said unto them: “See ye not the scythe I hold; if I did not go out to plough, hoe, manure and weed it, it would produce nothing.” Whereupon they said: ‘Thou foolish one, hast thou not heard what Scripture says?’ ‘As for man, his days are as grass. The tree could not spring up if the ground were not manured, weeded and ploughed, and even if it did spring up but were not watered, it would not live but fade into decay; even so the tree is the body, the manure is the drug, the labourer is the physician.” (1927 [2011], 45)*

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<sup>45</sup> It is perhaps important that we distinguish more intentionally between slavery proper and wage labour. Kloppenborg (2008, 40, 58) for example, maintains that slavery did not feature extensively in first-century Palestine in the agricultural sector relative to wage labour. See footnote 92 as well as later discussion.

<sup>46</sup> Kloppenborg’s work (2006, 2008), which we consider later, testifies to the ubiquity of viticulture latifundia in the first century CE.

The comparison being drawn by the rabbis in retort to the indignation of their so-called companion (field labourer) is between the instructions toward healing given by the rabbis to the ill man and the tending of the vines by the field labourer. Just as the latter's labour is necessary for the growth and health of the vine, so too are the instructions toward healing given by the rabbis to the man's healing. What I wish to highlight is not the comparison in the parable but the answer given by the field labourer to the rabbis: who created the vineyard?

In our own arguably less conservative climate, it might be considered "bad theology" to say that God was responsible for inflicting the sick man. This seems to have been a commonly held position (cf. John 9:2) in antiquity. But that the field worker should answer so quickly and assuredly that the creator of the vineyard is God indicates the ideology attendant to the given mode of production, i.e. that the owner of the means of production (owner of the vineyard) should be equated with God. This helps us perceive a similar ideology operative in the New Testament, and its remnant which endured passed that era, affecting the interpretation of many of the agrarian parables where the owner of the means of production is automatically identified as God. We will see later a similar dynamic in Boer's treatment of Genesis 3, and the expulsion from the garden of Eden, as an attempt to ideologically legitimate and assimilate aspects of the Palatine system.

There is a second aspect of Feldman's study which is of interest which has to do with imagery, simile, and metaphor which is pastoral in nature. Again, based on the information Feldman includes we can deduce specific features of the means and mode of production for the time. As in the case of the vegetal sector, where there is a separation of ownership and labour in the vegetal agricultural sector, so too, indicates Feldman, was there a separation between those who owned sheep and those hired to tend them in the animal husbandry sector (1927 [2011] 219). In our consideration of first-century caprine husbandry, we look at archaeological data and consider realistic numbers for flock sizes attendant to temple complexes. We see that these could not feasibly be produced by means of subsistence agriculture. Feldman includes the two examples below, one in which ownership of many versus few sheep is compared, and another which makes reference to "royal sheep":

*"Now he who has a single sheep gives it to eat and to drink in due time, because it is his soul charge. But whoso has a multitude of sheep cannot tend them all properly, for he is overmuch busied with them."* (Rabbi Berechiah (4<sup>th</sup> cent.) quoted in Feldman 1927 (2011), 217).

*"The Holy One, blessed be He, said unto Moses: How canst thou desire to enter the land? This might be likened unto a shepherd going out to tend the royal sheep. The sheep were taken captive. When the shepherd thereafter sought to gain admittance to the royal palace the king said unto him, "If thou enter now will not the people [seeing thee unconcerned] say that thou art to blame for the capture of the sheep?"* (Feldman 1927 (2011), 219)

What the second parable shows is that the palace, possibly temple complex, have at their disposal royal flocks,

suggesting the likelihood that such flocks were considerably larger than those farmed at subsistence level. Secondly, we see that labour was likely outsourced to tend to these larger flocks by 'shepherds' whose fealty in performing their task was sometimes questioned. Such a context will be illumined and elaborated on through the course of the study.

## CHAPTER THREE: MODE OF PRODUCTION THEORY

### 3.1 Mode of Production Theory

The study is informed at theoretical level by a number of key positions. The first, in line with the agenda of the historical-critical approach, is that there is an onus on exegetes to determine an accurate historical reading of a text, i.e. to determine what it meant in its original context or to its original hearers. The second assumption is that such a reading can only be attained by arriving at an accurate assessment of the socio-historical and socio-economic context of the text. This should not be equated with notions like the *Sitz em Leben* although it can include that. The third assumption is that the best way to arrive at an accurate assessment of the socio-historical and socio-economic context of the text is by employing class as a heuristic category. In order to employ class as a heuristic category, we must both define class and determine who constituted which classes in antiquity. The fourth assumption then is that to establish this we must determine the means and mode of production and who stood in what relation to this means and mode of production. It is for this reason that Mode of Production theory (MPT) and its adaptation by Boer forms the main theoretical basis of this thesis.

#### 3.1.1 Use in secular scholarship

Having provided an outline of the study as well as some pertinent scholarship on parable studies, we will now attempt to compile a more rigorous and thorough theoretical base from which to understand the relevant parables by use of MPT. Marta Harnecker (1980) provides a helpful summary of some of its theoretical underpinnings based on the writings of Marx and Engels. However, she points out that while Marx and Engels “frequently used the expression “mode of production of material goods” or simply “mode of production” in order to describe the *manner*, the *form*, the *mode* by which material goods are produced” (1980, 23) they did not offer a fully-fledged definition of the concept of *mode of production*.<sup>47</sup>

Harnecker says that “[w]e should not confuse the expression “mode of production of material goods” with the concept *mode of production*...[where t]he former is a descriptive notion which only refers to the economic structure of society...[while] the latter... is a theoretical concept which refers to the entire social totality” (1980, 23).<sup>48</sup> It may be helpful to add that whereas the expression “mode of production of material goods” refers to the economic structure of a society of a specific time and place, the concept of mode of production is a theoretical

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<sup>47</sup> In his *Introduction to A Critique of Political Economy* Marx refers to modes of distribution saying that distribution is ante-cedent to production in terms of there necessarily being a spatial distribution of the means of production and members of society in accordance with the given mode of production. This is evident within what is sometimes referred to as the tributary (or Asiatic) mode of production with its caricatured centre-periphery dynamic – surplus being extracted from rural hinterland and channelled inwards to the urban centre. In other words, to phrase Marx differently, the means of distribution may have a determinative effect on the larger mode of production which is usually thought to be the case with a tributary mode of production.

<sup>48</sup> Harnecker says later that “[t]he concept of mode of production is precisely the concept which gives us a scientific way to think about a social totality.” (1980, 24)

and heuristic one applicable to societies across time. It therefore has diachronic applicability or value.

Harnecker's definition highlights the distinction in Marxist theory between base and superstructure. The concept of mode of production normally encompasses base and superstructure whereas the mode of production of material goods (and then also in an even stricter sense, the means of production) may be seen as a "technical process" presided over or facilitated by certain "social relations" which nevertheless pertain more directly to the economic base (1980, 23).<sup>49</sup> Thus mode of production as a heuristic concept includes attention to relations of classes to a given mode of production as well as overt and covert mechanisms of control and resistance employed among classes.

Harnecker indicates some of this heuristic value in saying it "is possible to describe a society; to say, for example, that in every society there are industries, cultivated land, post offices, schools, an army, police, laws, ideological currents, etc...[but that] the organisation of these elements in different structures (economic, juridico-political and ideological) and the determination of the role which one of these structures plays in society, permits us to pass from *the description to the understanding* of a social reality". (1980, 24) In other words, MPT in identifying the means of production of a given society and the relation in which various groups stand to the means of production (which determines class) helps us to understand economic realities of that society – the *raison d'être* of the ruling class (those owning or controlling the means of production), their relation to the working class (that which constitutes labour) and, as we will go on to see for the period which concerns this study, the social phenomena which are symptomatic of modes of production and their collapse.

It may be helpful to note that Harnecker is concerned with contemporary applications of MPT and not with what is sometimes referred to as the Asiatic (or tributary) and ancient (or slave) modes of production, those modes of production relevant for this study. In modern times we tend to think of the totalising and hegemonic aspects of the capitalist mode of production which were not attendant to modes of production in antiquity in the same way or to the same extent. With this in mind Harnecker says that "[e]very mode of production is constituted by... a *global structure* formed by three regional structures: the economic structure, the juridico-political structure (laws, the state, etc.), the ideological structure (ideas, customs etc.)... [and that] in this global structure, one of the regional structures *dominates* the others...[where] the economic structure is always *determinant* in the last instance." (1980, 24).<sup>50</sup> Harnecker makes the distinction between dominant structures and determinant

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<sup>49</sup> Harnecker says "it is not enough to define [mode of production] only as a technical process. This technical process takes place under determined social relations, the social relations of production, which, in the last instance, make the process possible. Moreover, we have seen that elements of the superstructure of society enter into the making of these relations. Without the explicit, or implicit, consent of the members of society and its institutions, these relations could not remain in force." (1980, 23)

<sup>50</sup> In terms of the constitutive aspects of mode of production, Boer and Petterson (2017) say that as a heuristic concept, it is "the most inclusive of all economic models, incorporating economic matters (the traditional Marxist "base" or "infrastructure"), relations of productions (the questions of class and class conflict), and the crucial role of ideologies,

structures so that while the economic, according to Harnecker, is always “*determinant* in the last instance” it need not be the dominant structure. This is helpful in light of the above-mentioned observation for, while in the capitalist mode of production the economic structure might be regarded as both dominant and determinant, this is not the case for societies in antiquity.<sup>51</sup>

To highlight just one aspect of how the Asiatic or tributary mode of production differs from the capitalist it may be helpful to consider briefly a study by Carlos Garcia Mac Gaw (2020).<sup>52</sup> In Marxist scholarship, the distinction between capitalist and precapitalist societies has often depended on the perception of surplus appropriation in a given mode of production. In capitalist societies this appropriation is understood as an exclusively economic process while in precapitalist societies surplus appropriation is an “extra-economic process,” i.e. it is done post fact, after the production process is complete through tithes, taxes, rents and debts (2020, 217).<sup>53</sup> Whereas Marx saw the appropriation of surplus occurring within the labour process itself in capitalist societies, which is a precondition for the commodity, in ancient societies appropriation is always post fact. Mac Gaw challenges this distinction though arguing that surplus appropriation is always economic merely expressed differently depending on the mode of production (2020, 217-218).

In any event, based on Marx’s *Formations*, Mac Gaw lists the following features of the ancient mode of production, that which presides over the world of the New Testament (2020, 220):<sup>54</sup>

- the town or city is the economic base of the rural countryside, in which those peasants farming the rural countryside also often reside;
- “the cultivated fields appear as *territorium* belonging to the town”;

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cultures, beliefs, and ways of being (the traditional “superstructure,” or what we prefer to call the mode of *régulation*).” (2017, 150)

<sup>51</sup> Without wishing to pre-empt a discussion of Boer’s (2015) work, we could consider two examples from this which are illustrative. The Palatine regime (one of the dominant, extractive regimes for the period) is intermittently in competition with the subsistence-survival institutional form. The Palatine regime may be thought of as dominant, but its dominance is both manifested and facilitated at ideological level, through the ideology of temple and palace (i.e. not strictly in economic terms). It is nevertheless the economic base, the mode of production in the narrow sense, out of which this ideology arises. Boer maintains, due to the dogged resilience of the subsistence-survival regime and its ability to endure in the face of rising and falling dominant regimes, that it too has a materially determinative or constitutive effect. In this latter respect, the subsistence-survival institutional form is not economic in strict or conventional sense, but it is a means by which the material environment of its subjects is reproduced and so, to this extent, it is determinative.

<sup>52</sup> Mac Gaw points out that “Marx’s concept of the ancient mode of production first appears in the *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, one of the rough sketches, or *Grundrisse*, for his *Capital*.” (2020, 217)

<sup>53</sup> This distinction is important in the discussion of what constitutes a commodity which we consider later. Additionally, because surplus appropriation is done after the production process, the ideological legitimation to guarantee this is peculiar to the Asiatic or tributary mode of production.

<sup>54</sup> Mac Gaw earlier states that “in its class form the ancient mode of production was rather a specific social formation in which the slave-owning and tributary modes of production came together, the tributary mode ultimately dominating the slave-owning mode.” (2020, 219) Mac Gaw seems to indicate here that the tributary or Asiatic mode of production supersedes the slave-owning mode of production. He also makes distinction between the slave-owning and ancient modes of production whereas convention elsewhere is to see them as the same. Convention also is to place the Asiatic mode of production prior to the ancient. Mac Gaw says later that under certain circumstances the ancient yields to the tributary or Asiatic but one gets the sense of this being a dynamic too-and-fro process (2020, 240).

- the presence of the *ager publicus* or public lands, which were state lands (in reality often leased or bequeathed to members of the elite but still seen as owned by the state);
- the commune or state existing as “a relation of these free and equal private proprietors” in opposition to, i.e. in protection against, the peasant classes and external enemies;
- membership of the commune/state as precondition for the appropriation or possession of land;
- maintenance of equality amongst the peasantry;
- the object of the peasant not being the acquisition of wealth but rather “self-sustenance”

Mac Gaw also shows that a distinguishing feature of the ancient mode of production, in its transition from a tributary or Asiatic mode of production, is the change in ownership of the means of production. In literal terms, this refers to the expropriation of land by the ruling or elite class. Depending on how advanced this process is, there may be a combination of private and ‘state-owned’ land (2020, 220). Mac Gaw addresses the importance of “city as state” which he says is determinative to some extent of the arrangement of class relations. A feature of the ancient mode of production is that rural labourers reside in the city where the city as a state produces a conception of itself greater than the sum of its parts which is a defining feature of the ancient mode of production.<sup>55</sup> Mac Gaw later cites one scholar’s findings that “between 75 and 80 per cent of the population lived in cities during Greece’s Classical era, with the remainder living in small farms and villages in the territories controlled by them.” (2020, 224).

Though this is reflective of what Boer and Petterson will later refer to as the *polis-chōra* institutional form, whereby the *polis* exerted direct and overt control over a relatively small peripheral agricultural area, the context in first-century Judea and Galilee was slightly different. In terms of the Asiatic mode of production (that which preceded but also overlapped with the ancient mode of production), the majority of the peasantry reside in the rural hinterland and work the land as free-holding peasant farmers, tenant-farmers or, in a form of wage labour. If this assessment is accurate, it represents shifts in ‘land ownership’<sup>56</sup> and patterns of residence and labour in first-century Judea and Galilee. As we will see, the life and ministry of Jesus straddles this transitional period. According to Mac Gaw, Hobsbawm asserted that societies based on Asiatic modes of production were pre-classist whereas Godelier saw such societies as being in transition towards class societies, which would suggest that a transition from an Asiatic to an ancient mode of production signalled the development of class. Mac Gaw however maintains that class is already a feature of the Asiatic mode by virtue of the presence of exploitation (or the appropriation of a surplus), and control by the elite over the means of production which allows for this. As we have seen, a conventional definition of class is the relationship a given group stands to

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<sup>55</sup> The “city as state” has an “objective existence beyond its component individuals” (2020, 221).

<sup>56</sup> The notion of land ownership, at least in terms of private property, is tenuous prior to the Roman Empire’s ascendance.

the means of production.<sup>57</sup> Neither Mac Gaw, nor Marx's notes in Mac Gaw, speak of the elite 'owning' the means of production in the Asiatic mode. Instead, they use phrases like a "comprehensive unity," a "higher community", and a "unity" presiding over the mode of production constituted partly by the despot and the deity he represents (2020, 221-222). In other words, there is a pervasive ideological function in the Asiatic mode which facilitates the appropriation of the surplus. As we will see later not only was land 'ownership' foreign to pre-Roman societies but control of labour not land was key.

Mac Gaw had at the outset wished to problematise the distinction between capitalism and precapitalist modes of production based on the idea that the former appropriate surplus in an exclusively economic way while the latter does so extra-economically. Towards this he includes a quote by Anderson which is worth repeating. Anderson, in Mac Gaw, says that "pre-capitalist modes of production cannot be defined *except* via their political, legal and ideological superstructures, since these are what determine the type of extra-economic coercion that specifies them." (Anderson in Mac Gaw, 2020, 235) What Anderson has referred to as the *political* (but perhaps what one could identify also as the *ideological*) is qualitatively different within the Asiatic (tributary) and ancient modes of production. As already highlighted, in the Asiatic mode, appropriation of surplus is done "extra-economically" by means of a temple or palace in the form of votive offering or tribute and is compelled by ideological devotion to a deity and its representative (priestly class or ruler). Within an ancient mode of production, the 'state' still controls (much of) the means of production but the extraction of the surplus involves a different ideological component because the peasantry perceive themselves to be members of the citizenry, incorporated within the state, and are therefore compelled to act in the interests of the state, not least of which involves payment of taxes. On these differences it is helpful to refer to Wolf's distinction of *patrimonial* and *prebendal* forms of extraction (see below), and on the payment of taxes, again Boer's insight is helpful, where taxation occurs through the institutional form of tribute-exchange under the larger regime of plunder.

The Greek *polis* or city-state, which represents a shift toward the ancient mode of production for our purposes, has more of an egalitarian veneer because all 'citizens' are meant to be guaranteed a modicum of basic rights. As city-states grow and expand, and conquer and incorporate new territories, they begin to operate at macro level again in terms of something like a tributary mode of production where they exact tribute from their conquered vassal colonies (2020, 238-240).

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<sup>57</sup> Boer says "[o]bjectively, class is determined by access to and control over the means of production" (2015, 179). Ste. Croix, whose work Boer and Petterson use in *Time of Troubles*, says that class is defined by two relationships: one's relationship to the means of production and; one's relationship to other classes. Boer and Petterson say that "[a] class society exists when a particular (usually small) class controls the conditions or means of production and is thereby able to appropriate a surplus at the expense of other classes which do not control or own the means of production." (2017, 26) As the authors indicate, class struggle is often concomitant with economic exploitation since it is natural to resist exploitation. But the concepts of class and class struggle, heuristically, provide a means of explaining social phenomena which arise out class conflict.

### 3.1.2 MPT in Biblical scholarship

#### 3.1.2.1 Gottwald's use of MPT in *The Tribes of Yahweh*

Having considered secular treatments of MPT we now consider biblical scholars who have made use of MPT. Norman Gottwald was among the first to do so extensively where he also proved its heuristic value in the larger field of social sciences. In his seminal *The Tribes of Yahweh* (1979),<sup>58</sup> Gottwald first uses the term *mode of production* in the context of a discussion on pastoral nomadism. It is helpful to note that he is not examining the economic features of pastoral nomadism per se but does so in the larger context of settlement theories on the emergence of ancient Israel. In this regard, Gottwald disputes what he refers to as the “pastoral nomadic model for early Israel” (1979, 435). Gottwald uses other terms in addition to mode of production which often appear to mean the same thing. For example, he refers to the “socioeconomic base [of pastoral nomadism]”, the “socioeconomic mode” (1979, 435), and the “socioeconomic type” (1979, 436).

In Part X, section 50, of *Tribes* Gottwald appraises Durkheim, Weber,<sup>59</sup> and Marx, regarded as the founders of modern sociology, saying that a functionalist approach is “inadequate to deal with processual sequences and with social causation.” (1979, 622) The crucial question is: “Do the undoubted changes in societies over time, the transitions from one system of social life to another, proceed according to regularities, i.e., according to lawful behaviour, which it is the task of a science of society to discover and articulate?” (1979, 623) To answer this Gottwald seeks a sociological model, i.e. a “science of a society”. In his treatment of Marx, he quotes Marx and Engels at some length where he refers to the “Marxian historical cultural-material method of approach to social and religious phenomena,” (1979, 633) going on to say that this “method of approach...provides a framework within which to include structural-functional models as stepping stones in the analytic task of determining how social evolution occurs” (1979, 633) thus speaking to the questions of causation posed earlier.

It may be helpful to note that *Tribes* was styled as a “sociology of religion” of ancient Israel. When Gottwald says that a central premise of the “historical cultural-material method” is the correlation between religion and the material conditions of production<sup>60</sup> his concern is not ultimately with the material conditions of production but

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<sup>58</sup> There is an additional article by Gottwald which deals explicitly with MPT, listed in *Tribes* as forthcoming. According to Gottwald, however, this is a revision of an earlier article titled “Early Israel and ‘the Asiatic Mode of Production’ in Canaan,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (1976), pp. 145-154.

<sup>59</sup> On Durkheim Gottwald says, “It was Durkheim's view that in religion people adopt an attitude of reverence and submission toward the revered sacred objects that is exactly analogous to the attitude of reverence and submission concurrently adopted toward “social facts,” i.e., toward the givenness of human social solidarity.” (1979, 624) Or, similarly put, that “the human attitude of veneration and respect toward the sacred symbols is parallel to and somehow systematically congruent with the human attitude of veneration and respect toward moral authority and toward society.” (1979, 625) His appraisal of Weber is more complex however the main tenet of Weberian theory, even as Gottwald indicates, is the “reciprocally influential” relationship between religious phenomena and trends and socio-economic outlooks and practices. Gottwald later cites two “ideal typical categories” of Durkheim which may be used to infer causation – charisma and routinization (1979, 630).

<sup>60</sup> Gottwald writes “religion appears as a type of cultural expression in various forms correlative to various congeries of material conditions.” (1979, 636)

with the extent to which these shaped and constituted the religion of ancient Israel. His approach therefore is not primarily economic, but sociological, where the theory and model he is applying nevertheless assigns a constitutive force to the economic base. In as much as Marx saw religion as responsible for the ideological legitimation of a given mode of production, and a legitimation of the relations of production, it is reasonable that religion would impede efforts of emancipation through class struggle. Gottwald agrees with Marx that where class disappears so too will its ideological legitimation represented historically by religion (1979, 636). However, while Gottwald admits the “distorted sublimations” of class within religion, he does not dismiss the possibility that religious ideation precedes social formation.<sup>61</sup> While this seems contrary to the assumption of Marxist theory, that the economic base is determinative of the political and ideological superstructure, perhaps it speaks to a dialectic within religion in which there are aspects which are neither wholly negative nor positive.

How should one describe Gottwald’s use of MPT? He says, for example when referring to the larger phenomenon of Israelite settlement in Canaan, that “if there was to be a major new *socioeconomic system* in Canaan, it would have to be constructed on the *material base of agriculture*, since that was the massively *predominant mode of production*.” (1979, 661; my emphasis) Here Gottwald is applying the concept of mode of production in its stricter, narrower sense namely that which more closely represents the means of production.<sup>62</sup> Seemingly, Gottwald has used the term *socio-economic system* for what should be referred to as a *mode of production*.<sup>63</sup> Regarding which mode of production is applicable to the ancient Southwest Asia, Gottwald points to the “vigorous debate among Soviet Assyriologists” as to whether this can be described as a “feudal” or “slave society” (1979, 756). But Gottwald makes the case elsewhere that ancient Canaanite society can more helpfully be understood in terms of Marx’s Asiatic mode of production (1979, 757).

In understanding some of the ambiguity of Gottwald’s approach it is helpful to consider Boer’s comments (2002) in the anthology he edits to commemorate the legacy of *Tribes*. Boer says:

*“[I]n Marxist criticism [mode of production] has two senses: in its more restricted meaning mode of production designates the economic dimension of any sociopolitical formation. The key question becomes: what is the means by which the necessities (food, shelter and clothing) and luxuries of human existence are produced? Also called the ‘base’ or ‘infrastructure’ this sense is normally broken down into the two areas of the means of production—technological, ecological, demographic factors—and the social relations of production, that is, how human beings organize themselves and how they relate in order to produce the aforesaid necessary and luxury*

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<sup>61</sup> “[I]t may be that its [religion’s] origins are anterior to social stratification in a form of ideation which tries to grasp the synthetic human experience of the interpenetrating mode of production, network of social relations, and elaborated cultural products *as a coherent but changing, even fragile, totality*.” (1979, 637)

<sup>62</sup> Gottwald’s position might be helped by Boer’s which sees subsistence-survival (based on subsistence agriculture) as the predominant institutional form for ancient Israelite society. He highlights repeatedly the mistake of elevating this, as a hermeneutical category, to the status of a mode of production.

<sup>63</sup> Elsewhere Gottwald says the relevant mode of production for the period is “intensive agriculture.” (1979, 460)

items. But 'mode of production' bears a much more general sense, which is no less than the whole reality of a particular historical epoch, including within its orbit culture and economics, ideology and class, politics and philosophy, religion and population, nature and law, and so on. Often 'mode of production' slides between these two senses—the specific and all-encompassing—but in the latter sense it is the source of the great explanatory power of Marxist criticism.” (2002, 108-109)<sup>64</sup>

A central tenet of MPT at macro level is that the economic base is to some extent determinative of the social, political and ideological superstructure. At the heart of this is the labour theory of value which neoliberal economists do not support. If one is sympathetic toward a labour theory of value one sees how human labour generally is ontically and epistemically constitutive. Although Gottwald does not refer to this in detail, he does hint at it saying that “the way human beings within nature act upon nature to produce their means of subsistence...fashion[s] their own social nature.” (1979, 631) The labour theory of value and the ontically and epistemically formative aspects assigned to labour help us to see why the economic base will to a greater or lesser degree constitute the ideological superstructure. The task of an analysis of society should be to determine the nature of the economic base, i.e. the mode of production, in its narrower sense.

From the perspective of Marxist theory, Gottwald says that for any supposed egalitarian mode of production to emerge it must be preceded by a change in ownership of the means of production such that material subsistence is guaranteed to those creating such a society. Prior to the social revolt, which Gottwald says helped birth the Hebrew people, the group which came closest to this was the '*apiru* who produced their own food and engaged alternately in mercenarism and brigandry (1979, 661).<sup>65</sup> A central thesis of *Tribes* is that a population of sufficient size was able to break away from the dominant mode of production (which it may be helpful to see or understand as “tributary”) and, because their newly-formed mode of production did not involve the extraction or appropriation of a surplus, the forces of hierarchy and dominance were mitigated and a more egalitarian society emerged as a result.

The point brought to bear on biblical studies, which is perhaps the most important assumption many sociologists now take for granted, is that antiquitous societies *had material conditions* and that such conditions indubitably *affected* and *effected* the social groups comprising a given society. This should be the premise or starting point for any assessment of ancient society. We will never know with complete assurance what the material conditions of a given society were but, based on available data and provenly effective models, we can

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<sup>64</sup> Marta Harnecker had made basically the same distinction earlier.

<sup>65</sup> Incidentally, Boer makes extensive mention of this group (or groups) which he terms *Habiru* saying that ““Habiru” is a specific name drawn from the Amarna letters, but it designates anyone who has simply slipped away from the burdens of estate life, or any group or village that has felt the hot breath of an uncomfortably close power center (with its demands for taxation in labor and in produce).” (Boer 2015, 189) I suggest later that brigandry, or banditry, can be understood in terms of what Boer calls an institutional form, i.e. as a means or mode of subsistence. In this sense, it is closely related to the institutional form of patronage.

make educated guesses at trends and conditions and thereby infer other aspects of a community's social, political and religious formation. In light of this, the import of MPT is, in part, the following: every age or society is presided over by a mode of production (or combination of modes) where such modes are not accidental to the social and political formations under which people live but are determinative of these formations; furthermore, people always stand in a particular relation to the mode of production, or the means of production within this mode, where some exercise control over the means of production while others contribute to its labour. These are the relations which determine class. In most modes of production, labour is appropriated against the will of a subjugated class, while a surplus, in strict terms, is appropriated post-fact, after the production process, both of which require ideological legitimation. Forms of resistance which arise among the subjugated class in opposition to this process equate to class conflict or class antagonism. We consider some of these forms of resistance later. But resistance or contestation can also arise in the ideological sphere. This, in part, is what the parables represent.

### 3.1.2.2 West

In an article titled "Tracking an Ancient Near Eastern Economic System: The Tributary Mode of Production and the Temple-State," Gerlad West uses MPT to see, for the context of 1 Samuel 8, "a tributary mode of production administered through a city-state political system" (2011, 511). West's intention is not simply to articulate a theory of mode of production but to stress its heuristic value in analysing ancient societies thus gaining a better economic understanding of them (2011, 511). West says that the tributary mode of production was "characteristic of the imperial political economies of the Ancient Near East" (2011, 512). Citing Jameson, he points out that rarely, if ever, do modes of production exist independently. Instead, they overlap with vestiges of one mode being present in another (2011, 512). The three modes of production most pertinent to the world of the bible, and drawing on the terminology of Meyers, Jobling and Gottwald, are according to West, the *household*, *Asiatic* or tributary, and *slave-based* (2011, 513).

West reads the text of 1 Samuel 8 as representing the emergence of a tributary mode of production in ancient Israel. His assessment includes the application of the notion of a city-state which is fundamentally extractive (2011, 515).<sup>66</sup> Citing the work of Dreher, he suggests that a novel technology, the introduction of the ox as a plough animal, allowed for the accrual of a surplus which ultimately could support a standing army and the emergence of state apparatus (2011, 515). Still with reference to Dreher, he says that David's administrator of forced labour (cf. 2 Samuel 20:24), the census implemented by David (2 Samuel 24:1-9; 1 Chronicles 21:1-6),

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<sup>66</sup> Along similar lines, Jobling tells us that "Marx defined an "Asiatic" mode [of production], more usefully renamed by others the "tributary" mode, of which Israel's monarchy is probably an example... [as being] based mainly on agriculture...[where the] agriculture producers are legally free peasants (as opposed to slaves) but the land they work belongs in theory to the state (the king) and the peasants owe tribute in kind—understood as rent or tax—to the state." (Jobling 1998, 145)

and the distribution of Canaanite territory to his military commanders, are indicative of an “emerging tributary system” (2011, 516). This system developed fully under Solomon and witnessed “large-scale public works” and the building of a temple (2011, 516) which provided the necessary ideological legitimation for the emerging tributary mode of production.<sup>67</sup> The scale and relative extravagance of Solomon’s endeavours and the importation of “building materials, luxury goods, military technology, and skilled labour” not only placed direct added pressure on the peasantry but resulted in the accumulation of state debt. This led in turn to greater pressure on the peasantry to generate a surplus and resulted too in a limitation in range of crops now dictated by the custodians of the national debt (2011, 517).

As we have seen, MPT theorists indicate a level of fluidity and flexibility in the transition between modes so that we should not be overly rigid in our application of a single mode of production for the period in question. In *Tribes*, Gottwald admits uncertainty in applying a specific mode of production to ancient Israel (the period of 1200 to 1000 BCE). West prefers tributary (Asiatic) mode of production for the world of the Old Testament and ancient or slave-based for the world of the New (2011, 513). By far the most extensive use of MPT is Roland Boer’s *Sacred Economy* which has been described as pioneering and paradigm-shifting not dissimilarly to Gottwald’s *Tribes*. We should therefore consider this work at length. Boer’s main contention is that what he terms “the Sacred Economy” is the mode of production that predominates over the course of ancient Israel’s history. He sees multiple *means* of production, which he refers to as “institutional forms,” rising to greater or lesser prominence. The manner of their arrangement constitutes what he refers to as “regimes”. These in turn compete with each other but collectively constitute the Sacred Economy. Another central insight, according to Boer, involves the subsistence-survival institutional form, i.e. subsistence forms of agriculture, which he says was the most fundamentally enduring throughout antiquity. It is this institutional form which helped shape and form the popular religion of ordinary folk.

### 3.2 Boer’s *The Sacred Economy* and Boer and Petterson’s *Time of Troubles*

Roland Boer has published two volumes which make extensive use of MPT. The first of these, *The Sacred Economy of Ancient Israel* (2015), deals with the socio-economic world of the Old Testament, while the second, *Time of Troubles* (2017), which Boer co-authors with Christina Petterson, focuses on the world of the New.

It may be helpful before we begin to make a twofold observation regarding economic realities throughout history. It goes without saying that up until the modern period economic and technological change was slow.

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<sup>67</sup> Based on the work of both Marx and Ste. Croix, Kyrtatas (2002) highlights the importance of ideological legitimation as opposed to blunt force, particularly in more advanced modes of production. In such cases, whereas “[t]he percentage of the surplus extracted is normally smaller, although it may remain the same or even increase...its extraction in legitimated ways—ways accepted by society as just—makes a great difference to the longevity of the established social order. For whereas payment of tribute or taxes may be sometimes secured by force, it is more often secured by some kind of consent or agreement [i.e. legitimation].” (Kyrtatas 2002, 535)

There are greater similarities economically between medieval Europe of the 1500s and first-century Judea and Galilee than there are between the former and our present day, even though the length of time between the periods in the latter case is but one third. Capitalism as mode of production therefore differs *qualitatively* from all modes of production which preceded it and so it is anachronistic to infer aspects of modern capitalist economy into contexts of antiquity. Having noted this we must acknowledge that change did occur in antiquity.

The two worlds contained in the Old and New Testaments represent different periods, and so strictly speaking different modes of production, though again there are far more similarities between these two worlds than there are differences. Some of what Boer and Petterson refer to as “institutional forms,” the building blocks of a particular regime, are peculiar to each period, or feature more prominently in one than they do in the other, but many are common to both. Where the institutional forms collectively comprise regimes the regimes in turn compete with each other thus shaping the character of the overarching mode of production.

### 3.2.1 Theoretical Premises

Both *The Sacred Economy* and *Time of Troubles* make use of same sources – Mode of Production theory (or what Boer refers to as Soviet-era Marxist scholarship) and *régulation* theory (2015, 51),<sup>68</sup> while in *Time of Troubles* Boer and Petterson focus additionally on writings of Marxist historian G. E. M. de Ste. Croix (2017, 1). The authors see the two periods, those covering the Old and New Testaments, as presided over by two modes of production, the Sacred Economy and that of the ancient mode of production respectively.

In *The Sacred Economy* Boer distinguishes “between three levels of economic activity” which apply to all modes of production: “(1) the basic institutional forms, (2) their varying constellations as economic regimes, and (3) the overarching mode of production that is constituted by the regimes... [where into] this threefold structure... a further distinction, between allocative and extractive economic patterns” may be discerned (2015, 1).<sup>69</sup> Because of the geographical and economic marginality of the southern Levant, Boer says the “subsistence regime was the major economic reality for most of its history” right up to the modern period even though the greater region may have experienced shifts or changes in overall mode of production (2015, 3). Part of the reason for this is the nature of subsistence survival as an institutional form, its dogged resilience in the face of extractive regimes.

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<sup>68</sup> Boer describes his theoretical approach in short as the “idea of mode of production... that has been reformulated by *régulation* theory” (2015, 51). Boer later summarises his theoretical approach in more detail, listing its components: “the institutional forms, the regime and modes of *régulation*, the unique combinations that arise from attempts to achieve some stability in the face of constant crisis—all these are part of the rich idea of production as that has been reformulated by *régulation* theory. Add to this the contributions and deeper methodological assumptions of Soviet scholarship on ancient Southwest Asia, as well as the need to include a narrative of difference and be aware of the unexpected patterns of responsive metaphorization in the cultural products of an era.” (2015, 51)

<sup>69</sup> Boer says alternately “any economic system (mode of production) is made up of key building blocks (institutional forms) that come together in unique formations (regimes) to provide very limited continuity for a time within the larger scale of a mode of production.” (Boer 2015, 27)

The Sacred Economy as a mode of production is comprised of “economic building blocks (viz.) the institutional forms of subsistence survival, kinship-household, patronage, (E)states, and tribute-exchange”.<sup>70</sup> Boer cautions against universalising such forms as whole modes of production (2015, 5).<sup>71</sup> The diagram below represents the components of the Sacred Economy. From left to right the diagram may be regarded as loosely diachronic in that institutional forms and regimes gained ascendancy in the order they are listed.

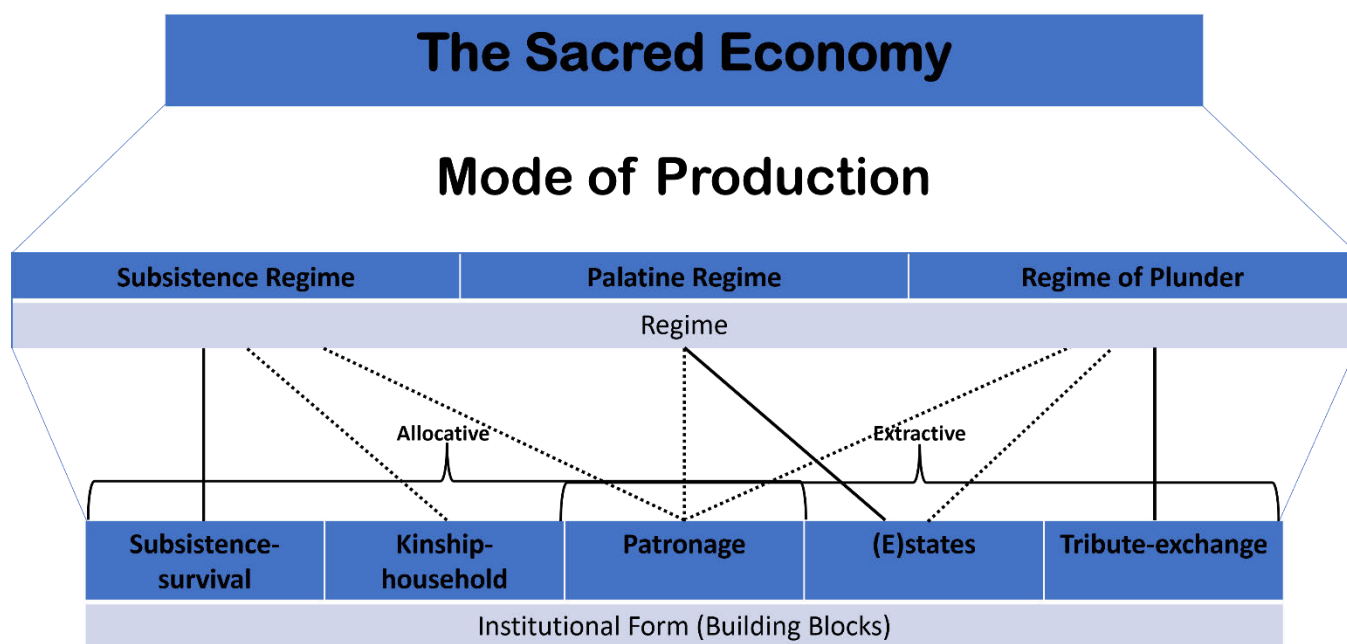


Diagram 1. Illustrating the potential components of the Sacred Economy  
 — Main constitutive institutional form in terms of means of extraction/allocation  
 ..... Secondary institutional form in terms of extraction/allocation

Boer’s theory in both *The Sacred Economy* and *Time of Troubles* differs from what might be regarded as standard MPT by its inclusion of *Régulation* theory. Incorporating aspects of *Régulation* theory, Boer sees the regimes of the Sacred Economy as inherently fragile and unstable, frequently breaking down and giving rise to the “norm of crisis” (2015, 37). All efforts to manage such crises are referred to as the mode of *régulation*. Accordingly, what is normative, and to some extent determinative, is this mode of *régulation* whose ideological framework attempts to manage and legitimate enduring crises. Whereas MPT sees the overarching mode of

<sup>70</sup> Boer brackets the ‘e’ at the beginning of “(E)states” because he sees the emergence of *the state* in any sort of coherent form as contingent with the Palatine or estate system – “[w]ithout a state, there would not have been agricultural estates, let alone the ongoing building and maintenance projects. For this reason, state and estate comprise one institutional form.” (Boer 2015, 132). Focusing on the state as an component of the institutional form of (E)states Boer recognises the integral “role of class conflict in the emergence of state and the seizure of the state machinery.” (2015, 132)

<sup>71</sup> He later says the institutional forms are the “building blocks of a regime... which may be defined as codifications of the fundamental social relations that underpin economics”. (Boer 2015, 60)

production with its economic base as formative at material and ideological levels *Régulation* theory sees the efforts and mechanisms to mitigate the “norm of crisis” as being determinative particularly at ideological level.<sup>72</sup>

*Régulation* theory operates on the basis of four critical premises when understanding a given mode of production or indeed the transition between modes: “economic activity is inescapably social; contradiction and therefore crisis is the norm; temporary stability is the exception and needs to be analyzed; stability is enabled by institutional, behavioral, and ideological practices.” (2017, 40) In light of these, *Régulation* theory seeks to analyse and articulate the mechanisms by which capitalism mitigates and contains crises to reassert, albeit always tentatively, a period of stability thus perpetuating the mode of production (2017, 40). Based on Lipietz, a mode of *régulation* may be defined as the ideological framework and assumptions which people subscribe to which undergird a given mode of production as well as the actual socio-economic institutions which support it (2017, 41-42).<sup>73</sup> The authors list four types of crisis: exogenous; endogenous; structural and; ultimate (2017, 43). Their focus is primarily on the third which enables them to discern how different institutional forms interact and compete with each other to bring about a transition in regime. The following citation is helpful:

*Régulation theory uses two categories: regime and mode. A regime designates the mechanisms by which a specific economic constellation is able for a time to manage exogenous and endogenous crises so that the regime may reproduce itself. Crucially, each regime is constructed by units or building blocks called “institutional forms.” These forms are codifications of the fundamental social relations that underpin economics. They may be quite discrete, with little in common with one another, or they may overlap in significant ways. The key is to find a combination in which they are able to work together, at least for a time. Usually, one institutional form dominates a regime with the other forms finding a place within that structure. It should be obvious that the relations between the institutional forms produce much of the tensions and potential crises of a regime. Most of the time, these tensions are endogenous and manageable, but at times the contradictions become too much and the regime enters structural crisis, collapse, and replacement with another regime. (2017, 44)*

There are four institutional forms relevant for the period covering the New Testament which are “subsistence survival... *polis-chōra*; tenure; and the slave-relation” (2017, 44). The periodic dominance of the latter three give rise to three competing regimes: the colonial; the land; and the slave regime. All three of these constitute the overall mode of production which the authors refer to as the ancient mode (see diagram below – as previously

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<sup>72</sup> Boer sometimes refers to the mode of *régulation* as the “determining ideological framework” (2015, 8)

<sup>73</sup> With regard to the norm of crisis assumed by *Régulation* theory, when applied to antiquity, the authors provide the example of the *pax Romana*. The façade of this period suggests that it was a period of peace and stability for the Roman empire whereas *Régulation* theory would see it as a concerted and coordinated attempt to mitigate crisis by means of widescale coercion and oppression where the ‘peace’ is a result of brutal subjugation. While maintaining the façade of peace, the *pax Romana* was paradoxically a form of crisis (2017, 43). They go on to say that “[t]he fact that such repression was necessary indicates the constant reality of crisis and disruption. In other words, the veneer of the *pax Romana* was enabled by the need to keep crisis in check.” (2017: 43)

the components may be seen as loosely diachronic from left to right). The institutional forms of any regime or mode of production must exist in such combination so that the regime is able to reproduce itself. This invariably brief period of stability during which accumulation is achieved is guaranteed by the mode of *régulation*.<sup>74</sup> Boer and Petterson provide another definition of *régulation* from Jessop and Sum as “an emergent ensemble of norms, institutions, organizational forms, social networks and patterns of conduct that can temporarily stabilize an accumulation regime despite [its] conflictual and antagonistic character.” (Jessop and Sum in 2017, 44-45)

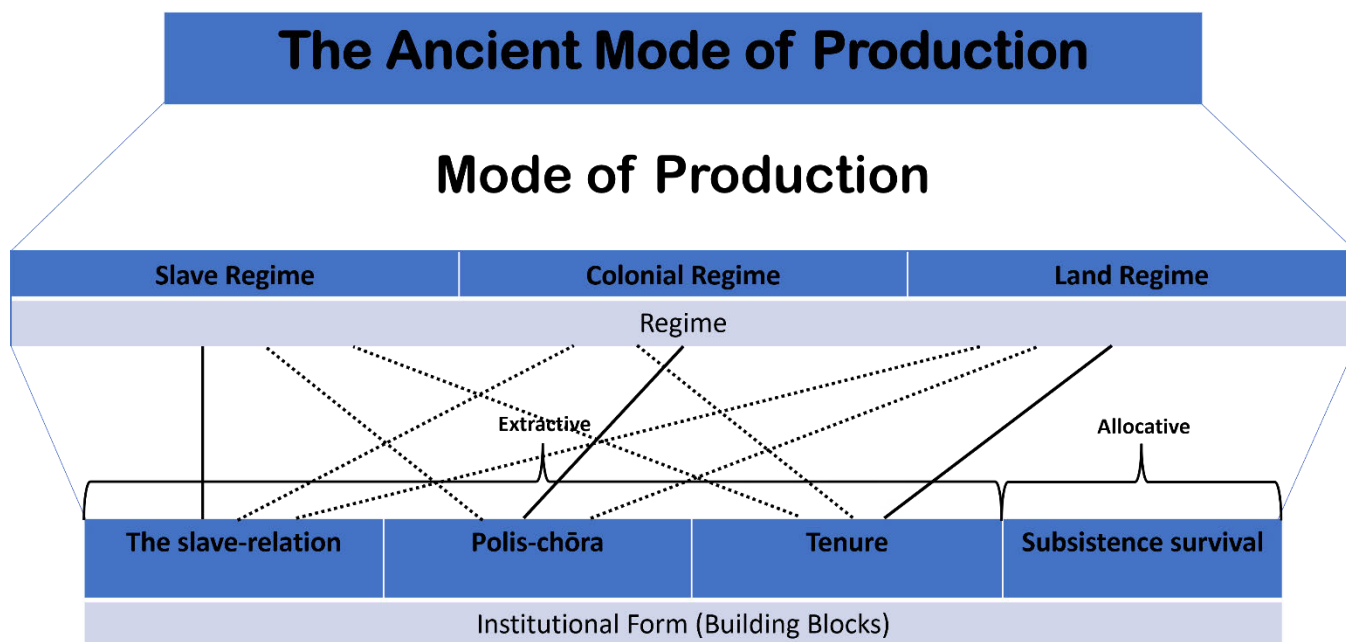


Diagram 2. Illustrating the potential components of the Ancient mode of production  
 — Main constitutive institutional form in terms of means of extraction/allocation  
 ..... Secondary institutional form in terms of extraction/allocation

### 3.2.2 Critique of a Neo-Classical Approach

As we continue to present the central theory of Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017) I include this subsection because, though it does not articulate their theory positively, their critique of what might be a conventional biblical economics is enlightening. In both *The Sacred Economy* and *Time of Troubles* a critique is offered of the “neo-classical” approach to historical studies, a hermeneutical approach which can be thought of

<sup>74</sup> “*Régulation* theory argues that the normal state of affairs is not stability disrupted by crisis, but rather assumes the normal state as one of economic instability and crisis, interspersed with periods of controlled stability. The key question is, therefore, how specific economic systems stabilize crises in order to establish continuity for certain periods. Thus, an economic system (mode of production) is made up of key building blocks (institutional forms) that come together in unique formations (regimes) to provide very limited continuity for a time within the larger scale of a mode of production. Due to internal contradictions, these regimes face constant tensions and crises. In those efforts at continuity, a whole series of compromises have to be made, which are enabled and sustained by cultural assumptions, social forces, and above all, religious beliefs (mode of *régulation*). But there is a catch: the regimes and modes of *régulation* in question do not merely offer stability against constant disequilibria, which threaten to tear the system apart. Instead, the situation is much more dialectical, for the modes and regimes generate their own instability.” (2017, 45-46)

as parallel to a neoliberal economic position. According to the authors this neo-classical approach triumphed in the last decade as the uncritically accepted and dominant way of approaching antiquitous economies because of its “economics imperialism” which is based on “chronic reductionism” by way of “individualizing, desocializing, and dehistoricizing” the economic subject (2015, 11). The economic subject in such an approach is the *Homo oeconomicus*, the entrepreneurial individual who is motivated by self-interest and utility, disconnected from a larger network of social relations, operating in an ‘economy’ not tied to or influenced by historical peculiarities (2017, 3). *Homo oeconomicus*, and by extension mainstream economics and the neo-classical approach, assumes the position of a false universal, being anachronistically retrofitted to ancient societies (2015, 18).<sup>75</sup>

A main contention of neo-classical scholarship, which the authors refute, is the notion that ‘trade for profit’ was a prime motivator of ‘economic’ activity in antiquity, which they say is a gross anachronism. Because trade for profit is understood as the main motive in modern economies, it is inferred back into economies of antiquity anachronistically. The authors unpack this by fingering as the inventor of the ‘modern economy,’ Adam Smith, whose identification of humankind’s timeless propensity to “truck, barter and exchange” has been applied to every civilisation that ever existed (2017, 3-4). Boer later refutes the possibility of large-scale, market trade in antiquity at great length. For now, it is helpful to consider the precondition for market economy.

The anachronism in applying the concept of ‘market,’ ‘market economy’ or even ‘economy’ (in the modern sense) to ancient societies is witnessed by accepting the precondition for a market economy, the commodity, which did not exist before the period of mercantile capitalism in the late medieval period. A distinguishing feature of the commodity is the subversion of its use-value and exchange value through the production process, such that the use value for the owner of the means of production lies in the product’s exchange value (or exchange for profit or capital gain) and not in its practical use.<sup>76</sup> Its commoditisation, and ultimately its fetishisation, lies in the first instance in this, that the commodity has ceased to function as a use-value and instead functions as an exchange value or, for the capitalist, as a use-value only insofar as it derives him profit.

As Marx explains in *Capital* it is also only on this basis that commodities can be exchanged, whereby they enter into a relationship with one another on the market. This relationship is determined or mediated by their exchange value. But their exchange value is derived from the labour value latent within them. What is common to the commodities is this value where that value is determined by the labour time represented, or latent, within them. This is the basis of Marx’s labour theory of value. The advent of the commodity, and their exchange,

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<sup>75</sup> In *Time of Troubles* Boer and Petterson say that the neo-classical approach “remains the dominant and mostly unexamined model for efforts to reconstruct this part [i.e. early Christianity] of the ancient economy.” (2017, 2) In a footnote (2017, 3) it is noted that the critique in *Time of Troubles* is a summarised version of that contained in the *Sacred Economy*.

<sup>76</sup> “His [i.e. the owner of the commodity] commodity possesses for himself no immediate use-value. Otherwise, he would not bring it to the market. It has use-value for others; but for himself its only direct use-value is that of being a depository of exchange-value, and, consequently, a means of exchange.” (Marx 2013, 56)

therefore are necessary preconditions for the existence of a market, or market-based, economy. It is fallacious and anachronistic to assume a 'market economy' in antiquity without its prerequisite, the commodity.<sup>77</sup>

Returning to Adam Smith, in both *Sacred Economy* and *Time of Troubles*, the authors refer to his claim in *The Wealth of Nations* of humankind's propensity to "truck, barter, and exchange" as the "founding myth" of the modern economy (2015, 14; 2017, 3) and yet remind us of the dialectical relationship between myth and truth viz. that myth often contains an obscured grain of truth. Whereas Smith had sought to assert the inherently and eternally economic, profit-minded inclination of humankind, he thereby invented such a nature. Through the subsequent dissemination and repetition of this myth it became accepted as truth (2015, 14; 2017, 5).

Boer and Petterson also give attention to the so-called primitivist and modernist positions stating that this spectrum confines one to an unhelpful framework (2017, 9).<sup>78</sup> Within this divide, the authors focus by way of example on what they term the "oikos debate" (2017, 9). The Greek word *oikos*, from which we get the modern word "economy," referred in the Graeco-Roman world to the household of *an estate*. The debate previously therefore has centred on the extent to which *oikoi* (i.e. estates) functioned as the central building blocks of Graeco-Roman society implying localised production-for-need and supposedly allowing for something like an overarching 'market' economy underpinned by profiteering and regional trade (2017, 9-10).

A persistent myopia within this debate is "the assumption that... "economy" means industry, trade, and commerce" leading to the neglect of any consideration of agriculture and animal husbandry as the main 'economic' activities for the period. As we have seen, the presence of a market economy requires commodities which ancient societies were devoid of. The observation regarding what constitutes an 'economy' is especially pertinent given that the most enduring and resilient institutional form throughout ancient Southwest Asia's history is subsistence-survival which, in neo-classical or neoliberal terms, is not regarded as economic activity. Referring again to the primitivist/modernist debate, where modernists detect evidence of trade and industry they

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<sup>77</sup> Boer later makes this point in *Sacred Economy* saying "[a]bove all, bulk trade [or the presence of a "market economy"] requires the combination of use value and exchange value, the latter of which produces the surplus value (absolute and relative) by which the whole system runs. The first time such a network functioned was in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, providing the basis for the first commercial, capitalist empire." (2015, 177, cf. also 181-182)

<sup>78</sup> Morley offers an assessment of the modernist (he uses the term "modernising") position as follows: "The differences between antiquity and the modern world are seen as quantitative rather than qualitative; there was less trade and a lower volume of industrial production in antiquity, but trade and industry were of the same nature, as were the forms of economic organisation and the underlying structures and processes." (Morley 2004, 35) He further says that "[m]odernising' is not a coherent theoretical position so much as a kind of historical temperament, a disposition to interpret the ancient evidence optimistically." (Morley 2004, 36) He describes that of the primitivist as follows: "The casual assumption that ancient economic activity was comparable with modern is comprehensively rejected [by the primitivist]; the differences between the two societies are seen to be qualitative, a matter of the nature and structural location of trade and manufacturing, not merely quantitative." (Morley 2004: 37) Ultimately, the position of the primitivists helps them to see "[t]he landowning elite—who were the only group in a position to invest in economic development—[as] regard[ing] manual labour as demeaning, even slavish, and trade as risky and rather vulgar; [where] agriculture alone was socially acceptable, and even there...aimed at satisfying needs rather than maximising returns." (Morley 2004: 39)

assert the semblance of a modern market economy while primitivists, also falling into the trap of equating 'economy' with trade, attempt to dispute or downplay such evidence (2017, 15-16).

### 3.2.3 Trade in preciosities and the "merchant" class

We are not seeking to articulate Boer's theory negatively but in refutation of what might be regarded as a neo-classical approach, and the claim that 'market-like' trade was present in the ancient Levant, it is helpful to consider his unpacking of what constituted an ancient "merchant" since this will be relevant later in understanding the means of ancient caprine production. In the section headed "Exchange: the department of elite plunder," Boer states his intention to tackle the positing of "international market economies" in ancient Southwest Asia." (2015, 164) He begins by distinguishing, based on the work of Wallerstein and Chase-Dunn Hall, between bulk trade, or exchange, and exchange in preciosities (2015, 164). In general, bulk exchange must be done in high volumes which requires complex transport networks and which must operate at low cost to make them financially viable. In reality, and partly due to technological limitations in antiquity, bulk exchange is "marginal, decentered, and local, undertaken between nearby settlements (usually in sight of one another) and in light of subsistence needs." (2015, 164) On the other hand, the exchange of preciosities can be done over extensive distances given the vastly smaller volumes in which preciosities are exchanged (2015, 164).<sup>79</sup> This, together with the contention that it is in the first place the ruling elite which create demand for such preciosities and the same who had the necessary means to acquire them, meant there was a constant flow of preciosities from far-flung corners of any empire. This activity was nevertheless acquisitive, that is, the flow of 'trade' was unidirectional.

Boer maintains that unlike the rest of ancient Southwest Asia, which experienced the ascendancy of the regime of plunder at the turn of the first millennium, ancient Israel, in attempting the status of a "little kingdom," experienced a resurgence of a Palatine regime or the institutional form of the (E)states. He says that this context is reflected in an ideological way in the texts emanating from this period, particularly in the narratives around Solomon, that images of an imperial leader were borrowed from the surrounding empires now engaging in a regime of plunder. In other words, though the context from which the narratives of Solomon were created was a Palatine one, the image of the mythical emperor Solomon was borrowed from the wider historical context

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<sup>79</sup> Based also on what Weber saw as a qualitative difference between modern and ancient economies, Boer and Petterson in *Time of Troubles* provide a list demonstrating what such qualitative differences might have been: "trade was limited in volume and rarely involved bulk goods, [where] long-distance trade was mostly in high-quality and high-labor goods" (i.e. what Boer refers to in *Sacred Economy* as "preciosities"); "major acquisitions such as grain were administered by the state"; "the pervasiveness of slavery (precisely during high points of "free" political systems)"; "the absence of industrial factories in the technical and operational sense"; "limited banking in the hands of a few tax farmers"; "the absence of large scale enterprises based on "free" labor"; "cities as sites of consumption rather than production"; "the role of *oikoi*, which [Weber] redefined in terms of the economic institutions of the political ruling class." (2017, 16-17)

of ancient Southwest Asia operating under the regime of plunder. Boer suggests that such narratives may still be used to glean historical data related to alleged “trade” that took place across such empires (2015, 168-170).

To simplify Boer’s contention, the so-called international trade supposed to have taken place between regional powers, the like of which is supposedly witnessed in the Solomonic narratives, was by no means ‘market trade’ as the neo-classicists suggest but instead the extraction of preciousities (2015, 167, 169) the aim of which was not ‘trade for profit’ but the accrual of what Boer refers to as “prestige value” (2015, 180). Because such items were not meant for the consumption of the masses there was in any event never a prospect of profit being derived through their ‘exchange’ or ‘trade’ (2015, 176).<sup>80</sup>

With reference to the lack of surplus, or the incapacity of the general populace to produce a surplus which could be ‘traded,’ Boer cites the work of Pearson, in which the notion of a tradeable surplus as the catalyst for more advanced forms of ‘market’ economy in antiquity is debunked. From a formalist perspective, Pearson’s position is that surplus “becomes the key variable in the emergence of more complex social and economic institutions” (Pearson 1957, 322).<sup>81</sup> Yet we know that where surpluses were present in antiquity these were marginal and extracted from the peasantry in order to sustain the ruling elite. At this point a pertinent question to ask is: did not this surplus or portions of it feature in ‘international’ or ‘market-like’ trade?

In answering, let us consider Boer’s analysis of the notion of the “merchant” which features periodically in the Old Testament. He considers here the three Hebrew words translated in English as “trader” or “merchant”. Firstly, there is סוחר which can also mean “enchanter or sorcerer” (2015, 171). Then there is רכל which Boer says can have the connotation of “slanderer” (2015, 171). The third term, which will be significant later in our consideration of Zechariah 11, is כנען meaning “Canaan” or “Canaanite,” i.e. conveying the sense of foreigners (viz. Canaanites) who were known for engaging in trade (2015, 172).<sup>82</sup> Boer’s contention, based partly on the

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<sup>80</sup> In reference to 1 Kings 10:22, for example, Boer says “[n]o mention is made of bulk goods, such as grains, meats, dairy products, or vegetables. Instead, acquisition and preciousities are the key elements of an ideal image [of an imperial merchant king], projecting a picture of how an Israelite empire might have appeared.” (2015, 169). Again, Boer says, “the archaeological evidence from the southern Levant later in the first millennium indicates that luxury goods for the elite were the prime items that were exchanged even in this marginal zone. As was the case with the Persian Empire, which is supposed by some to be the most “commercial” of all, the emphasis is thoroughly centripetal, in which tribute and trade merge into one. There is little sense of exporting goods, let alone two-way exchange, a favorable balance of trade, the weighing of risks, outlays, losses, returns, and investment. Nor is there any presence of the brisk trade in bulk agricultural goods... Even in the Greek world and its phase of colonization, the prime function of trade was the acquisition of goods one did not have, to be paid for by whatever means were available: mines, plunder, or the necessary evil of merchants.” (2015, 170)

<sup>81</sup> Pearson, H. 1957 “The Economy Has No Surplus: Critique of a Theory of Development,” in Polanyi, K. et al. (Eds.) *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*. Glencoe: Free Press. Pearson writes in full, “The meaning of the concept [i.e. supposition of a surplus in antiquity] is thus clear enough. There is a level of subsistence which once reached provides a measure — so to speak the dam over which the surplus flows. This surplus which is beyond needs however these happen to be defined, is then in some sense available: it may be traded abroad, or used to support the existence of craftsmen, a leisure class or other nonproductive members of the society. In other words, it becomes the key variable in the emergence of more complex social and economic institutions.” (Pearson 1957, 322)

<sup>82</sup> This latter term will feature again much later when we consider the sheep merchants of Zechariah 11.

connotations conveyed by these terms, is that merchants or traders were not regarded favourably but instead with disdain (2015, 173).<sup>83</sup> He defines these merchants or “middlemen” as “outsiders responsible for acquiring preciosities for the political indulgence of a small ruling class” (2015, 176) and later offers a detailed description:

*“[These merchants] were men (and never women) who were royal servants and were rewarded for their tasks. Against the curiously intractable and very modern assumption that state and “commerce” are forever opposed to one another, the vast majority of these middlemen were also tax collectors and diplomats. Rather than freewheeling entrepreneurs, they were indentured agents in the service of the king, engaged in gathering taxes internally and in interpalace gift exchanges externally.”* (2015, 184)<sup>84</sup>

In connection with the operation of such “merchants,” and in his refutation of the existence of ‘market trade,’ Boer urges us to consider also the matter of scale. Indeed, not being aware of the staggering difference in scale between ancient and modern societies can lead easily to anachronism. Population sizes, regionally but specifically of cities (which were more like towns), as well as lack of sufficient technology and bureaucratic procedures, meant that trade in bulk goods, including staples for dietary consumption, clothing etc. was not possible (2015, 178). Boer says, for example, that “Persian era Jerusalem had no more than 3,000 inhabitants, out of approximately 30,000 in the province” (2015, 178). In the case of all ancient Mesopotamian societies no more than 10% of a given population resided in urban areas. The vast majority of any population would have no need, means, capacity, or inclination, for trade in bulk surpluses. The “merchants” referred to in the bible represent a small fraction of an already small percentage of the total population and their ‘trade’ in preciosities was not motivated by market-driven profit. In their operation they fulfilled a social function, the provision of preciosities for imperial rulers, for which they were materially rewarded.

Based on Ste. Croix, Boer and Petterson offer the following insights on trade for the period of the New Testament. Firstly, there is the prohibitive cost of transportation (especially of bulk goods) for long overland distances (2017, 34).<sup>85</sup> This is one of the main points Boer cites against bulk trade in *Sacred Economy* (2017, 177-179).<sup>86</sup> Cost is one (perhaps the main) factor in the inhibition of overland travel but the other is protection of

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<sup>83</sup> “These despised merchants never formed a subclass, a “middle class” with its own identity. Instead, we find that if merchants did gather in one place, they were excluded from the usual categories of political life. Thus the Cappadocian tablets (from ancient Kanesh in the Hittite Kingdom) indicate that foreign merchants were segregated, in a type of economic apartheid, in a *karum* (a “harbor” or “quay”) or in a *warbartum* (trading factory).” (2015, 173). Boer also cites numerous examples in the Prophets where merchants are viewed disparagingly (2015, 175).

<sup>84</sup> Boer indicates the merchants or middlemen would have belonged to a single clan and also held the responsibility of collecting taxes, engaging in usury, as well as functioning as landlords (2015, 175).

<sup>85</sup> The authors say that “according to the price edict of Diocletian of 301 CE, it was cheaper to ship the same quantity of wheat by ship from one end of the Mediterranean to another—from Syria to Spain—than it was to transport it 120 kilometers (or 75 miles) overland” (2017, 34).

<sup>86</sup> It should be noted, that in his review of Boer’s *Sacred Economy*, Marvin Chaney (2017) maintains that an extensive trade network in bulk goods was made possible by sea travel and port cities in and around the Mediterranean.

cargo. If bulk goods of value are transported over vast distances they are vulnerable to theft.<sup>87</sup> While Boer and Petterson admit the transportation of bulk goods via the Mediterranean was extensive by the time of the Roman empire, they do not consider this evidence for 'market-related' trade. Instead, they see this as acquisitive activity, namely the supply to the *polis* of grain and other preciosities (2017, 35).<sup>88</sup> The argument is essentially the same as in *Sacred Economy*. The transportation of bulk goods even by sea was minimal by today's standards. Where this occurred, it was to provision the bigger *poleis*, such as Rome, with supplies, i.e. the nature of the flow of bulk goods was unidirectional. Where such goods did not represent payment to *poleis*, in the form of tax, tribute or plunder, i.e. where goods required some form of payment or exchange in return, such transactions were facilitated by a merchant. As stated in *Sacred Economy* and *Time of Troubles*, merchants were alienated and despised by Graeco-Roman standards, which was due to their general view on profiteering, being regarded as debased and uncouth (2017, 36).<sup>89</sup>

### 3.2.4 The centrality of the slave-relation in the ancient mode of production

In *Time of Troubles*, one of the reasons Boer and Petterson find the work of Ste. Croix helpful is that, unlike other scholarship of ancient economy, Ste. Croix assigns a central role to agriculture. This centrality operated in two related ways. We have seen to some extent how it formed the basis of the most enduring institutional form, that of subsistence survival, by which the vast majority of people over an extended period of history lived. For the ruling elite, agriculture, that is specifically latifundia, was regarded as the only legitimate means of attaining wealth and prestige. Additionally, the ruling elite had to eat (2017, 33).<sup>90</sup> Ste. Croix treats of the respective outlooks of the ruling class and that of unfree labour regarding agriculture and manual labour where, for the former, any form of labour was regarded as servile. Yet in the mind of the Graeco-Roman elite, for the period of the New Testament, possession and cultivation of land was the key to a successful, status-filled life. As such, members of the elite never personally or directly engaged in agriculture. This they did this through the cooption

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<sup>87</sup> By way of a more modern analogy, in the expansion of locomotive railways in the western United States, in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, train robbery became endemic and a constant threat to the cargo and crew of train locomotives. Hietter studies train robberies in Arizona in which he sees stagecoach robberies as a natural precursor to train robberies, both of which were used to transport valuable cargo over long distances. By 1890 the train replaced the stagecoach as the primary means of transporting bulk goods or valuables which is reflected in the sudden decline in stagecoach robberies and subsequent peak in train robberies for this period (Hietter 2004, 274).

<sup>88</sup> "The primary concern of Greek *poleis* was clearly imports, rather than commercial exchange for profit in view of the balance of trade. The Greeks were interested in what they could acquire, not what they could send out." (2017, 35)

<sup>89</sup> Boer and Petterson 2017: 35-36. "If a town did develop trade, it was secondary, arising from the needs of provisioning and imports (as Polanyi argued) rather than any primary intention to engage in trade. In Roman times, very similar assumptions applied. The reality was that food was primarily produced locally for local consumption, with exceptions being the larger poleis, and Rome the greatest exception." (Boer and Petterson 2017: 36)

<sup>90</sup> Boer and Petterson write "[e]ven in the most prosperous regions more than ten people [i.e. agricultural labourers] were required to enable a single person not to live on the land, and of the total population no more than three percent formed the ruling class." (2017, 33)

of labour. Any accumulation of wealth was done only to the end of acquiring more land which was then cultivated and farmed by unfree labour.<sup>91</sup>

Regarding the ideology of the mode of production for the period of the New Testament, Ste. Croix's insights raise further points on the perception of the ruling class of labour in general and of servile labour in particular. Marxist analysis sometimes refers to the Roman Empire operating under the slave mode of production. This is because slavery is seen as the main constituent of its labour force.<sup>92</sup> While perhaps not technically at least practically slavery, or unfree labour, may be seen as an umbrella term including all forms of unfree labour for the period, such as debt bondage, indentured servitude and tenancy. A given mode of production tends to colour and inform the ideological perspective of those engaged in that mode of production and this is based partly on the ontically and epistemically formative effects of the constitutive form of labour in that mode of production. Because of the centrality of slavery the ruling class "operated with the fundamental distinction between free and slave," (2017, 37) that is they understood their reality and the whole of society in light of this distinction, where labour in general, but particularly servile labour, was regarded with disdain. It was entirely unbecoming of a noble, well-born, landed Greek or Roman to engage in labour of any kind.<sup>93</sup>

The authors maintain that slave trade, the selling of slaves, occurred throughout the Graeco-Roman world and at various levels, from local one-on-one transactions in villages or towns, to the great slave markets of the larger cities (2017, 113-114).<sup>94</sup> The contention of Boer and Petterson is that not only was slavery all-pervasive but, partly because of this, it "determined and shaped the very nature of markets" (2017: 111, 112, 123 ff.). This contention is further based on a three-fold examination involving 1.) the ubiquity of slavery, 2.) the abstraction

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<sup>91</sup> Quoting Cicero, the authors say "Cicero sums it up best: "of all means of acquiring wealth there is nothing better, nothing more profitable, nothing sweeter, nothing more worthy of a free man, than *agricultura*" – by which he means possessing and managing land." (2017, 33)

<sup>92</sup> There seems to be a degree of uncertainty as the primary labour component in ancient Rome. As mentioned, Boer and Petterson maintain that this was outright slavery. Kyrtatas (2002), and to some extent Kloppenborg (and in his case, particularly in first-century Palestine) maintain that this was not the case in the agricultural sector, but that this comprised various forms of co-opted labour. While it may be true that slaves did not feature as prominently in the agricultural sector, Boer and Petterson's point is that they were so prevalent in urban centres that they mediated reality for the ruling elite. Consider, however, Kyrtatas' comments: "Slaves never outnumbered free laborers, let alone the free inhabitants of the Roman world at large. There is little doubt that, despite their large numbers and their significance in agriculture, production in the Roman world was basically the work of free peasants and craftsmen. In grain-producing Egypt, for example, agricultural slavery was almost unknown. But it is also clear that the propertied classes extracted most, or at least a very substantial portion, of their surplus by exploiting unfree laborers, most of whom would have been slaves in the strict sense of Roman law. We may thus regard the slave mode of production as dominant because through it the propertied classes secured their position in society (Ste. Croix 1981: ch. 2.3)." (Kyrtatas 2002, 539)

<sup>93</sup> The distinction between "slave" and "free" coloured their entire value system (2017, 38).

<sup>94</sup> The authors write that so "pervasive" was slavery, operating at "a number of levels from the economic to social consciousness and social interaction," that it "saturated patterns of thought and interaction". The authors therefore refer to it not just as an institutional form but as the "slave-relation" (2017, 103-104). Additionally, they refer to slavery as the "the archetypal form of unfree labor, omnipresent in the psychology of all classes" (2017, 109). The ultimate point regarding the centrality of slavery to every-day life which the authors are trying to make, is that it was responsible for achieving an overall level of mediation hitherto before not seen which nevertheless then became permanent. In other words, slavery represents a form of mediation, but slavery itself even in the absence of a slave, or slaves, brought about a society which became mediated society in every-day goings on (2017, 126-127).

required for the “invention of private property,” and slaves being the first instance of this, as well as the abstraction required for the invention of coinage and the subsequent abstraction of the monetary value of slaves on the market, and 3.) slaves being “extensions of the master’s *potestas*” (2017, 112).

If we attempt to summarise Boer and Petterson’s argument of how slavery birthed market trade it may run as follows. The centrality of the slave-relation as the dominant institutional form meant it had an ontically and epistemically formative effect on all of society which worked particularly at an ideological level. Practically, the centrality of the slave-relation to the mode of production meant a constant need to procure more slaves which was done through conquest of outlying territories. This helps us understand not only how the ancient or slave mode of production operated internally but how it perpetuated itself through conquest and colonisation so as to acquire more labour.<sup>95</sup> The ubiquity of slaves and their need to be traded throughout the empire meant that their status had to be precisely defined in a legal way. As an assertion of the *potestas* of the *dominus*, or paterfamilias (an assertion which reflected localised patriarchal tendencies as well as broader cultural ideologies), absolute authority and ownership over the slave (who was defined as *res* or “thing”) was legally established. Slaves, or labour, subsequently became alienable in that they were sold or traded at the market. This required the already present abstraction of human labour to be monetised (sold for coin in the market).

This development represented a legal relation which contained, in its incipient form, the notion of *dominium* or private property. This soon extended to all forms of alienable property which later were traded at market in the same manner as slaves. But the contention of the authors is that the abstraction in thinking occasioning the axial age, and allowing for the first forms of abstraction of value necessary for the advent of coinage,<sup>96</sup> was concomitant with the abstraction of the value of human life, or labour, in the form of slaves. Though it would be anachronistic to speak in such terms, this represents an early commodification, or reification, of the human in so far as the human (slave) is reduced to a *res* (thing).<sup>97</sup> As such, the slave assumes an abstract value and in turn a monetary one. The authors make the final point that, so possessed were slaves of their master’s *potestas*, they exercised an automated agency operating entirely within confines of their master’s will and interests, to the extent that they were able to carry out and conduct all affairs pertaining to their master’s needs (2017, 125-126).

In their contribution to the volume edited by Myles (2019) Boer and Petterson contrast a “capitalist market economy” with a “slave market economy” (2019, 142). If one considers the definition of a “market economy”

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<sup>95</sup> Kyratas’ comments on the feasibility of such acquisition are helpful. He says, for example, “there are certain prerequisites for the conversion of captives into slaves. The society into which they are introduced must be able to keep them under control, circulate them as commodities, and employ them at a profit. Roman society was able to fulfill all these requirements. Once a slave-owning society has been established, slaves may also be reproduced through breeding or other secondary methods, such as piracy and debt bondage.” (2002, 540)

<sup>96</sup> There were however other key factors which facilitated this which we will come to.

<sup>97</sup> The etymology of the English “to reify,” lies in the Latin, *res*. I.e. “to thing-ify” (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/reify>).

defined in the first instance as one which consists of commodities, i.e. where commodities appear in a market on the basis of an equivalent relationship, the labour value which is common to them, they are exchangeable on this basis. But as was said, such a relationship causes a reification, is the beginning of a fetishisation, because it inverts an object's use value and exchange value, where its use value, for the seller of the commodity, now consists in its exchange value. If one then imagines a "slave market economy" we see that there is a similar level of abstraction, in so far as for slaves to be sold at the market, there must be a common value applied to them, which is an abstracted value in money, but represented by their real labour.

In the case of members of the peasantry, regardless through which extractive institutional form they surrendered their labour, this was seen as servile, coloured by the same distinction of free-unfree. Practically, it was also possible for members of the peasantry to fall into actual forms of slavery through debt. The synchronic aspect of this is that those who are freeholding peasants, the category of small independent producers who 'owned' their means of production, potentially could occupy any one of the categories of 'unfree' labour through their lifetime, including debt-slavery. Whether one fell into slavery by military conquest or by debt, one's status was the same (2017, 28). Boer and Petterson write, for example, that "[f]or the Greeks and Romans, it made no difference whether one's servitude was temporary or permanent: they were all seen as *douloi* and *servi*." (2017, 28). The diachronic aspect, and here the authors refer to Ste. Croix's analysis of the period 700 BC to 700 AD, represents shifts in mode of production such that by the later part of this period a system of *coloni* based on indentured servitude (bondage to land) had become prominent with outright slavery featuring less prominently (2017, 29, 26-30). The use of agricultural slavery was initially the most efficient way of engaging in agriculture because it yielded a high surplus and required little coercion. This is effective only over relatively smaller distances, where there is closer proximity of the urban centre to the rural periphery. Here, senior slaves were appointed to oversee the running of estates, a phenomenon witnessed to in the New Testament. We will see though that this emphasis changed with the transition of the Sacred Economy to the ancient mode of production. As is made clear in both *Sacred Economy* and *Time of Troubles* not land but labour was of utmost importance in antiquity and the most effective way to appropriate and control labour was by creating a relationship, however objectively real or not, of bondage to the land (2017, 27-28).

### 3.2.5 Dominant institutional forms in the Sacred Economy

Having considered some of the general features of Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson's (2017) theory and their critique of the Neo-classical approach we now consider in more detail some of the central institutional forms of the Sacred Economy and ancient mode of production. Regarding the Sacred Economy, Boer had stated that the institutional form of (E)states was central to the Palatine regime, dominant for the pre-history of the Old Testament until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE (2015, 31). It then made a resurgence towards the

close of the first millennium BCE. Marx's own theory showed that each mode of production contains inherent contradictions where the possibility of one mode succeeding another lies in its ability to resolve contradictions of the previous mode. Within the succeeding mode there arises a new set of contradictions ultimately leading to the dissolution of the succeeding mode and giving rise to a new one. Boer explains how Soviet-era Marxist scholarship can be helpful in considering this tension and specifically the waning dominance of the Palatine regime towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE.

Here we have an urban elite controlling the institutional form of (E)states. This is their primary means of extracting a surplus from a rural agrarian population, a population which also constitutes the labour force of the (E)states but who are themselves surviving by the institutional form of subsistence-survival (2015, 31). These two institutional forms –the (E)states (both temple and palatine) and that of subsistence-survival– are locked in constant struggle around where labour will be invested. The natural inclination of the peasantry is to support their own livelihood by means of subsistence-survival. However, because the survival of the elite is dependent on their extraction of a surplus, they constantly seek to appropriate the labour of the peasantry to service the (E)states. Throughout Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson's volumes (2017), we see therefore that extractive regimes are concerned in the first instance with the appropriation of labour without which they cannot exist.

In *Time of Troubles*, Boer and Petterson say that for Graeco-Roman society the means of production consist of land, controlled by a ruling elite, as well as a large body of "unfree" labour compelled to surrender a surplus of their produce to the elite class. This body of unfree labour consisted for the period of the New Testament of slaves, which made up a considerable part, and peasants. Among peasants, various economic relations rendered them subordinate: debt-bondage which often included or resulted in bondage in perpetuity; indentured labourers (or serfs), those whose debt tied them not to a creditor but to land, and finally; "small independent producers," which importantly included tenant farmers who paid rent on their land (2017, 27-30).

Boer points out that sourcing sufficient labour is the perennial problem across all modes of production except that of late capitalism. He cites the periodic shortage in labour (which had been constituted by slaves) experienced by the regime of Plunder/tribute-exchange which superseded that of (E)states (Boer 2015, 58). This shortage accounts for the rapid expansion of empires operating by such regimes together with their requirement for war booty. The phenomenon of latifundialism in relation to the Palatine regime may be likened to the expansion of empire at regional level in the form of the regime of Plunder, or any of the three extractive regimes constituting the ancient mode of production (slave, colonial, land). The ostensible geographical expansion in both cases is not simply to gain political power or territorial expansion but primarily to guarantee the dominant regime's labour supply. The refrain appearing in the Gospels, "The harvest is plentiful, but the

labourers are few,” (Matthew 9:37; Luke 10:2a) reflects this reality, particularly at harvest time, when demand for labour increased, something we see evident also in the parable of the day labourers (Matthew 20:1-16).

Boer therefore describes the transition or shift in regime in the first millennium BCE, from Palatine (estates) to one of Plunder, as an extrapolation of the extractive nature of dominant regimes. The ascendancy of the regime of Plunder ultimately paves the way for the Colonial regime and the colonate under the Roman Empire, which we will consider shortly. The main means of co-opting labour, and thus securing a surplus under the Palatine regime, was by way of *corvée* though as we have seen labour could also be co-opted in other ways e.g. indebtedness. A question might arise as to how the ruling elite under the Palatine regime were able to convince or coerce subjugated people to surrender their labour. The answer lies in Boer’s point that throughout much of history a perpetual war has been waged where the prize is the labour of a conquered people.

Bearing in mind that ruling elites provisioned themselves with armies and weapons, conquered peoples were compelled to surrender their bodies, their labour, at pain of death. At this point, we see something of a symbiotic or parasitic relationship which develops, into which enters the institutional form of patronage, one of the other central institutional forms of the Sacred Economy. For while the newly conquered peoples are subservient to princely overlords, and demonstrate this in surrendering their labour, the victorious ruler offers them military protection in return.<sup>98</sup> It may be in the interest of a newly conquered people to remain under the jurisdiction of a princely overlord, periodically surrendering their labour as *corvée*, thereby securing his protection. Should the subjugated people choose to flee elsewhere, thus escaping their *corvée* obligations, they must soon reckon with the fact of being isolated and at the mercy of other marauding armies. So long as they remain under a king’s domain they have his protection. He might in addition throw an odd banquet to honour his subjects thereby demonstrating his benevolence and care. Such arrangements begin to suggest the ideological legitimization of a Palatine system. The king is further helped if he has a temple and priestly class at his disposal, for they may collectively appeal to the deity of the temple and entreat the deity for his protection, providing sacrifice to guarantee this. The subjugated people understand that it is in their interests too to appease both king and deity and so offer tithes and sacrifices as far as their limited means allow.

The regime of Plunder, in contrast, which the Palatine regime ultimately transitioned to, relied on three alternative means of extraction, two of which at first glance do not appear directly related to the co-option of labour. These consist in the booty of newly conquered territories and the tax which ruling elites were able to exact upon newly conquered subjects. Boer describes this tax as a form of plunder but technically it consists in

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<sup>98</sup> There is nothing altruistic about this since it is in the interests of a king to protect his labour supply. In antiquity prisoners of war were enslaved and put to good use through their labour. Given that labour was in short supply marauding armies were always on the lookout for fresh resources. This may indicate that commoditisation in very embryonic form begins as the commoditisation of the human body which is something Boer and Petterson (2017) have already alluded to in their examination of the slave relation.

the material subsistence of a subjugated people so that one can see it as connected to their labour.<sup>99</sup> The third means consisted directly in the supply of slaves.

While the focus in antiquity and in the Sacred Economy is indeed on labour, which was difficult to procure whereas land was plentiful, it would be inaccurate to say that land confiscation was not practised. Taxation, which also took the form of voluntary tithes, was a prevalent means of extraction throughout the Sacred Economy and this enabled, in the first instance, opportunities for indebtedness and therefore for latifundialism. This process, as is witnessed in the biblical record, was practiced from at least the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE so as to disenfranchise labour from land and co-opt it in indentured form.

We will discuss the case for latifundialism later, suffice it to say here that it held a two-fold benefit for the ruling elite: it reconstituted or realigned the means of production to suit their purposes – agricultural output increased as there was a switch to monoculture which also allowed for production of ‘luxury’ items like wine; but, perhaps more importantly, it created a pool of ‘excess’ labour to work the (E)states now owned by the ruling class. While labour appeared primarily in the form of *corvée* in the Palatine regime, as this transitioned to a regime of Plunder, latifundialism featured more prominently as a means of disenfranchisement, i.e. as a means to *create* labour supply, which in certain ways was the precursor to institutional forms like tenure and the colonate. In these latter instances, the emphasis is no longer on the coercion of labour in the form of *corvée* but on bonding labour to land by a quasi-legal state of indebtedness. This helps to explain phenomena like *anachoresis* and censuses. In the former, members of the peasantry fled land they were farming which was regarded by the state as a dereliction of state duties and a criminal offense, while the object of census is not so much to ascertain the taxable size of the population as it is to ensure that people are bound to the land.

#### 2.3.4.1 From Palatine to Plunder, and back again

At this point it may be helpful to consider the reason for the collapse of the Palatine regime in the latter half of the second millennium BCE, what facilitated the rise of the regime of Plunder early in the first millennium BCE, and why the Palatine regime made a resurgence closer to the first century CE. Bearing in mind the overlaps and dialectical nature of the transition between regimes, Boer indicates, in answer to the first question, that the reason is one of distance, influence, and acquisition of labour. Estates are functional and productive so long as they are controlled and administered by a ruling elite or their representatives, who usually reside in urban

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<sup>99</sup> Under the section titled “Plunder, tribute and tax,” Boer cites distinctions among the three: “Plunder” is referred to as what is taken as the spoils of war, where an enemy defeated in battle was guaranteed to have its wealth confiscated (this is a violent and overt process); tribute then becomes what a conquered, now vassal, territory pays the overarching imperial power, to secure its military protection while; tax is what is rendered from ‘citizens’ belonging to the imperial power (2015, 149). All the same, tax and tribute are legitimated forms of plunder, as Boer points out. Regarding the method of tax collection: “the tax collectors often belonged to the same landlord clans that ran estates and engaged in exchange and diplomacy with foreign courts” (2015, 150).

centres. Estates must necessarily be within the domain of an urban centre. The further away an estate the less control the ruling elite exercise over it (the same principle applies in the *polis-chōra* relationship). But the amount of arable land and its fecundity in such a space is finite, and so this poses an inherent limit to the Palatine system. At the same time, the acquisition of labour is notoriously difficult and also finite. Those engaging the extractive measures of a Palatine system were shortsightedly unconcerned over the productive effects their acquisition had on villages operating by subsistence-survival. Where despots appropriated labour without regard to the latter's viability this resulted in the failure of villages to sustain themselves and a shortage of labour as a result (2017, 94). At this point, *anachoresis* becomes a feature where, as mentioned, villagers simply relocate in an attempt to move out of the jurisdiction of the urban elite.

Following the collapse of the Palatine system in the latter half of the second millennium BCE, which may have been due also to supra-regional factors, there was a relatively prolonged hiatus of the extractive economic regimes which had predominated. In turning to the second question, what brought on the regime of Plunder early in the first millennium BCE, we see that the regime of subsistence-survival enjoyed a prolonged reprieve as a result of the collapse of the Palatine system. This allowed for regeneration of subsistence forms of survival, an essential predicate for the regime of Plunder. In addition to a sufficiently healthy population, relatively thriving by way of subsistence-survival, from which to extract a surplus, the regime of Plunder was predicated on three factors: a standing military; the invention of coinage (together with local markets); and a sufficient road infrastructure to allow expedient travel of the military. The modus operandi of the regime of Plunder was as follows: a technologically advanced and efficiently organised military, by means of adequate road system, could travel to previously remote areas and thereby enforce extraction (plunder) in tribute or taxation.

A military on the move and a military travelling to remote areas had to be provisioned and preferably remotely which gave rise to coinage and the small localised markets which traded produce for coin. This requirement facilitated empire's main means of internal extraction, taxation. By exacting tax in coin from the rural peasantry, the ruling class forced it to convert some of its subsistence to coin by exchanging it with soldiers who would intermittently pass through their region or who happened to be stationed there. The wages of soldiers, to enable them to procure food in this manner, were in turn paid in coin (2017, 119-120).<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> The detail of the "invention of coinage" is presented slightly differently in *Sacred Economy* compared to that of *Time of Troubles*. Whereas Boer indicates the advent of coinage was occasioned by the need to provision standing armies remotely in *Sacred Economy*, Boer and Petterson say in *Time of Troubles* that coinage arose at an earlier stage out of a need to pay mercenaries anonymously. I.e. mercenaries could not, or would not, accept payment in booty as this would betray their exploits (by virtue of the fact that their payment could tie them to particular exploits) and potentially alienate them from future employers (2017, 122).

Boer stresses though that the localised markets were not profit-driven initially: being “by-products of state-driven activities” their primary function was the provisioning of militaries (2015, 190).<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, those selling produce, i.e. small-scale subsistence horticulturists, were not doing so to derive a profit but in order to obtain the necessary coin to pay taxes. Their survival was not dependant on the amounts of produce they sold or the coin thereby gained but rather on the remaining produce they did not sell on which they continued to subsist (2015, 187).<sup>102</sup> Based on the advent of this coinage system, and the markets which arose in conjunction with it, rulers of empire realised both an efficient way to provision their armies and derive plunder from newly conquered territories. The regime of Plunder (which would later morph into the ancient mode of production) far exceeded the Palatine regime in scope and scale in terms of its capacity to extract surplus (2015, 190-191).

The expansion of the system of coinage and taxation was intertwined with the expansion of empire and the “reassertion” of control of the *polis* over the *chōra* at macro level (2017, 121) where the latter now included all outlying conquered territories. While the military, with its efficiency of travel, posed the threat of physical reprisal, the system of taxation allowed the ruling elite of the *poleis* to exert and maintain *economic* control from afar over the peasantry. Whereas in the Palatine system one’s subjugation was dependent on one’s proximity to the estate or *polis*, and the level of control it could physically exert in relation to this proximity, in a regime of Plunder not only was the extent of physical control vastly increased (through roads and military) but the system of taxation more effectively ensured economic control over broad expanses of territory.

The increasing hegemony of empire results in the phenomenon of *anachoresis*, a formal term designating dereliction of any one of a number of state duties, e.g. fleeing land one was contractually bound to farm, nonpayment of tax, evasion of military duty etc. Such a crime was formalised in the Roman Empire but was practiced even in the periods preceding. The angst villagers had to reckon with, as mentioned previously, was whether they could afford to be without the military protection of their king or local overlord when facing the threat of new marauding armies should they decide living conditions were too onerous and that relocation was favourable. This being the main factor, as well as finding suitably cultivable land, relocation was easier under the mode of production of the Sacred Economy. In the ancient mode of production, and under Roman rule, such a move was deemed treasonous and in addition one could now be found by Roman military and Roman road. Relocation due to high levels of taxation and unbearable living conditions made one a fugitive of the state. By choosing to forgo one’s quasi-legal status to the land, or the payment of tax, one invariably became a *latro*.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Boer says it is a fairly standard practice for all governments of colonial regimes to force newly-conquered subjects into a market system by imposing tax in coin or currency and thereby compelling local populations to find ways of possessing said currency. On this basis Boer says governments initially facilitate markets not the other way around (215, 188).

<sup>102</sup> Apparently farmers were unphased what they were paid for produce so long as they had enough to pay tax (2015, 187).

<sup>103</sup> Phenomena such as tax evasion, itinerancy, stock theft, and banditry are all related as we will see.

Boer and Petterson suggest that banditry was symptomatic not just of social inequality and unrest but a logical consequence of latifundialism, or the disenfranchisement of the land of the peasantry (whereby their means of subsistence is diminished). It was at the same time the “most telling signal” of efforts of resistance against the appropriation of land and labour.<sup>104</sup> In this vein, banditry may be seen both as a direct result of latifundialism, i.e. high levels of debt, indentured servitude, loss of land, as well as a conscious form of protest against these.

Historically, an influential concept in recent years in New Testament studies is that of Hobsbawm’s social bandit, mainly through its application by Richard Horsley (1979, 1981, 1987, 1988). Today, many scholars question the assumptions of Hobsbawm’s model, partly due to his use of what are seen as legendary or romantic accounts of banditry. We will consider this later by way of scholars who have challenged Hobsbawm. In spite of this, there is still heuristic value in understanding banditry as a symptom of economic breakdown. While the model of the social bandit has been questioned, that banditry – and it is clear from the historical sources that there were different types of bandits in antiquity – generally thrives in, or arises out of, a breakdown in class relations or, to phrase this another way, during transitions in means and modes of production, seems clear. Herein lies the enduring value of Hobsbawm’s position even if it has to be qualified.

We have so far looked at the nature of transition of a Palatine regime to one of Plunder under the mode of production of the Sacred Economy. This represents what strictly speaking was a transition *within the mode of production* of the Sacred Economy toward its decline. Boer and Petterson (2017), in line with conventional Marxist theory, refer to the mode of production presiding over the world of the New Testament as the ancient mode of production. In many ways, it is fair to think of the ancient mode of production as similar to that of the Sacred Economy but operating on a grander scale. To achieve this increase in scale, adjustments had to be made. Both modes of production are consumptive or extractive. In other words, they do not reproduce the resources or labour they require but must seek constantly to procure new albeit ultimately still finite resources.

### 3.2.6 Dominant institutional forms in the ancient mode of production

The three extractive institutional forms by which an increase in scale is achieved in transition from the Sacred Economy to an ancient mode of production are tenure, the *polis-chōra*, and the slave relation. In this transition the *polis* takes on a life of its own. The authors explain how the first *polis-chōra* relationship, embodied initially in the *polis* of Athens, was ostensibly a more symbiotic relationship where those who worked in the *chōra* (agricultural fields surrounding and providing food for the *polis*) also resided in the *polis* and, though constituting unfree labour, were regarded as its citizens. In the transition between modes of production, we also witness the

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<sup>104</sup> Though they cite banditry as a sign of endemic social unrest and resistance, Boer and Petterson say we must distinguish between “brigand chiefs” and “royal pretenders,” a distinction we will try to clarify in considering Grünewald’s work (2017, 148).

expansion of *empire* whereby at the height of Roman rule, those incorporated within Rome's ever-expanding borders are potentially regarded as citizens.<sup>105</sup>

In the ancient mode of production, the *polis-chōra* relation applies across the Roman empire and applies to all Roman colonies where Rome may be seen as the mother *polis* and territories outside her vast borders as the new *chōra*. Newly conquered people automatically become servile whereby, either through the institutional form of the slave relation or that of tenure, they contribute substantially to Rome's material output. In its initial formation, the *chōra* designated the countryside or fields directly surrounding the *polis* in which the *kōmai* or villages were located (2017, 37).<sup>106</sup> However, the *polis-chōra*, again in its initial inception, was regarded as a single entity to the extent that many of the labourers working in the *chōra* resided in the *polis* and all of those labouring in the *chōra* had citizenship of the *polis* (2017, 77). This relationship changed though under Alexander where it evolved into a mechanism of colonisation. By the Roman period, "the *chōra* meant not the fields and villages in the vicinity of the *polis*, but all the colonized territory outside the *polis*, with peasant farming, village communities, as well as wilder areas at the limits of human presence." (2017, 79) Whereas at the outset, the *polis* and *chōra* may have enjoyed a more 'symbiotic' relationship, by the Roman period, the relationship was largely an exploitative and extractive one in favour of the *polis*. Boer and Petterson discuss this in terms of the process of Hellenization which they regard primarily not as a cultural process or phenomenon (as it is conventionally understood) but an economic one. To Hellenize was to "citify," i.e. to create and spread *poleis* where *poleis* always imposed extractive, parasitic relations on the surrounding *chōra* (2017, 79-81).<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> In speaking of the efficacy of the regime of plunder, constituted by the institutional form of tribute-exchange and which ultimately facilitated the expansion of empire and the advent of the ancient mode of production, Boer offers the following: "The distinct advantage of this approach for the economies in question is that it relies, ideally, on the continued viability of both the tribute-giving polities and of the agricultural structures of one's own realm. Both domains (external and internal) boil down to the same reality, for the way a ruler raises tribute to give a foreign potentate is through taxing his own subjects or handing over treasures (usually stored in temples) gathered through earlier taxes. In this light, it is crucial for the institutional form of tribute-exchange that the patterns of subsistence survival continue to function. Why? The village communes of rural areas need to flourish so they can pay taxes, so that in turn a ruler can pay tribute to some other bully who happens to be stronger. The typical pattern was for whole villages to be taxed as distinct units. The initial yield of such a system may be lower than the estate system, for the surpluses from subsistence survival were much smaller and designed for seeing the village through lean times. In principle, nonetheless, taxes and tribute could be spread indefinitely across ever larger stretches of territory, thereby enabling empires." (2015, 150)

<sup>106</sup> "In colonized areas, the *chōra* was the relatively vast area of land outside the Greek-speaking *poleis*. Here local populations lived, worked the land, spoke their own languages, and shared cultural assumptions from well before the Greeks or Romans arrived (it is also the area in which Jesus focuses, at least as represented in the Gospels). Central to the *chōra* was the *kōmē*, which we prefer to translate as village community or commune." (2017, 37)

<sup>107</sup> It seems evident that the process of Hellenization, which Boer and Petterson liken to 'citifying', was indeed fundamentally an economic process. To Hellenize was to citify which involved the expansion, reproduction and duplication of the *polis-chōra* institutional form closely linked or undergirded by the institutional forms of tenure and estates. Colonisation, under the Roman Empire, may be thought of in similar terms where to colonise literally meant to introduce and implant in foreign territories the institutional form of the colonate. Kloppenborg's analysis shows (see comments in his 2010 study, pp.447-450) the extent to which viticulture drove the process of Hellenization and the proliferation of estates throughout the Greek Empire.

The authors go on to state that dynamics of the *polis-chōra* relation played out at two levels in the Roman period, what they refer to as the local and imperial levels (2017, 82). The Roman empire comprised many *poleis* throughout its territory and all of these operated in the fashion described above. At a macro or “imperial” level Rome itself functioned as the ‘mother *polis*,’ exacting tribute and extraction from its ‘baby’ *poleis* throughout the empire.<sup>108</sup> In the midst of these high levels of extraction, and to mediate them, there appeared “various agents, *negotiatores, navicularii, and publicani*” which neo-classical approaches mistakenly describe as a class of entrepreneurial merchants (2017, 84). Rather than being business-minded entrepreneurs, such agents were opportunists who profited secondarily by virtue of the requisite flow of goods from *chōra* to *polis*.

Another important difference, already alluded to, between the Sacred Economy and the ancient mode of production lies in the proliferation of coinage. This is not to say that coinage had been absent prior but Rome, and this speaks to its ability to advance its empire, paid travelling armies in coin while at the same time demanding tax from subjugated people which its armies conquered.<sup>109</sup> I mention this again because it relates to a difference between the Sacred Economy and ancient mode of production at ideological level. Whereas the Sacred Economy, or its dominant regimes, banked on the ideological legitimation of the temple, there is a fetishisation which occurs around the cult of the emperor in the ancient mode of production where this is not unrelated to the proliferation of coinage, each coin being stamped with the emperor’s effigy. At technological and ideological levels the Roman Empire supersedes its predecessors.

The final institutional form to gain ascendancy, which is relevant for this study, is that of the colonate. Both the slave regime and the colonial regime ultimately could not “contain...[the] constitutive resistance” of the institutional form of subsistence survival in its perpetual resistance at cooption of labour (2017, 142). The land regime provides the answer to this and “comes into its own” in the form of the colonate in the third century CE. This marks a change in emphasis from one on labour, which was foremost in the slave regime, to one on land. The colonial regime had begun such a shift, “driven by the reproduction and reconfiguration of space” (2017, 142), precipitated by the expansion of the *polis-chōra* relation. Within the land regime however “labor was fixed to a particular place (*origo*) with the consequent restriction of movement.” (2017, 142) The authors describe the colonate as an extractive system whereby “[a]n individual tenant, or, rather a tenant and his extended family was... tied to the farm or plot under rent... entered into the census in such a category, and would remain so on

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<sup>108</sup> To illustrate the centripetal flow of goods, and the extractive relationship of the *polis* to the *chōra*, the authors cite two examples, one of Sepphoris (as a relatively small and remote *polis* in the Roman empire), and of Rome itself, and the level of extraction these exacted as *poleis* based on estimates of population and food consumption (2017, 82-84).

<sup>109</sup> In this sense coin issued or paid to soldiers helped appropriate material subsistence from the peasantry. But this coin would later be exacted again from the peasantry in the form of tax.

a hereditary basis.” (2017, 143)<sup>110</sup> The *polis-chōra* institutional form of the colonial regime naturally complemented and preceded the institutional forms of tenure and the colonate.

In gaining a better understanding of the reason for this transition, we should see that the land regime, with its institutional form of tenure and later the colonate, could guarantee between one-third and one-half of an estate’s produce compared to roughly ten percent through tax and tribute under the former regimes (2017, 145). As we have also seen, as far as the institutional forms we have considered are concerned, the colonate was the most effective in exercising control (economic, ideological and political) from a distance. The slave and colonial regimes had been unsuccessful in containing and managing the institutional form of subsistence survival and thereby securing a permanent labour supply. The transition to monocultural, which the ruling elite preferred, and the exploitation of more desired crops, also meant higher labour demands – four times higher in the case of viticulture and three times in the case of olive cultivation (2017, 148). Just as the Palatine regime had displayed inherent limitations<sup>111</sup> which precipitated the transition to a regime of Plunder, the Slave and Colonial regimes, toward the end of the first century, began to reach the capacity of their internal limitations which helped facilitate a change in regime. The colonate was eventually realised by a series of decrees and laws which tied peasants on a hereditary basis to specific plots of land. The net effect was to reduce the peasantry to servile or indentured servitude in relation not to an urban-dwelling landlord but to the land itself which could be remote from *poleis* and which was far more productive in terms of output (2017, 147-148).<sup>112</sup>

### 3.2.7 Subsistence survival as an institutional form

Given the central, even if not dominant, role played by subsistence-survival as an allocative institutional form, it will be helpful to consider its features in greater detail. Subsistence survival is the basis of the name of the mode of production of the Sacred Economy, since Boer sees it as providing a material base for the realm of the Sacred.<sup>113</sup> Boer indicates that the transition from a hunter-gatherer society to a sedentary-agrarian one was not

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<sup>110</sup> In the context of a discussion of tenancy Kloppenborg provides a succinct summary of the development of the latter to the Roman colonate saying that “[t]he landlord could not lose in such a system. If the tenant paid the rent in full, the lessor prospered; if the lessee did not, he gained a "dependent tenant" (Foxhall's term), who was even more tightly bound to the land and to the landlord. Eventually this "dependent tenant" model developed into a formal colonate system, in which the tenant was tied to the land by a hereditary bond; clear evidence of which, however, is not found until the time of Constantine.” (2008, 61) Kloppenborg’s appraisal also illustrates the systemic way in which debt is weaponised to advance the development of extractive regimes.

<sup>111</sup> On the limited capacity of estates Boer says, for example, that “[t]he problem with a term such as “estate” is that it conjures up vast realms, with thousands of laborers busily engaged in the myriad tasks of production for the palace. The reality was far more modest. In the Hittite records that have survived, the largest estates have no more than thirty laborers, and it is not uncommon for estates with two or three laborers to appear.” (Boer 2015, 206) This point speaks to one which Boer highlights elsewhere which is another major discrepancy between modern economies and those of antiquity namely that of scale.

<sup>112</sup> The Roman colonate incidentally paved the way later for the medieval feudalism in which the class of serfs emerged.

<sup>113</sup> Boer says, for example, that in the wake of inevitably waning regimes, “the intimate practice of the sacred, with cult corners and the inescapable presence of imps and spirits and demons, dominates again, while the temple on the hill lies in

facilitated by expediency but possibly by the advent of beer and wine which historically went hand in hand with bread making (2015, 69-70).<sup>114</sup> Additionally, we can likely say that in the slow and oscillating transition from nomadism to sedentarism, there may have been an element of coercion. While the neolithic revolution is supposed to have taken place at the same time independently in various parts of the world, “the advantages” of a sedentary lifestyle over a nomadic one “are by no means clear” (2017, 52-54).

The model implemented for sedentary forms of agriculture, which included animal husbandry, was the village commune and typically accommodated 75-150 people (2015, 71). Strips of land (up to 1km long but only as wide as seed could be cast) were held communally and allotted at regular intervals to families to work by means of usufruct (2015, 73). It goes without saying that the notion of private property or private ownership was non-existent.<sup>115</sup> The “spatial production” of a village commune “is of tightly nucleated villages, with the dwellings either jumbled together or in a circular arrangement, surrounded by a highly fragmented landscape of small land shares” (2015, 74). The institutional form of subsistence-survival comprised both sedentary agriculture and pastoral nomadism and communities frequently engaged in both or switched from one to the other depending on expediency. The general rule regarding such preferences is: when times are good people settle and when faced with drought, marauding armies, etc. communities pick up and go.<sup>116</sup> Mobility, or the ability to engage at will in forms of nomadism, is the single most important factor in survival in the face of exogenous threat. The institutional form of subsistence survival operated initially in tension with and under the regime of the (E)states. Whereas in our modern times we have a shortage of land and a surplus of labour, the situation was the opposite in antiquity. Labour was in perpetual short supply and the primary concern for those controlling the means of production (landlord’s or estate owners) was the continual acquisition of new labour.<sup>117</sup>

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ruins. To use a term I have deployed earlier, rural life in village communes was the form of central constitutive resistance, to which the powers had constantly to respond, especially so when imperial armies invaded.” (2015, 199)

<sup>114</sup> “About forty percent of early crops were devoted to alcohol production.” (2017, 44)

<sup>115</sup> Boer refutes the notion of private property ownership or the concept of ‘ownership’ in general in antiquity hence elsewhere he had said that not so much was the land important but it’s usufruct (he maintains that the concept of private property was invented during the Roman period - 2015, 231). In an excursus on private property Boer says, quoting Steinkeller, that “the category of absolute private property in land in ancient economies is “useless, confusing and harmful,” or more fully, the notion that “an individual, separate from a social group, could be sole and exclusive owner of immovable property is a very recent notion; ... it is impossible to speak of private or individual property ... when referring to the situations existing in ancient times.” (Steinkeller in Boer 2015, 230) In other words, the notion that ownership of property or the “title deeds” of a property could pass from one party to another for whatever reason is foreign and anachronistic. The question then becomes about legal and ideological constraints imposed upon the peasant populace regarding the co-option of their labour.

<sup>116</sup> Is this possibly witnessed to in Genesis 46 – in the face of drought, Jacob and his family are forced to find greener pastures in their trek to Egypt? Israel Finkelstein also supports the notion of communities switching between sedentary agriculture and pastoral nomadism for this period depending on what was most expedient, based on archaeological data. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjhoI6G2fF0&list=PLvm7MPUI\\_WJclpUfZgCw1Tfd\\_cyT4Fh-f&index=5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjhoI6G2fF0&list=PLvm7MPUI_WJclpUfZgCw1Tfd_cyT4Fh-f&index=5) accessed on 23.01.2024)

<sup>117</sup> Boer includes a long list of evidence supporting the notion of chronic and perpetual labour shortage for the period: “infant mortality at a rate of 50–60 percent; life expectancy of approximately 30 years; disease cycles; constant mechanisms for securing labor, such as the primary function of debt in order to indenture labor, or standard punishments stipulating periods of indentured labor on royal land or for landlords; laws concerning the treatment of human beings

The problem, however, with the study of the institutional form of subsistence-survival is that it is by nature “aceramic” (2017, 55). Therefore, in its reconstruction one cannot rely solely on the archaeological record. Instead, the evidence which Boer and Petterson consider is historical, zooarchaeological and archaeobotanical. The historical record attests that the institutional form of subsistence-survival endured for millennia and still endures today in many parts of the world. It endured in the Levant right up to the twentieth century. A contention of the authors is that it is highly unlikely that an institutional form of such resilience, present in the ancient Levant prior to the Graeco-Roman period, would be usurped by a ‘market-related’ economy only to reappear after the Graeco-Roman period and endure again until the modern period (2017, 55).

In terms of livestock for the institutional form of subsistence survival, “[s]heep and goats were the key, with a 2:1 ratio of sheep and goats.” (2017, 55) These were favoured over the husbandry of pigs and cows for a few reasons. Sheep and goats consume less water; they can travel further from water sources and for this reason can cope with higher temperatures; if there was still a relation between nomadic forms of life and sedentary ones and some interchange between these, it was far easier to transport sheep and goats over vast distances; both sheep and goats produce milk and fibres which pigs do not – while there is archaeozoological evidence for pigs in Syria-Palestine, during the Graeco-Roman period they do not feature prominently; cattle, presumably because of the great expense required to rear them, were not bred for consumption but for traction and therefore were not required in large quantities (2017, 55-57).

The production of alcohol, as mentioned, had always been a salient part of sedentary life and while the rural peasantry typically produced beer, in the Graeco-Roman era, among the elites wine was the beverage of choice, to the extent that much land was devoted to viticulture (2017, 60). Boer and Petterson cite an article by Kloppenborg (2008) which examines the prevalence of viticulture during the Graeco-Roman period and its encroachment upon subsistence-survival. We consider this in greater detail later. Regarding the cultivation of grains, the other significant point is the elite preferred finer wheat specimens which could produce a more

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pledged for labor; laws concerning injury to able-bodied human beings, thereby rendering them unfit for labor, as well as protection of fetuses; the absence of evidence for contraception and abortion; the focus on usufruct in legislation; deportations, especially by the larger empires in the first millennium such as Assyria; treaties, edicts, and correspondence that often include clauses concerning fugitives; evidence of rural laborers abandoning estates and fields and joining Habiru groups; documents of estate administration, such as those from Ugarit, which provide lists of estates, laborers, yields, and tools, but simply ignore the extent of the estates themselves; the high cost of labor where landlords had to pay for it, outside the palatine sector; the routinely low cost of land where it was transferred and despite evident fluctuations; and the constant desire for more people, as expressed in the covenants and blessings of Gen 12, 15, 17, 22, and 35, plus Num 22–24.” (Boer 2015, 70). He later says in the conclusion of this chapter, “[w]ithout people to work the land and without the production of items needed for human survival, not to speak of the survival of flora and fauna, land by itself was useless. That is, usufruct and labor were the keys. Time and again, an invader would find a village and its lands empty of people, which rendered the land worthless. And the people knew full well that to vacate the territory would render it so... for the issue here was not the land of the estate but the labor desperately needed for it and the produce it would provide to feed those who did not labor so.” (Boer 2015, 79)

refined bread, while the peasantry, because of the hardness of the grain, its resistance to disease and requirement of less water, preferred the hulled species of wheat and other grains (2017, 60).

Regarding the structure and composition of dwelling spaces the authors state that “[a]rchaeological surveys indicate that villages of less than 4 hectares (10 acres)—including orchards, fields, and grazing lands—comprised more than 90 percent of all settlements.” (2017, 61) Typically, such villages would accommodate 75-150 people, as mentioned, though increasing strain from surplus appropriation by the *poleis* resulted in the amalgamation of such villages to the extent that these sometimes housed up to 2000 individuals by the Graeco-Roman period (2017, 62). Such villages would have comprised a common courtyard around which were located “dwelling clusters” (2017, 62). The latter usually comprised a single-roofed room utilised for various activities including storage, sleeping, and eating during inclement weather. Occasionally, attached to this single-roofed room were *insulae* which could accommodate younger couples beginning a family. The courtyard itself was common and formed the centre of the dwelling space being devoted to other daily activity not related to agricultural labour, e.g. “cooking, storage (water as well), washing, growing vines, keeping animals, as well as socialising” (2017, 63). As mentioned previously, a large portion of village life (i.e. of subsistence survival) would have been aceramic due to the constantly changing and fluctuating rhythms of life, the need to adapt to one’s natural environment, the relatively low concentration of material culture, as well as the occasional need to escape the purview of the urban elite by engaging in a form of nomadism (2017, 64).<sup>118</sup>

As a feature of village life in first-century Palestine the authors emphasise the highly communal nature of everyday activities. They stress that this stems not from some altruistic ideal but from what they refer to as the “allocative need of subsistence survival economics” (2017, 66). People cooperated and shared resources out of necessity. This flexibility and need to share extended to the area of labour where both sexes interchangeably took part in almost all areas of labour (2017, 67). In spite of the overriding need for communality and cooperation, village life and the institutional form of subsistence-survival were not entirely free of exploitation. This is not that imposed upon the village by external institutional forms but internal to the village and the institutional form of subsistence survival itself. To begin with, all ancient society, including the village, was both patriarchal and hierarchical. Typically, a village was overseen by a clan leader and it was possible for these and other members of the village through hereditary claims and even elections to accrue power (2017, 69). These

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<sup>118</sup> Regarding the aceramic and impermanent nature of the archaeological record of rural communities, the authors highlight the methodological misguidedness of so-called “household archaeology”. A single stone structure is regarded as representing a “nuclear” family, which in turn is mistakenly assumed as the foundational economic unit, while one with attendant *insulae* is said to represent the habitation of an “extended” family (2017, 64-65). The authors cite Morris’ likely mistaken assumption that an increase of dwellings with such extended structures in the first century CE represents an increase in standard of living, whereas the converse is likely true. The increased appropriation of land forced not necessarily extended family but fellow kinsfolk to amalgamate their dwelling spaces (2017, 65). In any event, the categories of household archaeology if not anachronistic are overly rigid according to the authors.

dynamics could be undergirded, or undercut, by patronage systems (2017, 69). Engels had distinguished between small (or small-holding) peasants, for whom the vicissitudes of life and demands of surplus were often exacting, middle peasants, who were often at the brink of becoming small peasants, and big peasants, who had the means to exploit the other two category of peasant (2017, 70).

### 3.2.8 Ideological factors

The institutional forms of patronage, kinship-household and subsistence survival often functioned alongside each other. Boer says that while patronage at times overlapped and appeared similar to kinship-household, the main difference was the familial bonds and ties which demarcated the legitimate 'territory' of the head of the clan in a kinship-household system. A leader of a patronage network may gather his 'clients' from many different families, clans and classes without regard for family ties and allegiances (2015, 106). Boer explains how patronage is sometimes a natural precursor in the transition from a kinship-household system to a monarchical one and cites David's rise to power as an example of this. Patronage has the advantage of gaining a much wider support base and is not fettered by clan or kinship ties (2015, 106). Boer refers to David's "gang of bandits," listing their mobility, or nomadism, as an advantage.<sup>119</sup> So while there is a close relationship between kinship-household systems and systems of patronage, the latter can operate both as an allocatory and extractive system (2015, 108) and the "language" of kinship-household is often used within a patronage system to provide ideological legitimization, to give the patron an air of benevolence (2015, 108).

In his discussion of class, Boer explains its objective and subjective aspects. Objectively, class is the relation of various groups to the means of production, where those who own or control the means of production are also the ruling class (2015, 121-122). The subjective dimension involves assuming a "consciousness [which] includes a complex web of cultural assumptions, modes of speech, social codes, world outlook, and religion." (2015, 122) This subjective dimension will become pertinent when we consider discourse within peasant societies in a short while. In *Time of Troubles*, and with reference to Ste. Croix, class is defined simply by two relationships: one's relationship to the means of production and; one's relationship to other classes.<sup>120</sup> In addition to these two relationships, or factors, Ste. Croix stipulates a third, namely economic exploitation.<sup>121</sup> As

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<sup>119</sup> It is interesting that in the context of a patronage system, Boer makes mention of banditry. And indeed, this is how David is characterised when he breaks ties with Saul and makes his own overtures at power. We will see in Grünewald's review of banditry in the Roman empire that the usurper and throne pretender were among the groups cited under the term *latrocinium*. One wonders then why Boer, from an economic point of view, has not considered banditry more closely, or even understood it perhaps in the likeness of an economic institutional form.

<sup>120</sup> The writers go on to say that "[a] class society exists when a particular (usually small) class controls the conditions or means of production and is thereby able to appropriate a surplus at the expense of other classes which do not control or own the means of production." (2017, 26)

<sup>121</sup> The authors write that "class struggle may be defined in economic terms, designating a situation when the system of exploitation is perpetuated and, most importantly, when it meets resistance. Class struggle is endemic to classes, involving constant tensions, struggles, and violence in the everyday experience of life." (2017, 26)

the authors indicate, economic exploitation is invariably concomitant with class struggle since it is a natural human response to resist the appropriation of one's labour. Class struggle, as a heuristic category, is helpful in explaining social phenomena which arise out of this. The phenomenon of banditry can scarcely be understood apart from the category of class/class conflict. It is this antagonism which fuels forms of resistance, some more conscious or overt than others, among the peasantry and of which the parables themselves are an example.

Boer says that while, as allocative and extractive institutional forms respectively, subsistence survival and (E)states assume oppositional positions to one another, the institutional form of (E)states surreptitiously assimilates aspects of subsistence survival such as language and metaphor so as to give the form of the (E)states a false guise of familiarity to those it has coopted (2015, 123-124), just as the institutional form of Patronage does with kinship-household. Under a Palatine regime, Boer suggests that the ruling elite made up no more than 2% of the total population for the period in question. Because of their voracious desire for renewed labour supplies, this elite were of the mind that it was in the best interests of the peasantry to be incorporated within the labour force of the Palatine system. Indeed, this was their ideal and inevitable fate. So long as they remained subsistence producers they were stigmatised and demoralised (2015, 124-125). This ideological slant of the ruling elite, the fact that they viewed the peasantry as being inherently subordinate and prone to manual labour, coloured the way the ruling elite wrote about them. Boer treats the creation myths in Genesis 1-3, for example, and particularly the situation of the man and the woman in the garden of Eden, their disobedience, and their punishment and expulsion from the garden, as a form of propaganda reflecting such ideological tenets of the ruling class, i.e. an attempt to both legitimise, and convince the peasantry of the favourableness of, the Palatine system and their participation in it (2015, 126).

Of the debt jubilees, which according to Boer were a consistent feature in ancient Mesopotamian societies, these were mechanisms of amelioration and "barometers of economic instability" (2015, 160). They are thus an important example of *régulation*, in that existing in a perpetual state of crisis or being close to a state of collapse, they relieved some of the stress within the greater mode of production which inevitably would have boiled over, these being caused by debt and destitution. But here at least superficially we are presented with a dilemma, for on the one hand such examples of amelioration, including passages like Nehemiah 5, according to Boer are examples of *régulation*. At the same time, we do not know the extent to which such measures were implemented. A similar dilemma presents us with the advent of the prozbul which we consider later. Was this, and other supposedly ameliorative measures, introduced to serve the interests of the exploited class or the ruling class, were they a means of amelioration or *régulation* and to what extent were they implemented?

In as much as the work of Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017) has been considered in detail to offer a theoretical backdrop for the worlds of the Old and New Testament, what I hope has also been apparent is a

sense of the progression of extractive regimes. Without wishing to present a philosophical question, what can only be due to the greed of man, throughout history those positioned advantageously over their fellows have sought to leverage and further entrench this advantage. In the section which follows, I consider the work of four scholars, Eric Wolf, Douglas Oakman, David Fiensy and John Kloppenborg, who deal with the subjects of rent, debt and latifundialism respectively, from within peasant-agrarian societies (the latter three specifically in the world of the New Testament).

### 3.3 Closing observations

In the sixth and final chapter of *The Sacred Economy* Boer considers the notions of “crisis” and “collapse” relative to the perspectives of the ruling class and the peasantry. Applying, as he does throughout his work, the central insight of *régulation*, that societies (or modes of production) exist in perpetual states of crises and seek to mitigate these, Boer poses the question of whether such states of crises were viewed as such by the peasantry. Times of crisis and collapse undoubtedly represented this for the ruling elite but for the peasantry were “a blessed relief from various means of extraction.” (2015, 196) This results in a somewhat paradoxical situation “in which crisis actually becomes stability, imbalance becomes balance,” for the vast majority of a region’s population (2015, 199). As Boer also highlights, this contradiction is witnessed in the archaeological record, where data which indicate decline or collapse in material culture are interpreted historically as a lowered standard of living for the given population.<sup>122</sup> In reality, such data and the ‘decline’ or ‘collapse’ thereby represented, would have meant an alleviation of burdensome tax, corvées etc. for the majority of the population, and thus an improvement in living standards and in the functioning of subsistence-survival (2015, 199).

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<sup>122</sup> In addition to this observation regarding the field of archaeology Boer, in an excursus on sources for animal husbandry data, criticises archaeologists Hesse and Wapnish who though seemingly provide plentiful and “useful” data work within “a narrative of specialization” (2015, 227). This according to Boer is a hang-up of an approach that consciously or unconsciously is neo-liberal, i.e. that there could be data in faunal remains which suggests the embryonic forms of a specialised or market-driven economy in animal husbandry. We will return to this point later when we consider archaeological studies for the purpose of this research. There are scholars (cf. Sasson, 2008) who within the field of archaeology refute the presence of specialisation.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PEASANT-AGRARIAN SOCIETIES

*“Again, take those who do not serve as soldiers or go to war, but work the land: they sow and reap, and lay the harvest before the king. They compel each other to pay him their tribute.”*

(1 Esdras 4:6, Revised English Bible)

### 4.1 Introduction

As with any academic study, one’s theory or theoretical framework determines the interpretation of data. To my mind, the more thorough or extensive one’s theory, the more comprehensive the inferences drawn from available data. In the main, I have used the two works by Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017) for the theory informing this study. In this following section, I wish to supplement this with theory focused on peasant-agrarian societies as well as from New Testament scholars who have written on aspects of first-century economy.

Before proceeding, it might be helpful to carry with us a characterisation of peasant society from Ste. Croix’s work cited in *Time of Troubles*. With reference to Ste. Croix, Boer and Petterson provide a rather long and varying list of features salient to a peasantry: they “possess, whether or not they own, the means of agricultural production by which they subsist; they provide their own maintenance from their own productive efforts, and collectively they produce more than is necessary for their own subsistence and reproduction”; they “are not slaves . . . and are therefore not legally the property of others; [but] they may or may not be serfs or bondsmen”; “[t]heir occupation of land may be under widely differing conditions: they may be freeholders, lessees (at a rent in money, kind or shares, and combined or not with labor services), or tenants”; “[t]hey work their holdings essentially as family units, primarily with family labor, but occasionally with restricted use of slaves or wage-labor”; “[t]hey are normally associated in larger units than the family, usually in villages”; “[t]hose ancillary workers (such as artisans, building and transport workers, and even fishermen) who originate from and remain among the peasants may be considered as peasants themselves” and finally; “[t]hey support superimposed classes by which they are exploited to a greater or less degree, especially landlords, moneylenders, town-dwellers and the organs of the State to which they may belong, and in which they may or may not have political rights.” (2017, 70-71)

As we consider some of the general features of peasant-agrarian societies, it may be helpful to consider the legitimacy of the term *peasant* about which there has been some debate.<sup>123</sup> In a chapter contributing to a volume edited by Fiensy (whose work we consider later), Oakman (2013) discusses the validity as well as real

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<sup>123</sup> Though he does not say why Boer does not frequently use the term in *Sacred Economy* (2015).

or perceived biases of the term.<sup>124</sup> Oakman's article highlights the obvious limitation of all sociological models and heuristic categories. As he points out, all historical studies are by nature *etic*, meaning we cannot avoid the application of what are in the final instance foreign models to ancient societies. To my mind, and at the risk of making a superficial assessment, the disagreement is a methodological one. For theorists and archaeologists who assume a maximalist position<sup>125</sup> regarding issues of economy and social stratification in antiquity, "peasant" implies a class relation, and carries Marxist connotations which maximalists would rather avoid.

Such positions feature within larger debates which have been framed in various ways, with terms like 'primitivist' and 'modernist,' 'maximalist' and 'minimalist,' 'formalist' and 'substantivist,' market forms of economy (or disembedded forms of economy) and embedded forms of economy.<sup>126</sup> Within the debate, the term "peasant," as noted, is eschewed by those aligned with a neo-classical position because apart from its admitted ambiguity it denotes class relations. What is at stake though in the broader debate is the positing of the existence of a market economy in antiquitous societies and, on this basis, the ability to draw inferences of similarity to our own, present-day society. It goes without saying that there are polemical and ideological factors emanating from modern political dispositions which contribute to theorists assuming these positions. It should be clear though that the use of MPT forces us to consider questions of class because central to MPT is the consideration of the means of production and who owns/controls this.

It may be worth citing a chapter by Cadwallader (2019) titled "Peasant Plucking in Mark: Conceptual and Material Issues" in *Class Struggle in the New Testament*. Like Oakman, Cadwallader focuses on the legitimacy of the term 'peasants'. He says that Ste. Croix had maintained, in his consideration of Ancient Greece, that while peasants indeed made up the bulk of the population, they were not primarily responsible for providing the surplus by which the elite subsisted, which instead fell to slaves. Hence, and this is Cadwallader's point on Ste. Croix's observation, the adversarial relationship, or class antagonism, supposed to have existed between

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<sup>124</sup> Oakman, D.E. "Execrating? or Execrable Peasants!" in Fiensy, D.A and Hawkins, R.K. 2013. *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*. Series: Early Christianity and its Literature. O'Day, G. (Gen.Ed.). Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature. Examples of those who outrightly oppose the use of the term *peasant* are Aviam and Mattila where "Aviam completely rejects the use of "peasant" as an interpretive category...[and] Sharon Mattila...urge[s] that the term "peasant" simply be dropped." (Oakman 2013, 152).

<sup>125</sup> Terms like 'maximalist' and 'minimalist,' 'formalist' and 'substantivist,' 'disembedded' and 'embedded' broadly speaking designate two camps. The former (which scholars like Boer sometimes identify with a classical or neoclassical paradigm) views ancient economies as bearing similar features to modern economies, though on a smaller scale; the latter group finds little basis for comparison of modern and ancient forms of economy and hence adopts a substantially different heuristic for understanding ancient economies. The terms 'maximalist' and 'minimalist' are more commonly associated with the field of archaeology, where the tendency of the former group is to 'maximise' archaeological data in terms of the inferences made for the scale of ancient economy (Osiek 2002, 96).

<sup>126</sup> Boer and Petterson say in *Time of Troubles* that Polanyi reframed the primitivist-modernist debate in terms of formalism and substantivism (2017, 19) but the derivation of these terms, not least what they designate, is obscure. Does 'substantive,' for example, refer to economic processes being *substantial to* the society in question, i.e. being "embedded," or does it refer to forms of economy which are *substantially different from* modern forms of economy?

peasants and the propertied elite is without basis (Cadwallader 2019, 69-70).<sup>127</sup> Kloppenborg however maintains, based on Mishnaic evidence, that first-century Judea and Galilee were something of an anomaly in the ancient Mediterranean in that slaves did not feature prominently in the agricultural sector (2008, 40, 58).

According to Cadwallader, Halvor Moxnes identifies part of the Third Quest for the Historical Jesus with the quest for the historical Galilee, i.e. to consider in greater detail the social (and economic) context from which Jesus emerged. Thus the “economy wars” referred to by the likes of Fiensy (2013, 173) are related to, or even stem out of, this supposed Third Quest. Cadwallader cites Fiensy as generally unsupportive of an overly-burdened peasantry in first-century Galilee, and of the presence of estates in particular, citing Fiensy’s *Christian Origins* (2014). We see later however how Fiensy (2014, 2017) modifies, perhaps even reverses, his position regarding estates in later studies.<sup>128</sup>

#### 4.2 Wolf on rent

*“In the course of cultural evolution...simple systems have been superseded by others in which control of the means of production, including the disposition of human labour, passes from the hands of the primary producers into the hands of groups that do not carry on the productive processes themselves, but assume instead special executive functions, backed by the use of force.”* (Wolf 1966, 3)<sup>129</sup>

In terms of the transition made in many regions across the globe, from forms of nomadism to sedentary agriculture Wolf, as Boer does in his analysis, acknowledges a level of reluctance (1966, 4). This is because, contrary to what may seem rational, sedentary life is relatively difficult and comes with its own attendant risks. Without dwelling on it, the point is that the transition from nomadic lifestyles to sedentary ones is sometimes occasioned by compulsion or coercion, viz. to produce the “fund of rent” which Wolf sees as a defining feature of peasant society. We will now consider in greater detail how such funds are apportioned.

In terms of the apportionment of produce generally within a peasant family, Wolf provides a case study of a fifteenth-century 40-acre farm in Germany, where more than half of the grain produced annually went to retainer seed and feed for animals (1966, 6). Of the 4000 pounds of net-grain left over, 2700 had to be paid in rent,

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<sup>127</sup> “Ste. Croix’s detailed demonstration of the ubiquity of slavery and its crucial contribution as the fuel for the ancient Mediterranean economy potentially displaces the accent on “peasantry” and complicates the definition of the group” (Cadwallader 2019, 70).

<sup>128</sup> Cadwallader is ambiguous about the material conditions of the immediate context of the Jesus movement, though by the end of his chapter he has called Jesus an “organic intellectual,” using Gramsci’s phrase (2019, 81). He is also reticent to apply the term ‘peasant’ as a sociological or heuristic category to that immediate context and instead focuses attention on Mark as a literary product, which he says reflects the concerns of a “cultural peasantry” (2019, 76, 79). This concept is applied to those who somehow share in the concerns of an actual peasantry. Cadwallader maintains that among the writings of “elite agriculturalists” (2019, 79) for the Roman period is evidence of Gramsci’s “organic intellectual” and the type of “cultural peasantry” which shares in the sentiments of a real peasantry or is sympathetic towards it.

<sup>129</sup> Oakman says that in James Scott’s opinion, Wolf’s *Peasants* is one of the best examples of a synthetic approach in economic studies (Oakman 2013, 143).

effectively leaving the family to subsist on 1300 pounds per annum or 1600 calories a day (400 calories lower than the caloric minimum) (1966, 9). In his consideration of the caloric minimum, which he places at between 2000-3000 calories a day, Wolf says there “are neither technical nor social reasons” why the horticultural producer should spend his energies to produce anything beyond this (1966, 6). The incentive or impetus to produce what is beyond one’s caloric minimum can only be cultural in nature. Therefore, in addition to guaranteeing the caloric minimum and replacement funds,<sup>130</sup> the horticultural producer is compelled to produce a *cultural fund* which catered to the cultural requirements of a person or family, carried out in the context of prescribed mores or rituals, e.g. payment of dowry, courtship (of a bride’s family), wedding ceremony, etc. Above and beyond these three funds, the replacement fund (constituted by retainer seed), and cultural fund, the horticultural producer possesses no incentive to produce a surplus.

Wolf offers a preliminary definition of *rent* as consisting in the “superior claim to [a peasant’s] labour on the land...regardless of whether [such] rent is paid in labor, in produce, or in money.” (1966, 9) He goes on to say that “[i]t is this production of a fund of rent which critically distinguishes the peasant from the horticultural producer.” (1966, 10). In addition, at this point “peasant” denotes “an asymmetrical structural relationship between producers of surplus and controllers.” (1966, 10) In summary, in differentiating “peasant” from other social categories, e.g. commercial farmer and primitive agriculturalist, Wolf reminds us that the efforts of a peasant are not aimed at economic contribution to, or gain from, a ‘market economy,’ since the peasant’s first and last concern is the physical sustenance of his household, and secondarily, his cultural obligations. Above and beyond this he will only ever produce a surplus under compulsion or coercion (1966, 10).

Based on Wolf’s insights the peasant does not willingly produce or surrender his surplus but is compelled to whether by threat of blunt force, foreclosure on land, or the more subtly persuasive ideology of the temple. We will go on to see that the concept of class, and its employment as a heuristic tool, is better understood when we perceive the relation in which social groups stand to the means of production, which is indeed what Wolf has been alluding to up until now. The class or social group which is perceived as ‘owning’ the means of production is the dominant class and that responsible for the extraction of a surplus.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Wolf designates various ‘funds’ which are helpful for conceptual purposes in understanding the dynamics of agrarian societies. He says, for example, that “[t]he amount needed to replace...minimum equipment for both production and consumption [is the]...replacement fund.” (1966, 6) In this regard, and with reference to technological development, Wolf says that people become culturally bound to certain technologies. Whereas in primitive eras people made use of rudimentary tools, the advent and appropriation of advanced tools meant that these were seen as not only technologically beneficial but as culturally necessary.

<sup>131</sup> While it is true that this elite class does not in a conventional sense “own” the land and tools responsible for producing a surplus, in a tributary mode of production there is a sort of collective ownership of land presided over by the temple precinct, depending on the specific permutations of the given mode of production, as well as the prevailing perception that the land ultimately belongs to the deity of that region (or temple). Wolf, for example, says of the peasant that in such societies there exists a “superior claim to his labour on the land” (1966, 9). We deal more extensively with the nature of the means of extraction in ancient societies in the work that follows. Interestingly, Wolf does not regard the city, or an

Citing Chaianov, Wolf (1966, 15-16) says that the outlook of the peasant is in no way economic in the conventional sense. Peasant households do not understand themselves as economic units – their motive is not ‘financial profit’ but the need to harvest enough to subsist on annually. In this light, the peasant household is both a “productive” and “consumptive” unit (1966, 13) whose labour is not understood in terms of wages but in its capacity to produce the requisite harvest to subsist on. While there is diachronic and geographical consistency in terms of some features of peasant societies it should be noted that Wolf is ultimately concerned with modern peasant societies. Therefore, naturally, factors such as market economy, wage labour, and monetary payment feature to a greater extent in modern peasant societies.

Wolf explains that a peasantry is invariably faced with two options in light of the inexorable pressures placed on it by the compulsion to produce rent. Members of the peasantry may reduce their consumption (perhaps the more obvious and less complicated option, though itself with attendant risks given their already close proximity to the caloric minimum) or they may improve their economic standing. In order to achieve the latter, given the limited financial parameters in which peasants operate, they have little option but to cut back on their cultural or ceremonial fund which means forfeiting certain cultural obligations. Such efforts toward personal enrichment mean that they may forego cultural ties with the larger community. This dynamic is pertinent with regard to what Boer and Petterson refer to as the “big peasant” in antiquitous economies, who seeks to exploit his fellow peasants by enriching himself at their expense (Boer and Petterson 2017, 68).

Regarding the means of production for such societies, Wolf refers to the “paleotechnic ecotype” and, within this, the “short-term following system”. Given its prevalence in Europe and Central Asia it is sometimes referred to as “Eurasian grain farming” (1966, 20-21). Within the Eurasian grain farming ecotype, Wolf identifies the “Mediterranean ecotype” as a sub-ecotype (1966, 32). Because of the relative shortage of labour, to ensure greater efficiency and productivity, the “scratch-plow, *ard*, or *aratrum*” is pulled by either a single animal or a pair, and because this ecotype experiences relatively low rainfall and in winter, the conservation of moisture in the soil is important. Hence the “scratch-plow” is used so as not to plough too deeply thereby damaging the soil capillary system. In light of the winter rainfall, seed is sown in autumn months and crops harvested in spring, while cultivable land is often halved with each portion being used alternately for planting and pasturage.

The cultivation of tree crops (Wolf cites olives and pistachios) is also not uncommon in this ecotype as well as that of grape vines. Though he mentions this in the context of more modernised economies, Wolf cites a link

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urban centre, as the decisive or even necessary feature of peasant societies. Whereas the stereotypical image of the parasitic city-state features prominently in our conceptions of extractive modes of production, Wolf says it is the formation of the state, not necessarily constituted by a city or urban centre, which facilitates the creation of a peasant class (1966, 10-11). Viewed from a technological perspective, and against the backdrop of Marxist theory, one might regard the city as precisely that nexus of class relations, and locus of reification, commoditisation and fetishisation – the congealment of human labour – which facilitates, in the minds of men, an inversion of that which is substantially real and that which is materially manifested in the larger mode of production.

between such secondary cultivation and urban centres which benefitted from it (1966, 32).<sup>132</sup> The Mediterranean ecotype, because of its labour-intensiveness, usually comprised extended family units with duties and responsibilities being shared across ages and genders. Having considered such an ecotype from the point of view of agricultural production, Wolf indicates how they subsisted at a secondary level, i.e. how they provisioned themselves with necessary goods and services. The model he offers which most closely resembles that offered by Boer – a collective of nuclear families, usually related, farming an area by allocating field shares – is of the south Slav *zadruga*. Many of the features of this social arrangement resemble those Boer offers for communities in ancient Southwest Asia in *Sacred Economy*:

*“A zadruga comprised a number of nuclear families—husband and wife teams, with their respective offspring; its total membership was on average between 20 to 40. The members of a zadruga were usually related, but often included adopted or unrelated members... Such a unit claimed common rights to fields, orchards, gardens, vineyards, livestock, pasture, and flax- and hemp-working shops. Food, medicines, shelter, clothing, and furniture were produced within the zadruga... The zadruga owned and managed its inventory of possessions as a unit; members maintained only share rights.”* (Wolf 1966, 38)

Wolf then considers the makeup of such societies at a broader level, specifically the means of extraction by the ruling classes. He deals in detail with the concept of a *domain* and explains in turn the three types of domain, namely the *prebendal*, *patrimonial* and *mercantile* (1966, 50-51).<sup>133</sup> Although he says these were often intermingled, the two which concern us are the prebendal and patrimonial, since the third assumes both developed forms of economy and private property. We could venture to say that while combinations of these existed for the period under our consideration, for a tributary or Asiatic mode of production, the prebendal was dominant while for the ancient or slave mode of production, and by the time of the Roman colonate, the patrimonial was likely dominant.<sup>134</sup>

The patrimonial domain, Wolf says, may also be referred to as the “feudal” domain though he would dissuade us from using this term given its polyvalence in this field of study (1966, 50). It refers to the dominion a lord exercises over the inhabitants of an area which is assigned on a hereditary basis and entitles him to exact tribute from the inhabitants in exchange for their occupancy of the land (1966, 50). A prebendal domain in

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<sup>132</sup> The advent of widespread viticultural production in the ancient Mediterranean and its effect of labour patterns is consider in more detail later through Kloppenborg’s work.

<sup>133</sup> Conceptually, this seems to be connected to the concept of *dominium* which Boer and Petterson discuss at some length and which informed and facilitated the development of the notion of private property, for both domain and *dominium* have their etymological root in *dominus*, meaning “lord, master, owner” (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/domain>; accessed on 20/07/2023). Interestingly, the medieval etymology of the modern word ‘villain’, *villein*, meaning a peasant or serf, suggests that there was not only a moral denigration of the villein, but is suggestive of the antagonism between the villein and the feudal lord. This designation is reminiscent of the usage of *latro* in antiquity which likewise carried not only negative moral connotations, from the point of view of the ruling elite, but communicated relations of hostility.

<sup>134</sup> Gottwald (1983, 35) discusses the use of these models regarding ancient Canaanite society.

contrast was not hereditary but based on the assumption of offices by bureaucratic or administrative figures. Such offices represented the state or sovereign and were responsible for collecting revenues on its behalf. Those occupying them either received salaries from the state (hence prebend) having submitted collected revenues, or were allowed to keep a portion of the revenues, as in the case of tax farms (1966, 51).

### 4.3 Oakman on debt

We now consider a helpful discussion on peasant economy and associated terminology with specific reference to ancient Galilee. In reviewing the term “peasant” and in considering its connotations of class dynamics, Oakman is concerned to establish at the very least a “subordinate rural labor” force as “typical in the [ancient] eastern Mediterranean world” (Oakman 2013, 143). According to Oakman, Firth maintained that “peasant” need not refer exclusively to small-scale subsistence farmers but could include “fishermen and rural craftsmen” who were nevertheless part of the same social class as the farmer (2013, 144).

Oakman makes inferences about the mode of production of first-century Galilee, saying that agriculture was characterised by “low yield based as it was upon the animal-drawn iron plow and iron hand implements (hoe, scythe, etc.)” (2013, 147) something we saw in Wolf’s model of the Mediterranean sub-ecotype. It is worth including a portion of a quote which Oakman cites from Schneider. He is quoted as saying that “[u]nder the conditions of ancient technology, human muscle power remained one of the most important energy sources...[where a]gricultural work in particular was highly physical work, done with simple tools such as hoe, sickle, or scythe.” (2013, 147) This acknowledgment has important ramifications for the limits of agricultural output for the society in question at the time.

According to Oakman, archaeological evidence throughout ancient Galilee points to the existence of small plots (Oakman’s estimate is on average 0,6 hectares per adult), supporting the notion of large-scale subsistence production for this period. Citing Lenski, he again says that “peasants and (iron) hand tools were the foundation of agricultural production.” (2013, 148) In exploring whether first-century Palestine may rightly be referred to as a peasant society, and in citing the work of Thorner, Oakman addresses the question of agricultural output (2013, 148). Given that for such a society, “half or more of the total production must be agricultural,” and given the technological limitations of this period, the only conceivable way for agricultural production to proceed was by means of small-scale subsistence farming. In other words, the agricultural output required for such a period did not magically appear but had to be produced, and this by a vast majority of agricultural workers functioning as free-holding subsistence farmers.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Kyratas says that the Roman Empire for example, “derived as much as twenty times more from agricultural tax than from trade and industry taxes” (Kyratas 2002, 536).

With this background, in *Jesus, Debt and the Lord's Prayer*, Oakman considers evidence to ascertain levels of debt in first-century Palestine, since this is supposedly one of the principal ways the ruling elite gained control of the peasantry. He says a distinction should be drawn between both Galilee and Judea as well as evidence of a "particular" nature and that of a "general" one (2014, 23). In the context of the first-Jewish revolt, and in discussing the work of Goodman, Oakman lists three areas of evidence: "the flouting of usury laws"; the *prozbul*; and the burning of debt records at the temple (2014, 23). This third instance is perhaps the most compelling for the presence of high debt levels in first-century Judea and Galilee. Perhaps significantly, the motive of the insurgents is not necessarily release from their own debts but possibly those of a vast number of the rural peasantry, in order to gain their support in the insurrection. Oakman's own treatment is instructive as he cites not only Josephus' reference to the burning of debt records at the Jerusalem temple but a similar incident in Antioch, possibly indicating more prevalent or wide-spread indebtedness (2014, 24).

Oakman highlights another point in this regard, namely that the temple archives or "records office" was the nerve-centre of the city, the primary means of ensuring income from the countryside and "the dominance of the city over the countryside." (2014, 24) In other words, at both symbolic and practical level, the destruction of debt records released not just families from financial burdens but severed the relationship of control which the urban centre or *polis* exercised over the rural periphery. If Oakman is correct, it concurs with Boer and Petterson's assessment of the extractive colonial regime, in particular the institutional forms of the *polis-chōra* and tenancy.

The next set of evidence Oakman considers is around the *prozbul* which seems inconclusive. Firstly, the etymology of the word is ambiguous making its derivation and meaning unclear (2014, 25). In addition, based on Oakman's comments, it is unclear what the Rabbinical motive for its implementation was and who stood to gain from it. On the one hand, it is presented as an ameliorative measure for the poor (those predisposed to take out loans), who apparently could not secure loans in or shortly before the Sabbatical year because their creditors feared the cancellation of the monies owed them in the Sabbatical year thus losing out financially. With Hillel's introduction of the *prozbul*, the loans of private creditors could be transferred to the public domain thus preventing cancellation and securing their re-payment. Thus, it would be true to say that creditors benefited by the implementation of the *prozbul* but it possibly also speaks to mechanisms by which the *polis* or urban centre was able to take on the credit of the peasantry, thereby gaining greater control over them. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, it may be valid to see the *prozbul*, like other ameliorative measures such as the Sabbath and Jubilee years, as a means of *régulation*.

Oakman then goes on to discuss "indirect" evidence regarding levels of indebtedness. He cites Grant's thesis made early in the second half of the twentieth century of the dual taxation systems of Judea and Rome being particularly burdensome for residents of first-century Palestine. Oakman indicates that this position has become

something of a consensus (2014, 27). Rome exacted an annual “ground” or land tax (*tributum soli*) which constituted the Roman tribute as well as a tax per capita (2014, 28). He cites “population pressure” (as a factor in increased economic pressures) as well as the “archaeological and historical evidence for extensive and intensive farming” (2014, 28). The “expansion of the number of villages, towns and cities” as well as “numerous landless [people/peasants]... encountered in the sources” is cited as evidence of such population pressure. Oakman also cites landlessness as correlative with banditry and messianism (2014, 28-29).

Oakman therefore proposes a model which sees the peasantry being dispossessed of land through indebtedness (2014, 32). In considering evidence of indebtedness in the parables, Oakman asks whether they are reliable sources of socio-historical or socio-economic data, i.e. whether they reflect real-life scenarios or are purely figurative. (2014, 33) Not dissimilar to the broader position of Herzog, Oakman maintains that because of the social hierarchies present in Jesus’ day, and that Jesus represents a lower stratum of the population, public discourse will invariably present some “indirection and obfuscation,” i.e. interpreting such discourse at a literal level will prove difficult (2014, 33-34). However metaphorical the parables of Jesus, Oakman maintains though that they still have some bearing on the socio-historical context if they are to convey meaning.<sup>136</sup>

Perhaps of significance, Oakman sees cases of imprisonment due to debt, done to secure repayment, as more common than the practice of conferring on someone the status of a debt-slave. In such instances, the relinquishing of property would have been a last resort for the debtor, even below the sale of family members into slavery, though this did happen and was possibly due to the allowance made by the *prozbul*, where full repayment of debts may have been unavoidable. With regard to Luke 16:1-8, the other point of interest which Oakman cites is that, given the nature of the debts (i.e. in kind) as well as their large sizes, they may reflect collective debts of entire villages (2014, 37), a point which Boer had alluded to earlier.

On the petition for debt-forgiveness in the Lord’s Prayer, Oakman quotes Jeremias, saying “the Lucan version has preserved the oldest form with respect to length, but the Matthean text is more original with regard to wording” (Jeremias in Oakman 2014, 51). Both Matthew and Luke use the Greek *πατηρ* for “Father” and not the Aramaism *abba* though, as Oakman points out, Luke’s shorter version of “Father” as opposed to Matthew’s “Our Father in heaven...” may reflect Jesus’ earlier/original usage of *abba* (2014, 51). The prayer for forgiveness of debts (Matthew’s version) may almost certainly be identified with the historical Jesus for the

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<sup>136</sup> This raises a valid point. If our ultimate aim is exegesis of the parables, and one seeks to do this after having pieced together an historically reliable context against which to exegete them, one cannot in the first instance use data in the parables to piece together this context, which would represent circular reasoning. The data and information for the socio-economic context of the parables should be external. Having said this, basically Oakman himself treats the parables as offering reliable historical data and therefore considers those parables which depict situations of indebtedness as reflecting actual prevalent levels of indebtedness in first-century Palestine.

simple reason that the evangelists would not have changed “sins” (Luke’s version) to “debts”. Whether or not this is an indication of historically high debt levels in first-century Judea and Galilee is less certain.

In dealing with *hapax logomena* of *epiousios*, often rendered “daily bread,” following the precedent set by the Church Fathers, Oakman sees this as a neologism which he interprets in light of Egyptian papyri. *Ousios* here does not have its philosophical meaning of “substance,” but rather a material meaning of property or (landed) estate, hence Oakman uses the phrase “estate-bread” (2014, 67). Though he does not state so overtly, he seems to be using a framework of patronage in viewing the Lord’s Prayer. Certainly “Our Father” is styled in terms of a patron owning a vast estate. Among the first definitions listed for *ousia* are “that which is one’s own, one’s substance, property,” “substance,” “property, immovables,” “estates”.<sup>137</sup> Based on Oakman’s research, it would not be fair to say that evidence for high indebtedness in first-century Judea and Galilee is conclusive. But debt represents only part of the control mechanism at the disposal of the elite, and debt would have been present only to the extent that it guaranteed the ruling elite access to labour and land.

#### 4.4 Fiensy and Kloppenborg on latifundialism

We must now consider the work of David Fiensy and John Kloppenborg on latifundialism. As mentioned previously, the phenomenon of latifundialism and its extent in ancient Judea and Galilee is important for two reasons. Firstly, it was not simply a means for the elite to amass land but crucially a means by which excess labour was created. Latifundialism is therefore key to the survival and furtherance of extractive regimes as well as an essential step toward the institutional form dominant in the late Roman Empire, the colonate. We should also keep in mind the possible correlation between latifundialism and itinerancy/banditry, the latter being the subject of the next chapter, where greater prevalence of latifundia potentially means higher levels of itinerancy/banditry. This is related to the second reason for latifundialism’s importance, which may appear at first sight as somewhat speculative. It nevertheless may be reasonable to assume that high levels of exploitation in the vegetal agricultural sector, which the prevalence of latifundia implies, correspond to levels of exploitation in the animal husbandry sector of an economy.<sup>138</sup>

##### 4.4.1 David Fiensy

The current work considered here of Fiensy is largely archaeological in nature. Although there is a whole chapter later devoted to archaeological data on caprine husbandry, I have included Fiensy’s work because it informs the kind of socio-economic model or framework we are trying to construct. However we wish to frame

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<sup>137</sup> <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/οὐσία>. Perhaps the English *property* is something of a parallel term in that it may be used to refer to material property belonging to someone, including land, as well as the qualities/attributes possessed by someone or something whether material or immaterial.

<sup>138</sup> There in fact appear to be grounds for such a correlation given the similarity in leasing contracts of latifundia with those of sheep merchants or stockbrokers which we consider later.

the discussion, as Fiensy points out (2013, 2014), there is a certain amount of division regarding matters of first-century economy in the southern Levant which engenders intense debate. Whether we use terms previously mentioned like 'maximalist' and 'minimalist', 'formalist' and 'substantivist,' scholars remain divided as to the nature of first-century economy and as to levels of prosperity and poverty within it (2013, 1-2, 2014, 1-2). Though it may be a generalisation, those termed minimalists or substantivists often employ social-scientific or anthropological models to make inferences about first-century economy, while those termed maximalists or formalists often revert to archaeological data among others (2013, 2).<sup>139</sup>

The work of Fiensy includes a review of the archaeological evidence for landed estates in ancient Judea and Galilee and, as we will see, supports the presence of estates. Fiensy co-edits, and writes the concluding chapter to, *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus* (2013) where he lists five considerations which help him adopt a "mid-way" position between the camps just mentioned (2013, 165). The five considerations are: the broader study of ancient economy by classical historians; economic differences between Galilee and Judea; the possible qualitative difference between periods 6 to 44 CE and 45 to 66 CE; the fragmentary nature of archeological evidence; the purpose/function of social-science models (2013, 165-166).

The study of ancient economy is, according to Fiensy, in a "post-Finley era" in that many of the initial assumptions in Finley's seminal work, *The Ancient Economy*, are being re-evaluated and challenged (2013, 166). He later writes "[t]he central question in the "economy wars" (i.e., debates between some Galilean archaeologists and some of those New Testament scholars utilizing social science models) is about the standard of living of the Galilean folk in the late Second Temple period." (2013, 173) Fiensy initially disputes the possibility of large-scale latifundia in lower Galilee or at least says that scholars who assume this must supply "hard" literary or archaeological evidence (2013, 179). He cites a study by Crossan which claims the presence of latifundia without offering any evidence.<sup>140</sup> In light of this demand, in a later study, Fiensy (2014) devotes a whole chapter to reviewing evidence of landed estates in lower Galilee going so far as to say that "[t]he discussion of large estates in Galilee in the first century CE is not the only issue to be used in determining the economic conditions of the common people, but it is one of the very important ones." (2014, 100)

In *Insights from Archaeology* (2017), Fiensy too seems to adopt an adjusted position to inferences made about Galilean economy, and in particular, to the possibility of large estates being present in Lower Galilee. In reference to the remains of a sizeable estate uncovered at Caesarea Maritima, Fiensy says that such an estate "illustrates the typical large estate so often featured in the parables attributed to Jesus" and so, it would seem,

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<sup>139</sup> Fiensy indicates that historical scholarship on the economy of first-century Galilee is "divided into two camps" with one side claiming the region enjoyed "economic prosperity and even an egalitarian society" while the other claiming it was subject to "increasing indebtedness, land losses, and exploitation of the peasants" (2013, 165).

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Horsley who uses the Synoptic parables as evidence for estates. The intention or ideal would be to corroborate the presence of estates in first-century Judea and Galilee outside of New Testament material.

also understands Jesus' parables as reflective of socio-economic conditions in Lower Galilee (2017, 53, 51). Fiensy lists the example of the estate found at Caesarea Maritima as an instance of "direct clarification" of the presence of estates in first-century Galilee in terms of archeological data for the biblical record (2017, 49).

We should acknowledge that Fiensy is among the few scholars who considers both social-scientific and archaeological perspectives, where he does so most comprehensively in *Christian Origins and the Ancient Economy* (2014).<sup>141</sup> His approach in this instance is helpful in that he focuses specifically on the economy of Lower Galilee. We will consider first general remarks regarding a model for the Galilean economic landscape.

He begins in *Christian Origins* by saying "[t]he agrarian economies of the ancient empires followed remarkably familiar patterns" (2014, 6) and goes on to say, citing Lenski, "that in agrarian societies in general, the urban elite viewed peasants as subhuman," a sentiment which likely prevailed in Lower Galilee (2014, 8, 10).

Furthermore, "[a]ncient agrarian societies" consisted of the "takers (i.e., the elites) and the givers (i.e., the large class of rural peasants)" (2014, 10). Though the society was "complex" and "included several socioeconomic classes and subgroups...these classes and subgroups were oriented toward one of the two main groupings—the takers or the givers" (2014, 10). Fiensy tries to determine the extent to which Lower Galilee aligns with such a schema, writing that the "elites of Galilee consisted of Herod Antipas and his family, as well as certain other wealthy families." (2014, 10) Based on Josephus' writings, Fiensy says Herod had an annual income of 200 talents which was derived from "taxes and from his large estates in Perea, on the Great Plain, and in Galilee." (2014, 10) Furthermore, political overlords such as Herod "enriched their top government officers and other friends with large land grants, commanded the army, and levied taxes" (2014, 10-11).

Fiensy describes a second social group comprising the elite which he terms "nonnoble aristocrats" (2014, 11). He equates these with the elders mentioned in Mark 15:1 and Acts 4:5. Some were "local magistrates" and some assisted tax farmers in the collection of taxes (2014, 11). Yet as concrete examples of such groups, he cites "respectable citizens," referred to by Josephus, among whom are a Roman citizen, two members of Herod's family, and one of Agrippa's (2014, 11). Fiensy describes such men as "nonpriestly and nonroyal members of the elite class who, because of their wealth, influence, and achievements, were leaders of their communities." (2014, 11)<sup>142</sup>

Considering whether such a group or 'class' existed in Sepphoris, Fiensy answers in the affirmative but says that they were "large landholders" (2014, 11). It seems there are essentially two class distinctions of importance

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<sup>141</sup> Fiensy, D. 2014. *Christian Origins and the Ancient Economy*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.

<sup>142</sup> One wonders how such men gained wealth if they were neither members of the royal family nor priestly class, since 'mercantile' enterprise, if not frowned upon, was at least regarded as a class below that of the ruling elite, according to Boer. One also wonders whether this does not again feed into the narrative of a 'market-oriented' economy, i.e. we see in antiquity the hard-working, industrious individual, who though not by birth a member of the elite, could nevertheless make a success of himself by becoming one of these "respected citizens".

which Fiensy alludes to these when he speaks of the derogatory view urban-dwellers had of rural ones. The first distinction is between the land-owning elite and the vast rural peasantry who though in some cases 'owned' their small subsistence plots nevertheless engaged in the agricultural labour held in such disdain by the elite. This distinction may also be thought of in terms of those engaged in manual labour and those who did not which is reinforced by the quote Fiensy includes from the Talmud distinguishing three classes in Jewish society: "landowners, the peasants and the empty ones [i.e. very poor]" (2014, 12).

Fiensy goes on to say that given the "nature of agrarian societies," the ruling elite likely comprised no more than 1% of the total population (2014, 12). He examines what he refers to as the class of retainers who "mediated" between the elite and the peasantry and "deflected" some of the hostility of the latter (2014, 12-13). These, says Fiensy, included tax farmers and bailiffs which appear in the New Testament. and were common throughout the Roman Empire. It is worth noting again that such tax farmers, though wealthy, were despised by the Jewish elite. This was likely due to what Boer had cited as the general disdain for mercantile enterprise (i.e. disdain for wealth achieved through means other than agriculture/land ownership) but also because of Jewish religious sentiments around unclean currency. The bailiffs often, if not always, were slaves. Like the distinction between those working the land and those who benefitted from its surplus, that between slave and free was another which marked and deeply coloured first-century life, as we saw from the analysis of Boer and Petterson (2017). Fiensy includes among the class of retainers, magistrates, presumably benefiting financially from their positions, as well as soldiers and lower officials of the royal court (2014, 14).

Moving on to discuss the peasantry, Fiensy cites a survey done which indicates that farm sizes in ancient Galilee ranged from 1 to 15 acres where most were about 4 acres (2014, 15). Such sizes are in accordance with "subsistence at best if the peasant had a large family of six to nine people," where such subsistence would have to be produced with "little or no margin for error," (2014, 15). In other words, families lived at or very close to subsistence level. Tellingly, Fiensy writes that there "is ample evidence—literary, inscriptional, and archaeological—that many large estates existed in Herodian Palestine, just as they certainly existed in other parts of the Roman Empire...[where such ]large estates needed a pool of cheap labor...[being] worked by varying combinations of tenant farmers, day laborers, and slaves." (2014, 15) Fiensy therefore considers in more detail the extent to which large estates existed in Lower Galilee and says that "estates large enough to support an absentee urban landlord and his family did exist in Galilee in the first century CE" (2014, 15). These are in addition to the "imperial estates" belonging to Antipas which were present in this region (2014, 15). Fiensy also sees basis for tenancy, where tenant farmers surrendered anything from one quarter to one half of

their produce.<sup>143</sup> Day labourers and slaves constituted the remainder of the workforce (2014, 16).

Though at this point Fiensy deals only briefly with the subject, he cites the prevalence of sheep husbandry and seems to understand it in terms similar to the agricultural sector where some peasants “owned their own flocks” (he does not indicate whether for subsistence purposes, though presumably this would be the case) while “day labourers or slaves...tended the flocks of large estate owners” (2014, 16). In other words, Fiensy does not explicitly describe a situation of contractors leasing out flocks but does allude to the employment of hired shepherds for large estates. Fiensy then treats of “merchants, artisans, and urban day laborers” (2014, 16). While merchants could attain some degree of wealth, they were not considered part of the elite. Additionally, it seems the income among those who were not wealthy merchants was low and the discrepancy between them negligible. Further, in Graeco-Roman thought, artisans (though not the same as merchants) are scarcely better than slaves, though Fiensy says the same sentiment was not prevalent in Jewish culture (2014, 19).<sup>144</sup>

Regarding banditry, Fiensy says it is “hardly deniable” that “banditry in the ancient world was rooted in social and economic factors,” and that there are “examples in Palestine of banditry originating in poverty and hardship.” (2014, 21-22) However, Fiensy takes issue with the romantic or idealised version of banditry presented by the likes of Hobsbawm and Hanson. He says it is probable that bandits did not enjoy wholesale support of the peasantry and that the latter possibly lived in fear of bandits (2014, 22). But his issue is with Hobsbawm’s thesis of banditry as “a primitive form of organized social protest” (Hobsbawm in Fiensy 2014, 21), not with banditry as a socioeconomic indicator of social and economic unrest. In other words, while it may be true that bandits enjoyed less support from the peasantry than Hobsbawm’s model suggests, that banditry was a sign and symptom of disintegrating socioeconomic structures is not thereby negated.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> According to the work of Kloppenborg which we consider momentarily, in Hellenistic Egypt, if a sharecropping arrangement, the proportion surrendered was frequently two-thirds.

<sup>144</sup> As an example of a tradesman who ascended through the ranks of aristocratic society Fiensy cites “Simon the temple builder,” representing “a family of well-to-do artisans in Palestine...which did hard manual labor but attained enough financial success to afford both a tomb in a rather high-priced area and ossuaries.” (2016, 18) Such an assessment to my mind seems highly anomalous. Without having reviewed the archaeological data or scholarly assessments of it one wonders if a similar tendency to that presented in Nehemiah 3, regarding the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, is not here repeated. In Nehemiah 3 various prominent families are listed as “having built parts of Jerusalem’s walls” when in reality one can scarcely imagine that they themselves undertook the actual manual labour required to do so. Instead, they would have enlisted the service of a form of wage or corvee labour.

In the last two categories of class, based on Lenski’s work, Fiensy lists the “unclean and degraded classes” (2014, 20) and the “expendables” (2014, 21). Amongst the former are “prostitutes, dung collectors, ass drivers, gamblers, sailors, tanners, peddlers, herdsman, and usurers” as well as the diseased and “those groups [considered] inferior...due to heredity” such as bastards (2014, 20), while the latter included bandits and beggars (2014, 21, 22). Qualitatively one imagines the line between the two groups was blurred. For example, Grünewald’s treatment of banditry which we will consider shortly shows that herdsman and bandits are often synonymous and Fiensy lists among beggars, the poor and the lame. In other words, particularly in terms of Torah, on an objective level disease or deformity consigned one to a fate of abject destitution.

<sup>145</sup> Fiensy’s summary remarks in this section are unfortunately vague. He says that in Galilee the “difference between the rich and poor populations was enormous...[where] only about 1 percent of the population belonged to the elite class” and in reference to the work of MacMullen, as much as a third of the total population may be described as poor. He concludes

In considering the evidence for estates in Lower Galilee, Fiensy raises the question of whether or not to include the Great Plain (Jezreel Valley) within the geographical designation of Lower Galilee. According to Fiensy, “sources sometimes include the Great Plain...and sometimes not,” but, on the other hand, it may be regarded as something of a moot point because the “Plain certainly lay close enough that it could have affected the economy of Lower Galilee.” (2014, 101) By my own estimation, it is about 18km south of Nazareth which meant importantly that it lay within a day’s journey from those residing in or around Nazareth, who could therefore have provided a source of day labour. Having said this, Fiensy notes that the “Great Plain with its huge area of 141 square miles (or 90,496 acres) has a long literary history of references to large estates.” (2014, 101) There is sufficient literary evidence to show that the Great Plain was owned and used for the purposes of large estates by imperial or royal classes from the Ptolemaic period (as far back as 300 BC) (2014, 102). In citing archaeological evidence for the presence of estates in the Jezreel Valley, the discovery of 117 wine presses on the “southern edge of the Great Plain,” some of which were in use in the first century, suggests the presence of a “large-scale wine-producing industry controlled by one agency” (2014, 102).

Additionally, there is archaeological evidence for the presence of medium-sized estates in the Bet Netofa Valley, “the valley just north of the Nazareth ridge” (2014, 103). Fiensy cites examples of two estates elsewhere in ancient Palestine (not in Lower Galilee), those of Qawarat bene Hassan, a village of some 175 to 200 families who worked as tenant farmers on an area of about 2000 acres (2014, 103), as well as an estate on the Ramat Ha-Nadiv ridge, of about 2500 acres, which was farmed by either day labourers or slaves or both (2014, 104). Fiensy concludes that the Bet Netofa Valley, just north of Nazareth, was used for similar purposes. One of the criteria to assess the presence of estates in Lower Galilee which Fiensy uses is the “pattern of estate ownership” in antiquity, where “the best lands...[of a region were] owned by kings and other elites” (2014, 105). Given that Bet Netofa was prime agricultural land one would “presume that...[it] was also owned by a few aristocrats and not divided up into small peasant farm plots of five to ten acres.” (2014, 105)

The references of Josephus to the town Asochis (*A.J.* 12, 4), which Talmudic literature identifies as Shikhin, and various inferences based on these, suggest the town could have been an important administrative centre for the Bet Netofa valley. If this was so and if, for example, there were grain storage facilities there, as Fiensy suggests, it in turn implies the presence of estates, i.e. that Asochis was the administrative centre for a series of estates in the Bet Netofa valley (2014, 106). According to Fiensy, “rabbinic literature confirms this,” as it indicates Eleazar ben Harsom, a wealthy priest during the second century, owned the village/town of Shikhin from which he exacted a vast sum in taxes. According to Fiensy, “that Eleazar owned the village of

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by saying that “[m]ost of the rest lived more or less also in poverty, but at least had their physical needs met...[where] the average peasant or artisan was very poor compared to the elite classes but was not destitute and did not live in habitual want.” (2017, 23)

Shikhin/Asochis (or part of it) means that it was a tenant village and administrative center for a large landed estate.” (2014, 107-108) The Talmud also indicates that Eleazar “inherited the tenant villages from his father” placing tenancy of the villagers at as early as the first half of the first century CE (2014, 108).

Additionally, there is another rabbinic story which references Joseph bin Simai as an “administrator of the king” (2014, 109). It transpired that a fire in the courtyard of his residence at Shikhin broke out and Roman soldiers from nearby Sepphoris were sent to put it out. They were later rewarded by Joseph bin Simai with a large sum of money. The fact that Roman soldiers were sent to assist Joseph bin Simai, as well as the monetary reward he offered them, indicates that he was “an important person and a person of wealth” (2014, 109). The accounts in the rabbinic literature “suggest that [at least] some of the Bet Netofa was given over to wealthy families and that Shikhin was the administrative centre, perhaps also used as their granary, and that Joseph ben Simai was one of the bailiffs of the estate(s).” (2014, 110) So once more, “[f]rom the literary evidence it seems that most if not all of the Bet Netofa valley was owned by a few elites” (2014, 110).<sup>146</sup>

Fiensy also considers archaeological evidence supporting the presence of estates in Bet Netofa. There is reasonable but not incontrovertible evidence at Shikhin/Asochis to suggest the presence of dwellings for estate owners and overseers (2014, 110-111). But he also considers archaeological data which he says is indirect evidence for the presence of estates in Bet Netofa, namely the presence of estate houses in nearby Sepphoris. Simply put, the only agricultural land which could have supported such estate houses in Sepphoris is that of the Bet Netofa valley. The presence of estates in Bet Netofa need not depend then on archaeological evidence of estate houses there. Some of these houses could have been, and likely were, in Sepphoris (2014, 112).

#### 4.4.2 John Kloppenborg

The work of Kloppenborg cannot be neglected for two important reasons. Firstly, apart from Ukpong and Herzog, as a biblical scholar, Kloppenborg comes closest to foregrounding material concerns, and material means of production, attendant to some of the original contexts of the parables.<sup>147</sup> Secondly, and perhaps ultimately most beneficial for this study, Kloppenborg has undertaken extensive research on the institutional form of tenancy and its associated phenomena, *latifundia* and wage labour, for the period of the New

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<sup>146</sup> Fiensy’s conclusion based on a synopsis of the literary evidence is as follows: “most if not all of the Bet Netofa valley was owned by a few elites—among them Eleazar ben Harsom and, most likely, the Sepphoris aristocrats. During the Great Jewish War (66–73 CE), Shikhin was pro-revolt while Sepphoris was pro-Roman. Shikhin was, therefore, destroyed along with Eleazar’s holdings. Between the wars, there was a Roman garrison in Sepphoris, which came to the aid of Joseph ben Simai when a fire started. The estates of Bet Netofa Valley had by then been confiscated by “the king”—I think Vespasian (and his heirs)—just as he had confiscated them in the Great Plain after the war. He employed a Jewish administrator, Joseph ben Simai, to oversee his estates in the valley.” (2014, 110-111)

<sup>147</sup> Regarding his (together with Callon’s) treatment of the parable of the lost sheep, for example, which we consider later, he says “[w]hile exegetes regularly note the plastic nature of the image of the shepherd, almost no attention has been paid to the social and economic registers presupposed by each instantiation of the parable [i.e. Q, Matthew, Luke and Gos.Thom.]” (Kloppenborg and Callon 2010, 219).

Testament.

Kloppenborg considers a variety of sources, including Egyptian papyri (dating from about 250 BCE), correspondence from the Cave of Letters (132-135 CE) as well as from Mishnaic tractates (dating later from the fourth century CE), as well as scriptural references. Many of the sources contain actual lease agreements and thus he is able to highlight some of the precise mechanisms of the three phenomena just mentioned.

What is significant about the features of such contracts, or the features of the obligations which they stipulate, is that they bear significant similarities to those stipulated for middlemen/stockbrokers attendant to ancient caprine husbandry practices as reflected in Neo-Babylonian archival material and in Mishnaic/Talmudic tractates.

Mishnaic tractate Bava Metzia (c.190-230 CE), which we will consider again later in connection with penalties for hired shepherds, outlines three forms of tenancy: fixed rental in kind; fixed rental by monetary payment (bearing in mind that the lessee had to have means of monetising his crop); and share-crop arrangements (2008, 34-35). As Kloppenborg indicates, the first two arrangements rendered the lessee more vulnerable as the tractate indicates that rent should be paid regardless of the performance of the crop. With a share-crop arrangement, the lessor could only claim a portion of the crop produced, which placed less liability on the lessee. The disadvantage with this latter arrangement was that the portion of the crop appropriated was high, from one-third to one-half of the total crop (2008, 35). Kloppenborg in fact states that, in Ptolemaic Egypt, rents were frequently as much as two-thirds (2008, 42; 2010, 497-498).

Kloppenborg reviews tenancy contracts for the early Roman period from the Cave Letters of the Bar Kokhba revolt, which detail contracts of Simon Bar Kokhba (2008, 36). The wording, or formulaic nature of the leases, are very similar to those of Graeco-Roman Egypt (2008, 37). The leases are examples of fixed rental agreements in money, though the second example cited makes provision for payment in wheat (2008, 38). Importantly, the leases make the lessee liable for payment even in the case of a failed crop and provide legal recourse for the lessor to seize property of the lessee in the case of default. Kloppenborg indicates such contractual obligations were a common feature of tenancy in Graeco-Roman Egypt (2008, 38).

An additional set of leases from the same period and, also involving Simon Bar Kokhba, contain “an abstract of at least eleven farm leases” (2008, 38). They are fixed-rental agreements in wheat. Kloppenborg cites this group of data as the earliest evidence for tenancy in Jewish Palestine though it is worth noting that he views the Synoptic parable of the tenants as potentially earlier evidence for tenancy, based on its use of the same type of formulaic language common to such contracts (2008, 38-39).

For evidence of tenancy during the Hellenistic period, Kloppenborg says that, based on the etymological proximity between the Hebrew word used for agricultural labour in the Old Testament and that used in Mishnaic

tractates, in the context of contractual obligations for agricultural labour, it is fair to assume that tenancy was operative in this period.<sup>148</sup> For the early Roman period, Kloppenborg cites a variety of literary sources which show that Herod, for example, and many of his contemporaries possessed estates (2008, 41).

We consider a study by Shimon Dar below, which Kloppenborg includes,<sup>149</sup> which provides significant archaeological evidence for extensive viticultural production in Hellenistic Palestine. Kloppenborg also considers papyrological evidence from the Zenon archive which dates to the mid-third century BCE. Some of this correspondence corroborates, and possibly emanates from, the widescale and extensive development of viticultural production which Dar's archaeological surveys had uncovered. Apollonios, finance minister to Ptolemy II, had farms in Galilee converted into a large vineyard and planted with 80 000 vines. According to Kloppenborg, assuming this endeavour to have been successful, it would have produced around 1500 kilolitres of wine annually (2008, 46-47). Kloppenborg indicates that the correspondence regarding this farm shows its conversion from a wheat producing farm to a vineyard, and the installation of housing which, Kloppenborg says, was used for agricultural labourers or tenants (2008, 47). Kloppenborg's analysis of evidence for the operation of estates in and around first-century Palestine must surely be among the most extensive.<sup>150</sup> His findings, together with the evidence of Dar's survey, make it safe to assume that agricultural tenancy, latifundia, and wage labour, were prevalent features of first-century Galilee, the conclusion Kloppenborg himself comes to.<sup>151</sup>

This leads us to the next consideration in Kloppenborg's 2008 study, the effects of estate farming or latifundialism on labour and labour patterns among the peasantry.<sup>152</sup> Kloppenborg's analysis is insightful. He says it would be false to understand the agrarian economy of first-century Palestine in a dichotomised way,

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<sup>148</sup> He bases this inference also on passages like 1 Samuel 8:14, Isaiah 5:8 etc. but in conclusion says that "the creation of a pool of nonslave labour was likely the result of estate accumulation [during this period]: the lands of smallholders were confiscated or lost through debt, and those farms that remained were too small or marginal to support all of the family members. These circumstances did not only create a pool of unlanded workers who earned their living on estates, but also forced members of peasant households to seek waged employment in order to support the family unit." (2008, 40) It is insightful on Kloppenborg's part, in line with Boer's analysis, to see the *raison d'être* of latifundialism being not simply the amassing of land but the amassing of land to sever the relationship of the subsistence horticulturalist from the land in order to create a pool of excess labour to service estates.

<sup>149</sup> We may note in summary that "[a]rchaeological surveys confirm the general tendency toward larger agricultural units during the Second Temple period. In Western Samaria farmsteads appear which distinguish clearly between the owner's residence and housing for laborers. Additionally, remains of heavily fortified farmhouses with large towers have been found; these were located near good soil (but on hilltops, probably as a defensive measure) and controlled larger blocks of land (4-7 ha.). The organization of these farms, each with a central, fortified farmhouse and smaller houses on the fringes, suggests that the estates were controlled by well-to-do military settlers but cultivated by tenants. Finally, excavations in Samaria, the Sharon Plain, and Judaea reveal large farms, requiring a labor force of several dozen workers, each with buildings resembling Roman villas, including large pressing installations, mills, storerooms, and workshops." (2008, 43)

<sup>150</sup> Craig Evan's research (1995, 1996, 1997) should also be mentioned in this vein. See bibliography for full list of titles.

<sup>151</sup> See Kloppenborg (2010, 284-287) for an additional summary of evidence for latifundia.

<sup>152</sup> His point made elsewhere is that viticultural latifundialism in particular was labour intensive (though seasonal) and not suited to slave labour. He says in his 2010 study in commenting on *PMich* III 200 that "[i]t is the high variability in labour needs that made viticulture a pursuit that was not ideally suited to slave estates. Note that for most of the days [in reference to *PMich* III 200], only 1-6 slaves were used (17 and 18 on two days). The expanding and shrinking labour needs were met from the ranks of day labourers, who probably formed a pool serving several large estates." (2010, 466)

consisting of neatly divided sectors of more intensified monocultures, on the one hand, and small-scale subsistence polyculture on the other (2008, 52). Instead, he describes all of the various means of production attendant to the period as existing in a state of “mutual dependency” (2008, 52).<sup>153</sup>

If I may be permitted to paraphrase Kloppenborg’s analysis, the change or transition in means of production from allocative institutional forms to more extractive ones involves, in the first instance, the appropriation of land by the ruling elite. This is important for three reasons: firstly, the land appropriated is always the most fertile and accessible of a given region; secondly, the appropriation of land allows for the crucial severance of the subsistence horticulturalist’s relationship to the land, which in turn allows for the appropriation of his labour; finally, the appropriation of land allows for the transition from polyculture subsistence agriculture to far more extensive forms of monoculture production (motivated by desire for luxury crops, like wine, olive oil, dates and figs) which in turn has an adverse effect on the production capacity of the subsistence farmer.

As Kloppenborg details (2008, 52-54), because rural horticulturalists are forced toward the margins of available cultivable lands, where some have been dispossessed of their lands and now service estates or act as tenants, they are no longer able to freely determine the nature and extent of their agricultural output (which was hard enough under normal circumstances of subsistence farming). Where tenants, for example, lease land, the lessor determines what crops are farmed.<sup>154</sup> If, hypothetically, the lessor wishes to produce wine, grapes must be farmed. It seems unlikely that peasants would be engaged in fixed-rental leases of vineyards because, unlike their wealthy landlords, they had little recourse or means to monetise their produce by way of trade. But even in a share-cropping arrangement, where the tenants kept a portion of the produce, it is not feasible to subsist solely on grapes and, for the same reason just cited, monetising their produce was difficult.

On the basis of Kloppenborg’s examination of 58 Egyptian papyri (see below), it is unlikely that the average peasant would or could function as viticultural tenants. Hence what Kloppenborg’s analysis suggests, in both his 2008 and 2010 study, is a wealthier form of ‘merchant’ or middleman taking out leases where they in turn either sub-let or acquired the necessary labour to service vineyards. This would then mean a greater orientation among the peasantry toward wage labour as opposed to tenancy. Nevertheless to diversify and supplement his subsistence, either the small-scale tenant or the wage labourer must engage in his own ‘private’ subsistence farming while performing wage labour or a form of sub-tenancy.<sup>155</sup> There is now demand for such wage labour

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<sup>153</sup> I.e. subsistence horticulturalist, tenancy, latifundia/estates and wage labour (slaves featured less prominently in first-century Palestinian agriculture). This is even more true if we consider that both the means and mode of production for the period were in a state of flux.

<sup>154</sup> Kloppenborg says that tenants in fixed-rental leases had the freedom to choose what produce to farm. In reality this was only feasible through the sale of lucrative crops which in turn was only feasible for a more ‘commercialised’ form of tenant, certainly not the average peasant. Kloppenborg says it was possible only for those tenants with “capital [sic.]” (2008, 53) when in reality no peasant possessed such.

<sup>155</sup> “Large estates occupied the best land and were exploited either by slaves supervised by a *vilicus*, or subdivided into a number of tenancies, or there was some combination of these systems. Peasant proprietors cultivated more marginal

from the expansive estates orientated toward intensive monocultures.<sup>156</sup> But the income from such wage labour is not sufficient to support an entire family<sup>157</sup> and, in any case is seasonal, meaning that at times there is demand for his labour and at other times not which, apart from affecting his income, impinges upon his own efforts at subsistence farming which he can only perform at certain times of the year.<sup>158</sup>

Kloppenborg maintains that while the *ergates* (εργατης), the day or wage labourer of the Graeco-Roman world, is missing terminologically from the LXX, it first appears in the book of Sirach, placing it in the second century BCE. By the time of the New Testament, it is commonplace, used even figuratively to refer to members of the Jesus movement (2008, 54-55).<sup>159</sup> But day labourers were more economically disadvantaged than both tenants (γεωργοι) and slaves (δουλοις). Landlords or lessors had some nominal obligations toward tenants, which they did not have toward day labourers and slaves were normally guaranteed their material needs being met and were protected to some extent as their owner's 'property'. Apart from being at a material or economic disadvantage, because of the nominal protection afforded tenants and slaves, day labourers were also often saddled with the physically more onerous and dangerous work (2008, 57, 58). In addition, Cato apparently advised against the regular employment of the same group of day labourers (2008, 59). In his far more extensive study on the historical reception of the parable of the tenants, Kloppenborg speaks of the employment of "labour gangs" of ten or twenty labourers and says, based on papyrological evidence, the services of such gangs were not frequently engaged more than once (2010, 283).<sup>160</sup>

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lands and in many cases their holdings were too small or too unproductive to support a family; they therefore had to supplement their own farm income either by assuming subtenancies or by serving as day laborers on the large estates." (2008, 52)

<sup>156</sup> "The growth of large estates of course also had the corollary of enlarging the pool of unlanded laborers that existed alongside underemployed peasant proprietors. Such pools could be used to supply the seasonal labor requirements of large holdings, subtenancies, and even small proprietors." (2008, 54)

<sup>157</sup> Kloppenborg explains how the cost of wage labour was tied to slavery as institutional form and its attendant costs. Since the cost of procuring and maintaining a slave was at about 1 denarius a day, the price of wage labour was set at the same, possibly less for Jewish Palestine, since it did not make extensive use of slaves in agriculture, i.e. indicating that wage labour was more prevalent but, if more prevalent, then concomitantly more cost-effective (2008, 57-58).

Kloppenborg maintains that while slavery was common slaves themselves were regarded as component of the household rather than agricultural workers (2008, 40).

<sup>158</sup> Kloppenborg says that "although a large vineyard employed a relatively large permanent staff of about thirty workers, there were times in the agricultural cycle when a far greater labor input was needed. This labor input came no doubt from peasant proprietors hungry for cash (but who would consequently have to defer their own harvests), and from a pool of landless day laborers, who were unemployed or underemployed during much of the agricultural year." (2008, 56-57)

<sup>159</sup> One perhaps should interrogate just to what extent this reference was figurative. It is to my mind entirely feasible if not probable that members of the Jesus movement were indeed *εργαται*. Incidentally, the Latin for this word, as Kloppenborg mentions, is *mercennarii*, again emphasising the tripartite link between informal or itinerant labourers, mercenaries and bandits (we omit momentarily the fourth association, that of pastoral nomads).

<sup>160</sup> In summary of the effects on rural labour patterns of the changing means of production, Kloppenborg says in conclusion: "The rise of large estates...had profound effects on the structure of the economy: it reoriented production from small-scale polycropping devoted to local consumption toward large scale monoculture directed at the export of highly priced crops; it created and exploited a class of under employed non-slave laborers (*ergatai*); it forced peasant proprietors to marginal plots of land; and it drew on the labor input from underemployed non-slave workers and peasant proprietors at certain key periods of the cycle of agricultural production as a means of maximizing the productivity of the land and the income of landowners." (2008, 60)

Like archival material from the Neo-Babylonian temples at Uruk and Sippar, which we consider later, the material Kloppenborg has collated deals directly with contractual arrangements, leases in some cases, between owners of estates and tenants, owners of estates and brokers (sometimes managers/stewards of estates and brokers), as well as receipts, wage accounts, and other correspondence, which shed great light on the means and mechanisms of viticultural production for the Hellenistic and Roman periods. For this reason, the information is highly insightful. It is of further importance because of the similarities between the type of labour brokerage it references and that referenced in the archival material from Uruk and Sippar and, to a certain extent, later Mishnaic tractates pertaining to caprine production. While we do not have direct evidence for labour brokerage in first-century Palestine, it is plainly evident, in the cases of Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, and Neo-Babylonian Uruk and Sippar, that brokerage operated in both the vegetal and animal husbandry sectors.

There are two distinctive features of ancient viticulture which Kloppenborg's work highlights. The first, as mentioned, is that some form of brokerage was in place regarding the performance of labour duties for viticultural production. The second feature of significance is that without exception, where there are contractual agreements, these are constructed to protect the interests of the lessor while placing maximum liability on the lessee. It is not surprising that the leases and contracts reflected in papyrological evidence show strong bias toward the lessor, which is normally the elite property owner or his representative, and minimal protection for the lessee. This is reflected in both the contractual obligations of the lessee as well as in the penalties, i.e. fines, seizure of property, should he fail to meet these.<sup>161</sup> A number of the leases considered by Kloppenborg indicate the extent to which contractual obligations severely disadvantage the lessee, or at least placed him at greater liability. Seizure of property is frequently listed as potential recourse for the lessor with *BGU IV 1122* and *BGU IV 1119* even listing imprisonment as a possible sanction.<sup>162</sup>

At this point it would be helpful to ask the question: who in such cases are the lessees? Because, while the

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<sup>161</sup> Kloppenborg says of *PColZen II 79*, “[a]s is typical of leases of vineyards and orchards, the lease contains a detailed list of the duties of the lessee...By contrast, the lessor’s obligations to the lessee are typically not described extensively.” (2010, 415)

<sup>162</sup> “If they should default on any of these conditions they shall immediately be liable to arrest and imprisonment until they repay both the wages that they have received and whatever portion, with an extra added half, of whatever else they received, and (if they?) damage (anything, they will repay) double; and (they shall pay) damages and expenses and a penalty of 500 silver dr. and the stipulated fine. Gaius shall have the right of execution on the property of both of them, who are jointly liable for full payment, or from one or the other, whomever (Gaius) should seize, or all their possessions, as if by a legal decision, all assurances that they have produced and all resort to protection being invalid.” (From *BGU IV 1122* in 2010, 481); “If he [the lessee] defaults (on any of these conditions), he shall immediately be liable to arrest and imprisonment until he is compelled... to pay in full whatever he owes of the rent, with the added half, and (all) damages and expenses and a penalty of 500 silver dr., and the stipulated fine. If Apollonios should violate any condition, the power resides with the lessors to evict him during the period [of] the lease and to rent it to others... and to exact (the deficit) as it stands on the date of re-leasing. The cost of any damage shall be paid to the lessors by Apollonios and from any of his possessions, as if by a legal decision, all assurances produced and all resort to protection being invalid.” (From *BGU IV 1119* in 2010, 486); “The lessor shall have the right of execution (πραξις) on the lessees who are surety for one another for repayment, and on which of them he chooses, and on all of their possessions, as if in accordance with a legal decision.” (From *POxy IV 729* in 2010, 509).

contractual arrangements do indeed place the burden of fulfilment on the lessee, with the threat of heavy penalties should they fail to meet these, it may be misguided to think of them as emanating from the peasantry. Kloppenborg includes a discussion, in conversation with Evans, precisely on this question (2010, 310 ff.). While Evans maintains renters (or tenants or lessees) could be “aristocratic,” Kloppenborg disputes this saying that in general they were “not wealthy” (2010, 310). It should be noted that Kloppenborg’s conversation with Evans is ultimately around the identity of the tenants in the Synoptic parable of the tenants. Kloppenborg’s argument is compelling in seeing these as disenfranchised members of the peasantry (2010, 313), and while he does concede that in some instances tenants or lessees could be of higher social status, he maintains that this was not the typical profile of tenant farmers. We perhaps should not see the two positions as mutually exclusive.

Two of the most obvious reasons, on the basis of the papyri which Kloppenborg himself considers, which suggest the lessees often emanate from a higher socio-economic class are the fact that they are literate, or have recourse to literacy, in that they are able to correspond with the lessor and in engaging the contract itself, something the average peasant did not have access to. This is possibly why sometimes contracts were verbal rather than written. But secondly, many of the lessees in Kloppenborg’s examples have financial resources at their disposal, which exceed those of members of the peasantry. There is ‘capital’ outlay to meet expenses associated with viticultural production which the lessee often assumes, including paying wages to labourers.

An additional feature of the general profile of lessees is that they were often non-Greeks, or did not have Greek names, whereas the lessors always do as far as is apparent. There is an additional designation or appellation used for some lessees in the Egyptian papyri which Kloppenborg examines, namely “Persian of Descent” (see further reference below). In other words, it is reasonable to suggest that lessees were often foreigners (i.e. non-Greeks). In this vein, it seems that the appellation “Persian of Descent” might bare similarity to the term “Canaanite” used in the LXX to designate, not simply someone of Canaanite descent, but someone predisposed to commercial trade. Therefore, the inference seems plausible that lessees in the contracts evinced in Egyptian papyri are something akin to the so-called merchants which we considered under Boer’s analysis. If this were the case, they would occupy neither the “aristocratic” class which Evans proposed, nor would they emanate from the peasantry. As we saw, according to Boer’s analysis, such merchants were outsiders, sometimes foreigners, who performed a necessary service for the state, thereby benefiting materially, but who were nevertheless regarded with a degree of disdain by the ruling elite.

It is my contention such a class of merchants are of a similar type to those who engaged in contracts with temple administrations in Neo-Babylonian Uruk and Sippar, and the same sort of “sheep merchant” referred to in Zechariah 11. In the instance of contractual obligations for caprine production attendant to temple complexes, and fines in lieu of meeting these, while theoretically the responsibility of the merchant, practically these

devolved to the hired shepherd, since he was to have direct oversight of the flock. We consider all of this in more detail later, suffice it to say here that a similar situation is not at all unfeasible in the vegetal sector.

From the 58 papyri which Kloppenborg considers we see there are commonly two ways for a vineyard owner (who is always the lessor) to ensure viticultural production. The first is to 'directly' oversee its management by way of an agent, or steward, who ordinarily works in the employ of the vineyard owner. We see this, for example, in *PZenPestm* 37, where Nikon is managing an estate on behalf of Apollonios (Nikon corresponds with Zenon who is Apollonios' secretary).<sup>163</sup> In this arrangement, the agent or steward is responsible for oversight and for sourcing wage labour which he does through dealing with a foreman (*δεκάταρχος*). Those papyri which are wage accounts or receipts indicate the foreman, who led a group of either 10 or 20 labourers, was paid by the steward, and he then in turned doled out the wages.

The other common way to ensure viticultural production was to lease the vineyard, either for a fixed rental or a share-cropping arrangement, where the owner derived anything from one-half to two-thirds of the annual produce (cf. 2010, 581).<sup>164</sup> It seems this second arrangement may have been preferable for the vineyard owner for two reasons. In spite of seeming greater liability for the lessor where his share was proportional to what the vineyard yielded in its entirety, most of the contracts go into some detail in making the lessee liable for penalties should he fail to meet his end of the contract. Additionally, since the lessee was left normally with a third of the produce it was in his interest to ensure the crop was as productive as possible (2010, 317).

There are at least two terms in the correspondence which Kloppenborg considers worth considering in greater detail. There is the *ἐργολάβος*, which is translated as "contractor," and it appears in 6 of the 58 papyri which Kloppenborg considers. The second is the *δεκάταρχος* (lit. meaning "leader of ten [workers/labourers]"), which Kloppenborg most frequently renders "foreman" but which he also refers to as a contractor (2010, 376, 375). Kloppenborg says these latter were leaders of "labour gangs" which could be of 10 or 20 labourers (2010, 376, 383). Of the 58 papyri they feature in 11.<sup>165</sup> The difference or distinction between the two would be the following: whereas contractors were enlisted to perform specific duties, tasks, projects, sometime of a more specialised nature, attendant to viticultural production, the manner of execution of which was their concern, the services of a *δεκάταρχος* were engaged specifically to provide labour for a certain task/project.<sup>166</sup> Thus we already see that there are potentially variegated levels of oversight, management and labour services required and that, at least in Hellenistic Egypt, the situation is more nuanced than a wealthy landowner exploiting a

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<sup>163</sup> Other examples in *PSI* IV 345, *PCairZen* V 59827, *PCairZen* III 59317, *PPetr* I 29.

<sup>164</sup> Examples of the latter are *PRyl* IV 583, *PLond* II 163, *PHarr* I 137.

<sup>165</sup> Bear in mind that the papyri reflect a variety of documentation, only some of which are leases or wage agreements.

<sup>166</sup> If we imagine, in today's world, a small- to medium-sized building contractor being enlisted to build a house, he might in turn engage a foreman to provide him with labourers, where the foreman would be paid a commission or somewhat higher wage than his team of labourers.

group of peasant-tenants. We consider below some examples by way of illustration.

*PLond VII 1957 + PMich I 27* reflects a deed of payment. Komoapis is an engineer charged with overseeing estates belonging to Apollonios, Ptolemy II's finance minister.<sup>167</sup> Komoapis engages the services of a labour broker or foreman called Necthembes who receives 20 obols for payment of 20 labourers clearing a vineyard. While the record indicates each labourer should be paid one obal, Kloppenborg says that, for the period in question, a typical wage lay between 0,5-1 obal (2010, 376). Necthembes possibly then would have received some commission. *PCairZen IV 59748* is a wage account and again what is instructive about the document is that it does not record wages paid to individual labourers but to a number of foremen who then in turn would have divided the wages among the labourers (2010, 382). Likewise, *PCairZen IV 59752* provides a list of wages paid to "work gangs" (2010, 435). *PMich I 62* is a fragment of a labour contract and instructive since it offers details around the role of the ἐργολάβος (2010, 407-408). It stipulates that the contractor will receive a fee for his services, i.e. in addition to the wages paid to labourers whom he is contractually obliged to provide.<sup>168</sup>

*PCairZen II 59182* is a labour contract which "resembles a lease agreement" (2010, 387) but instead of the contract being between a lessor, or vineyard owner (or his representative) and tenants for the use of a vineyard, it is between the lessor and a group of labourers for work they are to perform. What the contract details, as do most of such nature and most leases, is the severe penalties the lessees will incur if they fail in their contractual obligations. This particular contract specifies heavy monetary penalties and recourse to the seizure of property.<sup>169</sup> Likewise *PColZen II 79* stipulates penalties in the case of the lessee's failure to meet contractual obligations (2010, 413).

*PRyl IV 583* is a lease indicating a sharecrop arrangement between Nikomachos, the lessor, and lessee, Apollonios (not the finance minister of Ptolemy II),<sup>170</sup> which stipulates a two-thirds share entitled to Nikomachos (2010, 471). In the lease, Apollonios' name appears with the appellation "Persian of the Descent" which, says Kloppenborg, was a term frequently used in Egyptian papyri and, by the Roman period, indicated that the lessee stood in an inferior legal and economic relationship (2010, 473).<sup>171</sup> *PKoln III 144* is a lease of viticultural

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<sup>167</sup> But see *PCairZen IV 59752* where Kloppenborg refers to Komoapis as a vinedresser (2010, 434). It is possible that these roles were the same and that the vinedresser was responsible for overseeing the production of the vineyard.

<sup>168</sup> Kloppenborg says it is a form of contract testified to elsewhere where such a contract "often stipulates penalties to be exacted should the work not be completed or should the objects of the lease not be returned to the owner." (2010, 408)

<sup>169</sup> "If they do not return (the land), they shall immediately pay back to Zenon the money with half added and Zenon or anyone else designated by him shall have the right of execution on them and on all of their belongings, (with the same right of execution that exists) for royal revenues." (*PCairZen II 59182* in 2010, 387)

<sup>170</sup> See Kloppenborg's discussion of the identity of the Apollonios of *PRyl IV 583* in conversation with Evans (2010, 310). Evans apparently maintained that the Apollonios of *PRyl IV 583* was the son of the more well-known Apollonios (finance minister to Ptolemy II), since he is called "son of Apollonios" in this papyrus. Kloppenborg disputes this on the basis that 'Apollonios' was "an extremely common name," the fact that the two references stand eighty years apart, and that the Apollonios of *PRyl IV 583* is described as "Persian of the Descent" meaning he was not Greek (2010, 310).

<sup>171</sup> "By the Roman period the term also denoted a legal status in which the person so designated placed him/herself in the category of a debtor... Thus a Persian of the Descent was susceptible to personal execution in the case of default and was

labour and again is intriguing. Here “Judeans of descent” are listed as the lessees. Kloppenborg indicates the possibility that the term “Judaean of descent” “designated Jewish soldiers serving in the Ptolemaic army or former soldiers” (2010, 456). Interestingly, they receive the additional designation in this document of *τακτομισθοι* which originally meant “a rank in the army of the Ptolemies”.<sup>172</sup> We know however that the root *μισθοι* designates the payment of wages or the condition of being hired which is a mark of mercenaries. In the New Testament, *μισθωτοι* are wage labourers, e.g. Mark 1:20. We note later in the chapter on banditry, the close historical and etymological connections between mercenarism and the condition of being hired.

In addition to the papyri we have mentioned many indicate, amongst other things, the prevalence of theft (*PMich* I 63–64; *CPJ* I 14; *PGur* 8)<sup>173</sup>, the need for vineyard guards (*PSI* IV 345; *PCairZen* III 59329; *PCairZen* IV 59610) who are often formally employed, as well as the illegal occupation of vineyards (*PCairZen* IV 59624).

Kloppenborg in turn engages a study by Dar (1986). The study includes an extensive examination of 1200 tower installations in western Samaria, dating from the Iron II period to the Roman and Byzantine periods. While the pattern of distribution of the towers is upon an “agricultural basis,” dating to the early Iron Age II period, and the towers were also utilised in the Herodian period and in the first and second centuries CE, their planning and construction dates to the third and second centuries BCE (1986, 109). The study is significant for our purposes because, if Dar’s analyses and conclusions are accepted, his findings suggest a massive increase in the scale of viticultural production in ancient Palestine during the Hasmonean period. To summarise Dar’s conclusions, regarding the numerous tower installations he says that these were not designed principally as fortifications and are in many instances either too close together or too short to make effective watch towers. They are, in addition, unsuitable for even medium-term habitation, being in some instances interiorly too small, with most possessing only a single door (i.e. also being completely dark inside when closed).<sup>174</sup> While skilfully constructed, the stones are not mortared, meaning there would have been some degree of ventilation inside the towers. This, together with the fact that some of the towers have plastering on the outside section which received the most sunlight or radiation suggests to Dar that the towers were temperature controlled and thus

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prohibited from seeking asylum in a temple, the traditional right of an Egyptian.” (2010, 473) See also *PLond* II 163 (2010, 497).

<sup>172</sup> <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/τακτόμισθος>

<sup>173</sup> In the latter case cited, the theft is by three Judean labourers. The docket lists them as “Judeans of descent” which may bear some similarities to the designation “Persians of the Descent” in implying inferiority. While Kloppenborg says the former did not suffer “any legal impairment” they were not entitled to own cleruchic land (2010, 455-457).

<sup>174</sup> “The average tower was a massive stone structure whose sides varied from 3.00 to 4.00 m. square and whose height was about 3 metres. Its walls were 0.70 x 0.80 m. thick and it was built of large hard stones - of dolomite and durable limestone. The average weight of a medium tower was 100 – 150 tons! The towers were built without binding material, and their walls were not insulated. They possessed one small entrance, which could be shut by a wooden door. Their interior was a dark chamber, 30 percent or more of the exterior measurements of the tower. There is no sign that the roof was used, and only in two cases did we find evidence of stairs which led to the roof (*'Azun* map, 71-72; 156a). It would seem that these stairs were built in a late stage of the tower's use. Apparently the tower was a functional structure, entirely built for an agricultural and economic purpose. The number of exceptional towers is so small that nothing can be learnt from them of general application.” (Dar 1986, 107)

built for the purpose of fermentation (1986, 110-111, 157-158). This would immediately explain the close proximity of the towers to each other, i.e. as opposed to the possibility that they were watch towers.

There is an additional principle Dar cites in support of this theory, that of material reward on the basis of the large investment in both resource and manpower in building the towers. It may be fair to describe the extent of skill and resource required to construct this system as monumental. Citing Mintzker, of the Department of Antiquities, Dar says that “300 or 400 days work were required to build one average tower...[where t]he erection of a single tower needed a trained professional team of a number of men, also auxiliary means for lifting the heavy stones.” (1986, 95) The average tower comprised stone weighing 700 kgs (1986, 95) meaning that the system in its entirety represents the transference of roughly 8 400 tonnes of hewn stone. Additionally, the towers were built “in all conditions...of the terrain and in every topographical formation” (1986, 95) thus requiring strategic planning in the case of steep gradients and rock surfaces.<sup>175</sup>

Furthermore, Dar notes that the towers have no fixed directional orientation, which would likely have been the case if the towers had a cultic function.<sup>176</sup> Instead, that the towers possess no directional orientation and appear over diverse topography is more likely due to the wide dispersal of vines even in rocky or terraced areas which the towers catered for (1986, 65). In light of these insights, it is not surprising that Dar suggests the tower system is indicative of governmental planning, where this applies not just to the construction of towers but to the field arrangement of vineyards in relation to the towers.<sup>177</sup>

Whereas the work of Fiensy was perhaps more speculative or theoretical regarding the presence of estates in first-century Judea and Galilee, the work of Kloppenborg, as well as Dar’s study, not only confirm the presence of estates but give us some insight into their scale and functioning. Most notably, as was mentioned previously, we see legal protection by way of contractual agreement for the lessors and conversely most of the liability or risk saddled with the lessees. The question was raised as to which socio-economic class comprised the lessees or tenants. While this perhaps cannot be established incontrovertibly, the fact that lessees often had financial resources at their disposal, as well as the prevalence of both contractors (εργολαβοι) and foremen (δεκαταρχοι), suggesting some form of brokerage, in turn suggests a more variegated arrangement in which

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<sup>175</sup> “The towers are sited in all conditions and play of the terrain and in every topographical formation: bosses, spurs, slopes and valleys. As far as they could their builders endeavoured to select level rock areas on which to build. If the rock surfaces were not level, the courses were adjusted by dressing the stone in situ. We found no cases of surfaces dressed and smoothed before the tower was erected. Sometimes towers were erected in conditions of sharp grades, in which case the floor was levelled by an artificial fill of soil and stone.” (1986, 93)

<sup>176</sup> Some scholars had speculated that they were dolmens or associated with burials. Apart from the lack of directional orientation to support this, only in one instance did a tower accompany bodily remains which in any event dated to the Byzantine period (1986, 91).

<sup>177</sup> “The method and arrangement with which the towers were built indicate a planned government project...[where the] settlement pattern of the villages with towers, in contrast to those without them, shows that a single planning agency determined and carried out the division of the fields.” (1986, 120)

something like the so-called merchants referred to by Boer may have featured. If this was the case, it is likely that contractual liability and the onus around penalties devolved to those occupying the lowest rung in the overall means of production, namely the δεκαταρχος and his team of day or wage labourers. In spite, or perhaps because, of this there is evidence for an adversarial relationship not particularly between lessees and lessors but between labourers (who are responsible for theft in many cases) and vineyard owners (or between labourers and the representatives of vineyard owners or even lessees themselves), as well as the evident need for guarding likely to prevent pilferage by either labourers or the local population.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

Whereas in the previous chapter we detailed a theoretical framework to understand the overall modes of production for the periods of the Old and New Testaments, in this chapter, we tried to consider some of the particular features of first-century Judea and Galilee as peasant-agrarian societies. Wolf said that the feature which critically distinguishes a peasant from a horticultural producer is the extraction of rent, whether in cash, produce, or labour, where this fund of rent can assume the form of tithe, tax or rent proper (i.e. by way of lease or contractual arrangement). Accepting this defining feature, first-century Judea and Galilee could only be labelled 'peasant-agrarian' societies if this feature were present.

Through the work of Oakman, we tried to gauge debt levels in first-century Judea and Galilee, for debt can only be present when there are concomitantly high levels of extraction (i.e. of rent) as well as the necessary failure of members of society to meet such payments, resulting in the debt. In addition to debt being an indicator of extractive regimes, it also facilitated the process of latifundialisation, the conglomeration of small-holdings into large estates. On the basis of Oakman's findings, debt was certainly present. The advent of the prozbul, Jesus' petition in the Lord's Prayer for debt-forgiveness, and burning of debt records both at Jerusalem and Antioch cannot be explained apart from the presence of debt. Whether it was prevalent and to what extent is less clear.

We then considered evidence for the presence of latifundia, not only their presence but their operation, since this is meant to be one of the dominant institutional forms for the period. As we saw in the previous chapter, latifundialism, or the institutional form of tenure, and that of the *polis-chōra* relation were two sides of a coin which constituted the overarching colonial regime. It was the means by which the Greeks hellenized, the means by which the citified, and later the means, in conjunction with the colonate, by which the Romans colonised.

Through the work of Fiensy and Kloppenborg, we saw that there is extensive evidence for latifundia in Judea, and particularly in Galilee where, in the second century BCE, expansive attempts at viticultural production are evinced. Of all agricultural production, viticultural was the most labour intensive, being however seasonal, thus placing unique and strenuous labour demands on the populace. The process of latifundialisation was therefore required by the ruling elite for two reasons. At early stages they had to acquire sufficiently large tracts of

accessible, fertile land to engage in intensive monocultural production (among which viticulture was common). Secondly, they required a labour force to service these estates. To achieve the latter the ruling elite had to encroach and impinge on the subsistence-survival institutional form of the peasantry to such an extent that members of the peasantry were forced to seek alternative forms of subsistence. In simple terms, latifundialism (aided to by indebtedness) severed the peasant's relationship to his land making his labour accessible.

Alternative subsistence could be sought by assuming tenancy (which for the small-scale horticultural producer was really a form of economic control and domination) or wage labour. The encroachment of latifundialism on the peasantry and their labour patterns brought significant disruption and upheaval, one of the side effects of which was itinerancy and banditry. Preceding the First Jewish Revolt, population levels at Jerusalem were at their highest, suggesting that extraction levels, in terms of the *polis-chōra* relationship, were concomitantly high. If we are to take Josephus' accounts at face value (we consider this in more detail in the next chapter), economic disenfranchisement was at such levels as to be a contributing factor of the Revolt.

## CHAPTER FIVE: BANDITRY

*“When someone steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, the thief shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. The thief shall make restitution, but if unable to do so, shall be sold for the theft... When the animal, whether ox or donkey or sheep, is found alive in the thief’s possession, the thief shall pay double.”*

(Exodus 22:1, 4)

*““Many of them [the Jews] emboldened by impunity, had recourse to banditry, and raids and insurrections, fostered by the more reckless, broke out all over the country” (J. W. 2. 15,5 § 238).”*

(Josephus quoted in Horsley 1981: 415).

### 5.1 Introduction

We now come to the last area of this study which we will consider from a theoretical perspective, the phenomenon of banditry. The subject of banditry is important for many reasons in the context of this study. To begin with, one’s appreciation for the social milieu of Jesus is deeply enriched when we have a better understanding of banditry. The Gospels are permeated with references to banditry: in the Synoptic tradition Jesus is crucified between two bandits (Mark 15: 27) and; accuses the authorities of coming to arrest him as if he were a bandit (Mark 14: 48); in the so-called parable of the Good Samaritan, a man falls prey to bandits (Luke 10:30-35) while; in the John a bandit is exchanged for Jesus before his crucifixion (John 18: 40).

Jesus himself, if not personally styled as a bandit, was likely to have been thought so by the authorities. He was guilty of *anachoresis*, which automatically rendered him a *latro*. In most modern English translations of the New Testament, the meaning of ληστης is lost by rendering it “thief” or even “robber”. The crucial distinction between a thief and bandit (in terms of Hobsbawm’s model) is that the bandit is ideologically motivated against the state. Having said that, Hobsbawm’s model, as mentioned previously, requires some revision. In light of this, while the ancient bandit might have been motivated against the state, this was not necessarily on behalf of the peasantry and, at times, depending on what was most expedient, he may have even cooperated with the state. Nevertheless, to render ληστης “thief” conjures images in the modern mind of petty thievery and voids the term completely of class or power dynamics. Amidst these references, biblical material under examination in this study, John 10:1-16, makes reference to bandits against the backdrop of shepherding. Bandits, as we will

see from the research below, have a long-standing relationship with shepherds. Banditry may also be regarded as a social gauge for general levels of unrest where banditry correlates with levels of disenfranchisement.<sup>178</sup>

## 5.2 Hobsbawm

The work of Eric Hobsbawm (1959, 1969 [2000]) has proved influential in scholarly approaches to peasant-agrarian societies. Amongst his more important claims for our purposes is that banditry arises out of a set of antagonistic class relations, viz. those between an urban, non-productive elite and a rural, productive peasantry. In other words, Hobsbawm allowed us to understand banditry as a symptom of the breakdown in class relations in peasant-agrarian societies. As a symptom of peasant-agrarian societies experiencing such a break-down, banditry also acts as an indicator of social unrest. There are however various factors which may contribute to a prevalence in banditry and also different classes which may come to constitute, or be termed, bandits. In this sense, it is inaccurate to understand banditry exclusively as a form of class conflict between the rural peasantry and urban elite, especially in the context of the Roman Empire. Before considering these permutations, let us look at the features of Hobsbawm's model.

Hobsbawm notes that "banditry simultaneously challenges the economic, social and political order by challenging those who hold or lay claim to power, law and the control of resources" and that "[B]anditry as a specific phenomenon cannot...exist outside socio-economic and political orders which can be so challenged." (2000, 7-8) This remains applicable whether one subscribes to Hobsbawm's position or a qualified version of it. The most basic definition of the Roman *latro* was someone opposed to the Roman state, regardless of their motivations or circumstances. Strictly speaking however, in Hobsbawm's model and as a social phenomenon, banditry arises in response to socio-economic pressures which lead to, or manifest as, a form of antagonism. In this sense, there is also grounds to understand banditry as an extension, albeit an overt and antagonistic one, of the hidden transcript, i.e. as a form of resistance, as articulated in Scott's work.<sup>179</sup>

Hobsbawm goes on to say that "[b]andits, by definition, resist obedience, are outside the range of power, are potential exercisers of power themselves, and therefore potential rebels...[i]ndeed the original (Italian) meaning of *bandito* is a man 'placed outside the law'" (2000, 12). Hobsbawm had stated previously that bandits "only become outlaws, and are punishable as such, where they are judged by a criterion of public law and order" hitherto absent from their social structures (2000, 8). Therefore, as we will see even within Grünwald's more conservative analysis, even if one does not see banditry arising out of a set of class antagonisms there is

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<sup>178</sup> Hobsbawm had made the important point (2000, 34-35) that landlessness is a contributing factor to banditry not as one might have expected for exclusively economic reasons. Owning land renders the peasant immobile through his commitments to farm the land and feed his family, as well to a broader set of cultural commitments and obligations.

<sup>179</sup> Both Scott and Hobsbawm list sabotage, pilferage and theft as among the forms of resistance to which the peasantry reverts (2000, 9).

inevitably an antagonistic relationship between the state and the bandit which derives precisely from the fact that one's status as a bandit lies outside state-sanctioned activity.<sup>180</sup>

Hobsbawm's claim that the uniformity of social banditry allows it to be applied as a heuristic model to various societies, certainly in a diachronic sense, has been contested.<sup>181</sup> Nearly all of the studies considered below cite the various ways the terminology and concept of banditry is applied in the Graeco-Roman sources, which immediately negate this universal applicability for the simple reason that, in these sources, we cannot always be certain what phenomenon we are dealing with.<sup>182</sup>

One of the contentions of this study, borne out by the theoretical analysis of Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017), is that first-century Judea and Galilee were undergoing changes in mode of production and that signs and symptoms of these changes were manifest in the material conditions of the society at the time. To offer a tentative and preliminary list, high levels of debt essential for the securing of labour in the transition from tenancy to wage labour, together with both localised and regional changes in administration, contributed to greater pressures on the peasantry, intermittent vacuums of power, and increased opportunities to take advantage of these. Such conditions likely both contributed to higher levels of banditry, in turn linked to a greater prevalence of stock theft and other forms of sabotage, but also collectively represented the material manifestations of a society whose mode of production was in flux.

Hobsbawm indicates the possibility of large groups of pastoralists, when being thrust onto such a society or being dispossessed of their livelihood, making the transition very easily into banditry. He cites the example of the Ottoman empire in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries where "historians...virtually identified brigandage and herdsmen" (2000, 21). This is a fairly simple and straightforward insight from Hobsbawm's work, important within this study as it is concerned with caprine husbandry, but an insight borne out by all of the subsequent scholarship, even that which disputes the central theses of Hobsbawm's approach.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> "The history of banditry, including social banditry, cannot therefore be understood or properly studied except as part of the history of political power, which, at its highest levels, is the power of empires and states." (2000, 13)

<sup>181</sup> Hobsbawm states that "[s]ocial banditry...is one of the most universal social phenomena known to history, and one of the most amazingly uniform. Practically all cases belong to two or three clearly related types, and the variations within these are relatively superficial. What is more, this uniformity is not the consequence of cultural confusion, but the reflection of similar situations within peasant societies, whether in China, Peru, Sicily, the Ukraine, or Indonesia. Geographically it is found throughout the Americas, Europe, the Islamic world, South and East Asia, and even Australia. Socially it seems to occur in all types of human society which lie between the evolutionary phase of tribal and kinship organisation, and modern capitalist and industrial society, but including phases of disintegrating kinship society and transition to agrarian capitalism." (2000, 21)

<sup>182</sup> Cf. later Shaw (1984), McGing (1998), Grünewald (2004) and Blumell (2008).

<sup>183</sup> As an aside, Hobsbawm states that "[i]t is commonplace that brigands flourish in remote and inaccessible areas such as mountains, trackless plains, fenland, forest or estuaries with their labyrinth of creeks and waterways, and are attracted by trade-routes and major highways, where preindustrial travel is naturally both slow and cumbrous." (2000, 24) In this context we may understand David's contestation of Saul's power where he is recorded as fleeing from Saul to caves and mountains with his band of men. Boer had characterised David as a bandit, i.e. in terms of Grünewald's thinking (which we consider later) one who pretends to the throne. Incidentally, tradition states that David was also a shepherd.

With regard to banditry being a social marker of economic upheaval, Hobsbawm says that it “tended to become epidemic in times of pauperization and economic crisis.” (2000, 26) He describes this observation as somewhat “platitudinous” (2000, 26). On the other hand “[t]he situation is rather different when the events which precipitate an epidemic of banditry... reflect long-term changes...[where in] such circumstances epidemics of banditry... may reflect the disruption of an entire society, the rise of new classes and social structures, the resistance of entire communities or peoples against the destruction of its way of life.” (2000, 27)

In the context of first-century Judea and Galilee, where at least a minority of the population were vehemently opposed at an ideological level to the hegemony of Rome, we must try consider the class out of which bandits emerged. One can understand why social banditry as a model was appealing to Horsely where, writing for the period of first-century Judea and Galilee, Josephus indicates that banditry was rife particularly in Galilee.<sup>184</sup> Using only Hobsbawm’s position, and based on Josephus’ writings, Horsely understood this to imply high levels of disenfranchisement, likely through land-indebtedness. But because of the ideological concerns just mentioned, first-century Judea and Galilee represent a unique context. An illustration of this is the Hasmonean revolt, begun by the Maccabee family in 167BCE which, at least according to 1 Maccabees, was motivated by ideological or nationalistic factors. The Hasmoneans were a priestly and royal class and ruled Judea for about 80 years from 140BCE. As a class they therefore represent the ruling elite and yet their action, at the outset of the revolt, would have been regarded unequivocally in Graeco-Roman terms as *latrocinium*.<sup>185</sup>

In light of Boer’s (2015) and Boer and Petterson’s (2017) use of *Régulation* theory we could also understand banditry as a form of crisis mitigation.<sup>186</sup> In other words, if we understand banditry as a form of crisis mitigation or *régulation*, at a broad level, banditry would have served the interests of the elite. The crux would have been to maintain a balance, i.e. to allow banditry to a certain extent without becoming excessive or without allowing it to foment widescale revolt.<sup>187</sup> I mention here though in cursory fashion the possibility of appreciating the

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<sup>184</sup> Horsley says “a closer look at Josephus’ histories reveals that, according to him at least, banditry was a recurrent and widespread phenomenon in Jewish Palestine and increased dramatically during the decades prior to the Revolt.” (Horsley 1981: 410) He goes on to suggest that it was even a main cause of the revolt and in turn says that “[m]any of Hobsbawm’s insights and generalizations are as valid for banditry in ancient Jewish society as they are for banditry in modern European agrarian societies” (1981: 412).

<sup>185</sup> The same is true of Simon Bar Kokhba, leader of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, who was nevertheless not a member of the peasantry. As we saw from papyri from the Cave of Letters, he owned a number of estates.

<sup>186</sup> “*En masse*, [bandits] are little more than symptoms of crisis and tension in their society – of famine, pestilence, war or anything else that disrupts it. Banditry itself is...not a programme for peasant society but a form of self-help to escape it in particular circumstances. Bandits, except for their willingness or capacity to refuse individual submission, have no ideas other than those of the peasantry (or the section of peasantry) of which they form a part. They are activists and not ideologists or prophets from whom novel visions or plans of political organization are to be expected.” (2000, 29)

<sup>187</sup> Hobsbawm himself says that “[l]ocal merchants make their own arrangements to safeguard their businesses against constant disruption. Even the locally stationed soldiery and police may merely prefer to keep crime – by tacit or overt agreement with bandits – below the threshold which will attract the attention of the capital, which leaves plenty of room for banditry, for in the pre-industrial period the eye of central governments does not penetrate too deeply into the undergrowth of rural society, unless its own special interests are involved.” (2000, 98-99) That Judea and Galilee were a relative backwater in the Roman Empire may explain the high levels of banditry cited by Josephus. This in turn may

productive aspects of banditry or, to use Boer's terms, understanding it as an institutional form since those engaged in banditry used it, even if in indirect ways, as a means to subsist.<sup>188</sup>

Hobsbawm explains (2000, 36-37) that the average bandit profile across societies is one of young men between the ages of 15 and 30, typically unmarried, and landless. The latter two are key as land represents both a form of subsistence, and with this having to provide for a family, as well as attendant cultural obligations. To sever a subsistence horticulturalist from his land renders him entirely free of economic and cultural moorings, hence the connection between landlessness, itinerancy, and banditry. Hobsbawm indicates the close relationship between pastoralism and banditry saying that the "characteristic bandit unit in a highland area is likely to consist of young herdsmen, landless labourers and ex-soldiers and unlikely to contain married men with children or artisans." (2000, 39)<sup>189</sup> Thus if we reflect on features of those predisposed to banditry we see they are those whose land-ties have been severed, thus freeing them of economic and cultural responsibility, and therefore prone to itinerancy; those who, whether due to this or by lineage, are nomadic pastoralists and; those, again whether due to this or not, who are intermittently engaged in mercenarism. We see even in Hobsbawm's version of the social bandit it is not exclusively members of the peasantry who are predisposed to banditry.

Furthermore, Hobsbawm had himself indicated in line with supposed critics of his position (or his via Horsley) that the exact politics of banditry become more complex with some of the local client rulers pandering to, and also using, local bandit populations to their ends. He highlights an important dynamic of social banditry (2000, 99)<sup>190</sup> whereby the politics of banditry, and perhaps the efficacy with which banditry functions in a region, depends primarily not on opportunity for monetary gain but on social relationship and influence. Hobsbawm explains that while money may feature in this, the primary determinant of a bandit's success is a sort of kinship system or, at alternate times, a system of patronage, which may or may not include money and is based fundamentally on loyalty between client and patron. As far as it may be considered as a political movement banditry, in societies experiencing forms of dissolution, may represent a transition from kinship-household

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explain the anxiety of the ruling elite in Jerusalem as regards too much unrest and foment and retaliation by the Romans. What is highlighted well in Grünewald's study is the state's ideology which develops around banditry. In other words, there is a language and perception which is spread by the state to manage banditry at an ideological level.

<sup>188</sup> Banditry is closely related to the institutional form of patronage.

<sup>189</sup> Bandits are "not watched, but rather watchers... Indeed, as often as not the mountains provide their common world, into which landlords and ploughmen do not enter, and where men do not talk much about what they see and do. Here bandits meet shepherds, and shepherds consider whether to become bandits." (2000, 39)

<sup>190</sup> He writes: "The politics of areas ruled by pre-capitalist landowners turn on the rivalries and relationships of the leading landed families and their respective followers and clients. The power and influence of the head of such a family rests, in the last analysis, on the number of men to whom he is patron, offering protection and receiving in turn those services of loyalty and dependence which are the measure of his prestige, and consequently of his capacity to make alliances: fighting, voting, or whatever else determines his local power." (2000, 99)

systems to grander ones of patronage, hence my reason earlier for considering banditry in terms of Boer's institutional form of patronage, as it may be seen to represent a means or mode of subsistence.<sup>191</sup>

### 5.3 McGing, Shaw and Grünewald

We will now consider the work of other theorists on banditry in conversation with Hobsbawm's model. These deal with both the perceptions, as well as instances, of banditry in Graeco-Roman literature. There are methodological issues which we will consider in due course, suffice it to say here that there is a discrepancy between elite Graeco-Roman perceptions of banditry and actual instances of banditry. Additionally, what the ancient Romans described as banditry does not necessarily or always coincide with Hobsbawm's social bandit. The first theorist we consider is Brian McGing (1998) whose study uses papyrological evidence from Egypt. Commenting on how the notion of banditry was understood in the Graeco-Roman era and highlighting some of the interpretational difficulties, McGing writes:

*Romans (and to a lesser extent the Greeks)...used the word (ληστης/latro) to cover a much larger range of applications than we usually associate with it: mercenary, political adversary, mutineer, usurper, revolutionary, mountain-man, barbarian. Indeed, from the point of view of the state and its law-abiding citizens, anyone who refused to integrate, especially someone who offered violent opposition to established authority, could be designated a bandit. This makes the task of analysis potentially a difficult one: both the small brigand group in Egypt who attacked the two servants of Dionysius son of Heracleides on the road between Crocodilopolis and Oxyrhyncha in 152 BC (P.Erasm. I, 2) and the more famous (and problematic) Bacaudae of Gaul, are termed "bandits," in spite of the fact that they have very little in common, and can scarcely be regarded as the same phenomenon. (McGing 1998, 160)*

Though McGing is concerned with banditry in ancient Rome, he is sympathetic toward Hobsbawm's model and offers the following characterisation of this in summary: "[s]ocial banditry is a purely rural phenomenon, and cannot exist without peasant discontent. Pastoral economies, particularly in highland areas, are far more bandit-prone than tillage ones, but banditry flourishes...in remote and inaccessible places at the edges of society, where there is a gap between the area dominated by the organs of state control and the actual geographical boundaries of the state." (1998, 161) Again, based on Hobsbawm's insights, McGing says that although banditry does not provide a programme for revolution "[s]ocial banditry is a precursor to more conscious, sophisticated and ambitious forms of peasant agitation." (1998, 162)

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<sup>191</sup> Recall Boer had cited the emergence of the 'Davidic' dynasty by means of banditry, where this too may be seen to represent a transition from the kinship-household institutional form to one of patronage. See later under Finkelstein's work for a revised assessment of the scale of both the Davidic and Solomonic 'dynasties,' where Finkelstein regards these as no more than influential, localised chiefdoms.

McGing however challenges Hobsbawm's model on three counts. Firstly, regarding the relationship bandits were supposed to have enjoyed with the local peasantry, and citing Blok, Barkey and Hopwood, he suggests bandits were often more closely aligned and associated with the ruling classes, sometimes through a system of patronage, than they were with the peasantry (1998, 164-165).<sup>192</sup> The second and related aspect McGing questions is the notion of the bandit as *benefactor* of the peasantry. According to his sources, McGing says bandits are self-serving and unconcerned with the lot of the peasantry. The third aspect McGing takes issue with is Hobsbawm's use of source material where, in many instances, this consists of legendary or anecdotal accounts which seem to have been romanticised. Some of the flaws in Hobsbawm's model, viz. its assessment of the relationship between bandit and local peasant, stem from this unreliable or unfactual data (1998, 166).

Pertaining to the Egyptian papyri, McGing asks important questions around the portrayal of banditry among the upper class of Egyptian society (1998, 167). The phrase ληστρικῶ τρόπῳ is used to convey that something, usually a crime (often theft), has been done in the *manner of a bandit*. Seeming to sometimes have an idiomatic function, McGing indicates uncertainty as to how often the term speaks accurately about the phenomenon of social banditry. Furthermore, there is other content which seemingly describes accounts of banditry yet does not use the word ληστής (1998, 167). Finally, regarding the phrase ληστρικῶ τρόπῳ, McGing sees it being used "exclusively and uniformly in a hostile way [and that] there is no underlying feeling that a ληστής might be a good or heroic type."<sup>193</sup> Based on an account by Galen, McGing in fact cites the "bitterness of ordinary people...towards bandits" (1998, 169).

McGing also considers legal decrees and injunctions pertaining to the apprehension of bandits, their punishments, as well as those of people who aided them. Very interestingly, he refers to the phenomenon of "bandit-catchers" (ληστοπιαστῆς), people (perhaps mercenaries) formally employed by the ruling elite to hunt down bandits (1998, 171-172).<sup>194</sup> McGing cites injunctions against local policing forces as well as these "bandit-catchers," warning of the consequences for failing or refusing to arrest bandits. This may suggest that local policing forces and populations were reluctant to arrest bandits, that they feared bandits or, contrary to his position that, in some instances, they supported them.

McGing's analysis is of further insight as he speaks to the phenomenon of *anachoresis* which we have considered previously in the work of Ste. Croix through Boer and Petterson. *Anachoresis* is the technical term for tax evasion or, more generally, the avoiding of civic duties. Literally meaning "to withdraw," it is the same

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<sup>192</sup> In this vein, based on what was previously mentioned, the state might tolerate and even use bandit networks to their own advantage, with the ever-present threat of state prosecution if the bandits had ideas of overextending their reach.

<sup>193</sup> Admittedly, given that the elite produce the surviving historical record, this sentiment may not be surprising.

<sup>194</sup> In this sense, and we might refer to Josephus' reference to Galileans taking revenge on Samaritans, by hiring the bandit Eleazar, for the murder of one of their members when travelling through Samaria in describing a situation where bandits hunt bandits.

word from which we derive the English words *anchorite/ anchoress* and was applied to the early Desert Fathers. The concept is understood in the biological sciences as “the habit of living in holes or crevices as a means of avoiding predators”.<sup>195</sup> McGing says that the bandit-catchers mentioned just now were at times enlisted to catch tax fugitives, a category of people closely related to the bandit (1998, 172). The action of ‘living among caves’ seems to have been common to groups of both religious ascetics and those avoiding taxes and/or bandits. We have seen evidence for the equation of pastoralism with banditry and a common factor to both of these is itinerancy. Though there appear only resonances with the former two regarding Jesus’ ministry, at the very least, what seems clear is that he was both itinerant and engaged in, and likely promoted, non-payment of taxes.<sup>196</sup> On McGing’s less stringent criteria Jesus would be guilty of the crime of *latrocinium*.

Let us now consider another scholar whose work on banditry has gained respect. Brent Shaw (1984) in his study of banditry in the Roman empire considers the etymology of *latro/latrocinium* which is highly informative:

*“the principal Latin term for bandit was latro and for banditry latrocinium. These words are based on a \*LATR root and are derived from a whole family of words in Greek of similar origin, though earlier in date. The striking fact about all these earlier Greek terms (for example, latris, latreia, latreuo) in their usage from the seventh to early fourth centuries B.C. is that they have no apparent connection with bandits at all. Latreia, for example, is a noun meaning “the condition of a hired labourer, the performance of services or duties for another man”. It has the denotation of “working for someone for compensation” and hence “performing labour obligations”. But it also has a connotation of social subservience, a stigma of inferiority incurred by the very performance of the labour duties. The verb latreuo means not only to work for hire but also to be in servitude, “to be subordinate to someone else’s dictates”.” (1984, 26)*

It seems there are almost two sub-fields within banditry studies which are becoming apparent: there is banditry within the Roman Empire, and within this banditry in first-century Judea and Galilee, which were Roman colonies (this form of banditry also features a wider set of criteria as to what constituted banditry); then there is banditry considered more broadly as a socio-economic feature of peasant-agrarian societies during times of upheaval. While the two must necessarily overlap for the purpose of this study, since first-century Judea and Galilee were both Roman colonies and peasant-agrarian societies, the literature devoted to these respective ‘sub-areas’ do not always share the same methodological or theoretical orientations. Whereas those focused on the former tend to rely heavily on literary sources (Josephus, papyrological data, and classical Roman

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<sup>195</sup> <https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/anachoresis>

<sup>196</sup> The incident in Mark 12:13ff. can only be understood if the Jewish authorities (Pharisees and Herodians) knew Jesus did not pay tax. If he paid tax, and generally supported payment of tax, the pretence on which they try to trap him makes little sense. It could only have been effective on the basis that they hoped Jesus might declare publicly what he taught his disciples privately, viz. the non-payment of tax. The same is true of Matthew 17:24ff. where this functions as fanciful and fabled apologetic in light of the fact that Jesus was known not to pay the temple tax.

accounts) those focused on the latter tend to assume a sociological approach in their applications of ‘models,’ precedents, and patterns based on observations of modern instances of banditry in peasant-agrarian societies.

Within a Graeco-Roman context, based on Shaw’s work as well as Grünewald’s, banditry has a quite specific origin. The root of the word in Latin and Greek conveys the notion of being paid or receiving a wage as we have seen. In investigating banditry’s origins in the Graeco-Roman world, we also see that soldiers or mercenaries were known to engage in banditry when not enlisted formally by an army or ruler. They were predisposed to banditry by exposure to military combat and they presumably possessed the necessary the weapons.

This feature of banditry in a Graeco-Roman context, and in other contexts where mercenarism was common, is important and helps explain the disagreement between scholars like Shaw, McGing and Hobsbawm. One should examine this in more detail but we can already see how banditry in a Graeco-Roman context (primarily the concern of Shaw and McGing) may yield different results to a consideration of banditry in more modern peasant-agrarian societies. One of the inferences of Hobsbawm’s approach is that the bandit adopts an oppositional ideological stance toward the state. Hypothetically, if a member of the peasantry is dispossessed of land by the ruling elite, has no other means of subsistence, and engages in banditry as a result, his motivation, even if in some nascently conscious way, is likely to be against the state.

On the other hand, if banditry, or a group of bandits, has arisen because these were formerly mercenaries and are now out of work, we see that such a group may not have the same ideological orientation to the state, nor the same relationship to the peasantry. Yet the Latin for “banditry”, *latrocinium*, conveys the idea of an illegal war against the state. Hence, regarding this second instance of banditry, this might also involve the act of a rogue mercenary, or defected general, turned would-be usurper who possessed the practical means and ability to recruit additional forces to make a viable attempt at challenging structures of authority.

In such instances, what we translate as, but do not necessarily mean, *bandit* (i.e. Hobsbawm’s social bandit) the aggressor or ‘bandit’ is a pretender to the throne who likely does not arise out of the same context of class antagonism, or indeed the same class, as Hobsbawm’s social bandit. Both Hobsbawm’s social bandit and the mercenary/general-turned-usurper may be politically motivated against the state but their motivation is not the same. One can also see there is an ideological aspect to Rome’s use of the term *latrocinium* which Grünewald highlights and which favours the viewpoint of the Roman Empire. Since it was the Roman state which defined what was legal and illegal it tended to label any dissident or subversive group as *latrones*.

In MacMullen’s (1966) review of banditry in the Roman Empire, he groups banditry, military service, and what is referred to “gladiation”, i.e. fighting in the arena as a gladiator. He also recounts a well-known story about a Roman soldier turned deserter who “gathered a large band together consisting mostly of other deserters like himself” (1966, 267) who then attempted to assassinate the emperor Commodus. Again, we easily see that the

political orientation, not least because of the social class difference, of a deserting soldier would be markedly different from that of a member of the peasantry. In other words, if we are to use the term “banditry,” Hobsbawm’s social bandit cannot be equated with some of the types of bandit under this same rubric as are considered in Roman literature. Whereas the deserting general might have a reasonable chance of usurping the throne, the average peasant has no such chance or aspiration. To my mind, both these ‘versions’ of banditry were relevant to the context of first-century Judea and Galilee. The examples cited earlier of Judas Maccabeus and Simon Bar Kokhba can hardly be regarded as members of the peasantry, and yet their pattern of behaviour fits this ‘other version’ of banditry we see in the Roman and Egyptian sources. The same is true, I believe, of those who led the First Jewish revolt, as we will see when we consider Horsley’s work on banditry.

Let us return briefly to the work of Shaw (1984) who says that “almost every kind of violent opposition to established authority short of war was subsumed under the catch-all rubric of *latrocinium*” (1984, 6). He lists two types of legitimate warfare in the Roman Empire – *bellum servile* (or slave war) which was war waged by groups or populations considered inferior to Rome, and *bellum iustum* (or real war) which was war waged between two “legitimately established states”. All other violence directed toward the state was labeled *latrocinium* (1984, 6-7), i.e. an illegal act of war against the state, a point that Grünewald also highlights.

Based on the seeming abundance of data relating accounts of banditry in ancient sources, Shaw states that “banditry appears as integral to the functioning of imperial society.” (1984, 8) For example, among “common causes of death recognized by the laws are old age, sickness and attacks by bandits.” (1984, 8-9) Shaw therefore describes banditry as “ubiquitous” throughout the Roman Empire (1984, 10) and says there are tombstones which, though relatively small in number, are scattered throughout the empire with the formulaic epitaph “killed by bandits” (1984, 10-12). Due to lack of local policing, Rome also placed the legal onus for mitigating banditry upon local governors and even citizens (1984, 18-19). In light of the legal status assigned to them, bandits occupied a similar standing to that of slaves and the insane (1984, 22-23) and Shaw cites the fact that within Roman parlance *latrones* could be applied to any enemies of the Roman state. In other words, the term assumed a polemical use (1984, 23). What is important to note is that *latrones* designates a particular *political* relationship between those identified as *latrones* and the Roman state.

As we saw earlier the etymology of the word *latro* and its cognates centres around the notion of hired labour and subservience. This is significant and not entirely unrelated to Hobsbawm’s model of the social bandit in that it is indicative of two of banditry’s prerequisites: that a bandit be landless (and probably itinerant – a feature of the *εργατης* so common in the New Testament) and; that he assume a hostile position toward the state. As Shaw points out, while not associated with the same political dynamics as the Roman *latro*, the term *latreuo* conveyed inferiority or stigma which derived from the fact of being hired and engaging in servile labour (1984,

26). As a matter of interest, Shaw refers to the privilege and prestige associated with serving in the army of a Greek *polis* and that this was even a means of social advancement. Importantly, citizens serving in this capacity were never paid. The only soldiers ever paid were mercenaries who were regarded as outsiders of the *polis* (1984, 27).

To summarise what has been said thus far, we have seen that according to Graeco-Roman sources, there is a polemical aspect when dealing with banditry in either an abstract sense, e.g. philosophical treatise, or in terms of historical incidents. We have seen that this arises from the perception of banditry by the Roman ruling class where *latrones* and *latrocinium* were catch phrases to include anyone or any activity assuming an adversarial relationship to Roman authority. Graeco-Roman sources do include references to the 'social banditry' more closely aligned to Hobsbawm's model but more frequently to other phenomena which may be seen as distinct, e.g. mercenaries turned bandits or previously respected generals who make pretences toward the throne.

Finally, and this applies indirectly to Hobsbawm's model, the etymology of *latro*, or the historical emergence of the concept in the Graeco-Roman psyche, indicates connotations of both servility and employment which are possibly related. There are in fact various related connotations of the term. If the term originally connoted employment, this likely implied landlessness (and also itinerancy), since to engage in wage labour one likely had been dispossessed of land. And yet if it implied landlessness, it likely also implied that the person who was now landless once worked the land. Both connotations, that of undertaking manual labour as an agricultural worker and that of being engaged in wage labour, are perceived negatively in the Graeco-Roman psyche.

Thomas Grünewald's (2004) *Bandits in the Roman Empire* is an extensive review of the Roman record of banditry which it would be helpful to consider. A methodological problem made clear from the outset, not dissimilar to that pointed out by McGing (2008), relates to the nature of data on banditry for the period. As is the norm throughout history, in Roman literature, its writers are preoccupied with their own needs and interests and those of their class and tend to reference poorer or inferior classes only when these impinge on these interests.

There is an additional tendency within Roman historiography, given Roman society was predicated on honour and shame, not to include record of parties regarded as shameful or disparaged. The most glaring obstacle in studying banditry, according to Grünewald, thus rests on the simple fact that "marginal groups of ancient society are not a valid subject for statistical enquiry," (2004, 2) ostensibly rendering an assessment of actual banditry a pipe dream. Additionally, one cannot base an assessment of banditry in the Roman Empire on a simple and uncritical survey of the use of the term *latro/latrones* for, as we have seen, these words meant different things in different contexts. Furthermore, the use of *latro* according to Grünewald, as a form of insult toward anyone deemed immoral, disreputable, or behaving uncouthly, was fairly common (2004, 2-3). All of this means one is

more realistically poised to assess how banditry, and bandits, were portrayed and perceived by Roman upper classes than to assess, in any factual way, the nature and extent of banditry as a social phenomenon.<sup>197</sup>

Grünewald's work includes a concise etymology of the Latin and Greek words for *bandit*. The Greek root conveys the notion of "services performed for reward" whereas *λατρευειν* carries the meaning of being a *mercenary* and, according to Grünewald, *λατρις* is the Greek for *mercenary*. The lexicons I consulted indicate that this is indeed one of the meanings or connotations for *λατρις* but that it could also mean "workman for hire", "hired servant", "slave", and even "minister of God".<sup>198</sup>

As we have already seen in terms of the link between mercenarism and banditry, and in terms of the original Greek meaning of *λατρις* in Ancient Greece, mercenaries when not employed were known to lapse into brigandage.<sup>199</sup> However in what Grünewald refers to as classical Rome, the period covering 200BC to 300AD, the Latin *latro* is used periodically to convey what we understand more conventionally by the term *bandit* (2004, 4). Due to the paucity of references to historical banditry, knowledge of banditry in the Roman Empire must be gleaned from fictional sources as well. Grünewald says that based both on fictional and historical, or philosophical, sources there are two types of bandit clearly distinguished. He proposes the possibility that these two "types" which in some sense were constructs of the Roman imperial psyche – that of the noble and common – were inferred back into actual accounts of social banditry (2004, 8).

Grünewald also criticises Hobsbawm's model of the social bandit where his main objection is that, like slaves in Roman society, bandits possessed no class consciousness (2004, 10). Hobsbawm's model posits, as a defining feature of the social bandit, an ideological motivation against the state. At least initially, Grünewald and Hobsbawm assume opposite positions in understanding the motivation of the bandit. Class consciousness was absent, or cannot be proved, according to Grünewald, among bandits of ancient Rome. Grünewald also disputes the supposed universal validity of Hobsbawm's model "for all pre-industrial peasant societies...[thereby elevating] the social bandit to the rank of an anthropological constant." (2004, 11) It is precisely this supposed validity which has given the social bandit its heuristic value as a sociological model. He says that the "the

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<sup>197</sup> In the classical sources various challenges present the researcher of banditry. Grünewald cites the aversion amongst Roman historians to include details of members of Roman society not from the aristocracy (2004, 5). There is also a polemical aspect oftentimes when bandits are mentioned. The term *latro* was used at times metaphorically, i.e. to speak disparagingly of someone, to liken them to a bandit, not to indicate that they actually were a bandit (2004, 2). Even then, among what may be assumed to be references to historical bandits, or philosophical treatments of the phenomenon of banditry, there are variations in meaning and connotation.

<sup>198</sup> <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/λατρις>

<sup>199</sup> There are various etymological connections around the semantic field of *bandit*. Brigand, from the old French, meant originally "lightly armed irregular foot-soldier," ([https://www.etymonline.com/word/brigand#etymonline\\_v\\_17117](https://www.etymonline.com/word/brigand#etymonline_v_17117)) thus indicating the link between banditry and military activity. This all stands to reason when one thinks about the dynamics of those employed in armed conflict since they are removed from whatever societal roles they had fulfilled previously whilst at the same time warfare is sporadic in nature.

validity of [Hobsbawm's] approach, which in conceptual terms is very close to the Marxist notion of *latrocinium* as a form of class conflict, was and remains the subject of sharp debate." (2004, 11)<sup>200</sup>

Grünewald therefore sets out to define, in contradistinction to pretenders to the throne and political adversaries of the Roman state, what he refers to as "real banditry" (2004, 14), i.e. what might be thought of more along the lines of, but not necessarily equated with, Hobsbawm's social banditry. Whereas all of the case studies he refers to in subsequent chapters are "specious" bandits, in a "metaphorical and figurative sense," the only common factor regarding these bandits "is that, as a result of involvement in political events, they were vilified as *latrones* by official or semi-official circles in Rome." (2004, 14) By reviewing Roman legal sources Grünewald offers a description of some features which constituted what might be termed real banditry in classical Rome:

*"though every latro was a robber, not every robber was a latro... the crime of robbery appears to have been a necessary, but not a sufficient, criterion for being a latro. Latrones are emphasised as a special category of robbers through their use of weapons (vis armata), through their forming of bands (factiones, homines armati coactive) and through their aim of plunder (spoliare) with malice aforethought (dolus malus). In brief, therefore, latrones are those who, as armed brigands, commit particularly serious crimes."* (2004, 16)<sup>201</sup>

Like Shaw, Grünewald also speaks to "the ubiquity of banditry" (2004, 17) where, at least in the sources, it is displayed as widespread and frequently occurring.<sup>202</sup> Some of these references include banditry being listed as one of the legitimate reasons to escape liability for losing borrowed goods; being listed as among the most common crimes; as among the most common dangers when travelling; the many references to piracy at sea; the common epithet on gravestones (*interfecta a latronibus* – killed by bandits) which appears throughout the empire, and finally; the possibility that emperors on at least three occasions used the excuse of banditry to cover up assassinations which they had ordered (2004, 20-25). These examples are taken from the period of the Early and High Empire, i.e. a period of supposed peace and stability to show that banditry was an "everyday occurrence" (2004, 25) affecting "people of all social groups and ages" (2004, 24).<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Grünewald's ultimate critique of Hobsbawm and those who follow him is that they "impute to the lower social classes... a hidden potential dynamism in the shape of some awareness of the way in which they were repressed and an active desire for violent and directed change in their personal fortunes and in the circumstances which determined the life of their class." (2004, 12)

<sup>201</sup> Grünewald also considers the term *latrocinium* and its use from within a legal perspective. In the first instance, he compares and contrasts the crimes of petty thievery (*furtum*), robbery (*rapina* – differentiated from *furtum* by the use of violence), and banditry (*latrocinium*), i.e. the position of thief, robber and bandit, saying more than once that whereas every bandit was necessarily a robber not every robber was a bandit. What distinguished the bandit from the robber is less clear except that according to Grünewald bandits tended to be organised groups, putting more planning into their robberies and exacting more violence than robbers (2004, 16).

<sup>202</sup> McGing (1998) in his study also attests to the ubiquity of banditry in Graeco-Roman culture saying that "bandits and their image were deeply embedded as an inevitable and ubiquitous feature in ancient society, is clear from their appearance in a wide variety of sources" (1998, 159).

<sup>203</sup> According to Boer's use methodological orientation around *régulation*, it is precisely during such periods where banditry is likely to be more prominent.

We see however that Grünewald has not directly addressed the question of class, i.e. which class bandits arose from, or which were most affected by banditry. Superficially, Grünewald's position indicates that bandits in the Roman Empire had no political or ideological motivation, or that this was not consistent, in as much as he says banditry affected all classes. If there is validity in Hobsbawm's approach, which says that bandits emanate from lower social strata and are ideologically motivated against the state, then they are more likely to direct aggressions toward elite classes. In instances of *latrocinium*, which involved military deserters and pretenders to the throne, we can hardly say *latrones* operated without a political agenda yet, as mentioned previously, their class concerns are different from those of the social bandit. In the section of Grünewald's study referred to above, it appears he is characterising the "real banditry" he refers to in ancient Rome (at least its depiction in the sources) as akin to everyday, petty crime, i.e. crime that has no political or ideological motivation. If we return though to the original definition of *latrocinium* as an act of aggression against the state, which the state deems illegal, how should we really understand the political agenda, if any, of one who commits an act of Grünewald's "real banditry"?

Based on the examples Grünewald cites, in those which include robbery, it is obvious to state that only people carrying valuables fell victim to banditry. Therefore, in the cases of *latrocinium* which involved robbery (and all legitimate cases of *latrocinium* did according to Grünewald) members of the peasantry could scarcely have been targeted, if not because bandits were sympathetic towards them, because they possessed nothing worth stealing. Furthermore, given that acts of banditry occurred frequently on highways, between urban centres, we must ask which class was the most predisposed to use such highways. Frequent long-distance travel was both motivated by, and required, significant resources. For what reason would a first-century subsistence farmer who earned and owned little wish to travel to a distant province?<sup>204</sup> Thus we see that in spite of Grünewald and other's attempts to avoid issues of class and class conflict, the concept of *latrocinium*, no matter its various permutations, by its basic definition of war against the state and its elite custodians, refers to and emanates as *a form of class conflict*.

Grünewald also considers the link between banditry and nomadic pastoralism in considering "Guerrilla leaders as *latrones*" (2004, 33). In listing some of the types and categories of bandit he had distinguished in his introduction he is here concerned with banditry as a form of "military resistance," citing examples of Viriatus and Tacfarinas (2004, 33).<sup>205</sup> Hobsbawm saw Viriatus as an example of the noble bandit. Grünewald does not

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<sup>204</sup> A possible exception in the case of first-century Judea and Galilee may be in the instance of pilgrimage. But again, by some assessments, the financial burden on the average Jew meant that such prescriptions were not always observed.

<sup>205</sup> Grünewald considers at length the example of Viriatus, the *leistarchos* (head bandit) of the Lusitanian people in the Iberian Peninsula. In this context, he considers two additional connotations of the Latin *latro*, firstly, that the term was frequently applied to barbarian enemies and, secondly, to those who engaged in guerrilla warfare (2004, 37). In citing these two additional connotations, Grünewald further illustrates the polemical nature of the term *latro*. Returning to the technical or legal definition of *latrocinium* provided in the introduction, namely as an act of warfare against the state

dispute this, at least concurring that this is how he is depicted in the literature, but he applies the sub-category “rebel” (2004, 34-35). Gr̃newald says that “Viriatu0 was, of course, a *latro*, and for two very basic reasons – his origins and the guerrilla tactics of which he was master and which the Romans called *latrocinium*.” (2004, 35) In referring to his “origins,” Gr̃newald means shepherding. Growing up in the mountains of Lusitania, the sparse conditions apparently compelled Viriatu0 to this vocation, a vocation which was “more or less synonymous” with banditry according to Gr̃newald (2004, 36). He goes on to say that, “[I]n the Roman period, herdsmen were traditionally regarded as bandits and troublemakers (usually specifically as cattle thieves).” (2004, 36)<sup>206</sup>

Throughout this section, in addition to other observations made regarding the features of banditry, we have seen increasingly close relationships between bandits, shepherds and livestock thieves, to the extent that in certain cases the three may be identified. Gr̃newald goes on to say that the *topos* of ‘shepherd’ carried both negative and positive connotations in Roman literature. He explains how the “herder of myth” was romanticised, being thought of as “strong, frugal, uncorrupted, upright and independent...[and] pure of character.” (2004, 36) Furthermore, in such a context, the shepherd was “allowed his banditry as a legitimate means of earning a crust.” (2004, 36) Gr̃newald writes later “[t]hanks to their freedom of movement, [herdsmen] had the opportunity to indulge in banditry while managing their flocks thereby living a double life.” (2004, 57)

At this point it may be helpful to make two observations. Firstly, as with the case of the pastoral genre more generally, for example in early modern England, we see an ideological tendency to romanticise in hindsight previously engaged modes of production which were regarded as servile. Secondly, the nature of intermittency between pastoralism and brigandage is not completely unlike that between mercenarism and brigandage, in that the latter is engaged, in both cases, where the ‘regular’ mode of subsistence is no longer available. Absent also in both cases is access to land, hence also the link to itinerancy.

Gr̃newald eventually considers the work of Josephus who, as we have seen, references banditry extensively in the period culminating in the First Jewish Revolt. Gr̃newald is concerned additionally with the work of Horsley,

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deemed ‘illegal’ by Rome, Gr̃newald concedes the obvious fact that the Roman empire was the soul arbiter in determining such illegality (2004, 38-39). He goes on to show though how the designation of organised acts of aggression against Rome could change depending on the circumstances. An uprising or rebellion at its inception might be termed *latrocinium* but depending on its success, whether it grew in scale and duration, might well eventually be termed *bellum* (i.e. ‘legal’ war). The change in designation depended on the perception of the person in command of the enemy forces. If the army leader was deemed a worthy opponent he gained respect and was reflected favourably in Rome’s historiographical record (2004, 41).

<sup>206</sup> Gr̃newald had alluded to the oft-cited connection of the bandit and shepherd. Based on a number of depositions given in the wake of a series of thefts, which were committed *leistrikoι tropoi*, after the type or fashion of a bandit (2004, 28), in the Egyptian town of Euhemeria, Gr̃newald says that among the accused are “shepherds (*pastores/poimenai*), mentioned nine times, [who] form the largest group.” (2004, 30) Gr̃newald goes on to say that “[t]hroughout the Roman Empire, and also particularly in Egypt, shepherds were notorious as ne’er-do-wells, implicated in both petty and serious crime...[where t]he Bukoloi, bandit shepherds of the marshes of the Nile delta, provided Heliodorus’ *Aethiopia* with the setting for many a vivid incident; and, under Marcus Aurelius, shepherds also find mention in historical works in connection with an uprising” (2004, 30).

who has made use of Hobsbawm's model in reviewing Josephus' accounts of banditry. There has been recognition, and this is Grünewald's own position, that Josephus uses the term ληστικς for various otherwise distinct groups (2004, 94). One common factor, according to Grünewald, is that bandits act politically against the state (Rome). To make his point, Grünewald includes an example from Josephus of a seeming instance of banditry which, according to Grünewald, is completely apolitical (its motive is personal material gain) and Josephus apparently does not use the term ληστικς when describing it. Grünewald maintains that all of the instances cited by Josephus of banditry are precluded from an application of Hobsbawm's model because they have some form of political motivation which, according to Grünewald, is entirely absent from the profile of the social bandit. This objection is similar to that raised by Blumell (see below) which is that most, if not all, the groups designated by Josephus as λησται seem quite clearly to have definite political aspirations and some which even realise these aspirations for short-lived periods. Thus, according to Grünewald and Blumell, such cases must be precluded as social bandits since Hobsbawm's model ascribes no such political aspiration.

Grünewald however had criticised Hobsbawm for "imputing to the lower social class...[from which, according to Hobsbawm's model, the social bandit arises] an active desire for violent and directed change in their personal fortunes and in the circumstances which determined the life of their class." (2004, 12) Grünewald mentions, and it is true, that Hobsbawm sees social banditry as a pre-political form of protest. This is by no means however to say that social bandits are void of political orientation. On the contrary, it is precisely as a form of *protest* that social bandits are politically motivated *against the state*, though they may possess no coherent political agenda, nor the necessary means of realising such an agenda.

Grünewald's overall position is that it is difficult if not impossible to arrive at a true assessment of the extent of banditry as a social phenomenon within antiquity, or within the Roman Empire, and this for three reasons. If we subscribe to Hobsbawm's model, groups of bandits were constituted by the peasantry or lower classes. Historiographically speaking, the perennial problem of a one-sided record of history is that interests and achievements of these classes are often omitted from the historical record. Additionally, Grünewald cites the disinclination of Roman writers to give attention to phenomena or people regarded as inferior or dishonourable, *latrones* being among them, in that the *latro* represented a stigmatised trope in Roman psyche. But most importantly, Grünewald regards the composite profile of the *latro* presented in the Roman record to be a product of sentimental imagination. The bandit of Roman history is a literary type or trope not a social phenomenon.

Additionally, it should be clear that Roman sources use the same term to refer to distinct manifestations of banditry, where greater attention is afforded to those bandits who pose greater threat to Roman hegemony (illustrated in the tendency for *latrocinium* to change into *bellum* if the *latrones* in question proved themselves worthy). In other words, relatively little attention is given to instances of social banditry because if and where

these were present, they posed little threat to the hegemony of Rome. In this sense, the criticism levelled against Hobsbawm, or possibly Horsley's application of Hobsbawm, is valid in that we do not have sufficient evidence in the Roman sources, and even in Josephus, of social banditry. In spite of the seeming dead-end presented by Grünewald's work, his study makes clear the polemical nature of the terms *latrones* and *latrocinium*. In all cases, by virtue of the definition Grünewald himself provides, the *latro* was an enemy of the state, thus establishing or confirming an antagonistic orientation on the part of the *latro* towards Rome.

Given the numerous references in the Gospels to bandits and banditry, and that first-century Judea and Galilee were Roman colonies, should we then understand these in the same way that Grünewald understands Josephus' treatment of bandits, as well as that of Roman writers for the period, i.e. as a literary trope or type?<sup>207</sup> In terms of what the Gospels may say indirectly about Jesus' ministry and banditry, let us consider the following: on his arrest Jesus likens himself to a bandit; it is evident that some of his disciples were armed and he is arrested by armed temple police who come to him "as if a bandit" (Mark 14:48); Jesus is executed by crucifixion, a form of execution reserved for those guilty of sedition, of which *latrocinium* was an example; we are furthermore told that Jesus is executed alongside two bandits and, finally, according to John 18:40, that the man released in place of Jesus, Barabbas, was himself a bandit. Additionally, as we have seen, Jesus was likely guilty of *anachoresis*, the non-payment of taxes, which would have made him a tax fugitive and thus a *latro*. His general itinerancy, avoidance of authorities, and reluctance to be seen in urban areas also fit this profile. An acceptable assessment is to understand that, in their intent to have Jesus killed, the Jewish authorities presented Jesus to the Roman authorities (Pontius Pilate) as a bandit, i.e. as one guilty of *latrocinium*. This is in fact the essence of the charge appended by Pilate to the top of his cross.

#### 5.4 Horsley

Of all biblical scholars, Richard Horsley has made most use of Hobsbawm's model, particularly in his early work. I will present this in summary and then, in addition to offering my own comments, temper Horsley's position in considering remarks by Blumell (2008).<sup>208</sup> Thereafter, we will proceed to the following chapter on discourse within peasant society where again Horsley's work features though in a different way.

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<sup>207</sup> Blumell says the consensus amongst New Testament scholars, following the influential work of Horsley, is to understand banditry in the New Testament in light of Hobsbawm's social bandit – "While this characterization of ancient Galilean banditry [i.e. Hobsbawm's model] seems sensational, it currently dominates the field of scholarship. Martin Goodman, Peter Richardson, K.C. Hanson and Douglas Oakman, have to varying degrees embraced Horsley's thesis and joined with him in identifying the various manifestations of Galilean banditry as examples of 'social banditry'." (Blumell 2008, 36)

<sup>208</sup> Blumell describes Horsley's position as "ideological reductionism" (Blumell 2008, 36). While it may seem that the division in scholarship on banditry (which may be characterised by the scholarship of Horsley, Hanson and Oakman on the one hand, and that of Shaw, Grünewald and Blumell on the other) follows contours similar to those present in Galilean economy more generally, I think that positions like that of Blumell represent a sobriety worth heading.

Horsley acknowledges the problematic use of terminology in ancient sources where terms used to refer to banditry could carry any number of connotations. Among these, Horsley lists piracy, armed robbery, breaking and entering, “less civilized peoples,” pretenders to the throne and, later, heretics, raiders or privateers (i.e. mercenaries) (1979, 48).<sup>209</sup> Additionally, what should be distinguished from social banditry or “banditry proper,” are “barbarian tribes raiding across the frontiers or otherwise resisting Roman rule” and “temporarily independent peoples who took to raiding in times and areas of weak external governmental control” (1979, 48). Horsley says that for “ancient social banditry proper” the evidence is “fragmentary” yet “extensive” (1979, 49).

Horsely’s position is based primarily on an application of Hobsbawm’s model to Josephus, principally his *War of The Jews* and *Antiquities of the Jews*. In trying to discern what precipitated the First Revolt, he maintains that this can neither be attributed to the group referred to as the Zealots which he says arose only after the Revolt began (Horsley 1981, 409), nor to the group referred to as the Sicarii which he says was an exclusively urban movement (1981, 410), although both groups are referred to as bandits by Josephus.<sup>210</sup>

Based on Josephus’ account, Horsely highlights how the temple captain, Eleazar ben Ananias, and his followers killed the leader of the Sicarii, Menahem ben Juda, and drove them to exile at Masada after which they took no further part in the Revolt. Eleazar ben Ananias and his followers did play a crucial role in the Revolt initially, being responsible for ceasing the sacrifices in honour of the emperor which provoked retaliation from Rome (1981, 410). Horsely however contends that Eleazar and his followers maintained no distinct identity during the Revolt and based on this and the extent of foment throughout the “Galilean and Judean countryside” that additional or alternative factors were involved as regards the Revolt’s causes (1981, 410).

Horsely concedes that Josephus applies the term *λησται* to both the Zealots and the Sicarii which is why many modern scholars tend to conflate the three groups discussed thus far. As we have seen though the Zealots emerged at the outbreak of the Revolt and therefore cannot be understood as a factor leading to the Revolt. Based on Josephus, “banditry was a recurrent and widespread phenomenon in Jewish Palestine,” was “epidemic under the last few procurators before the Revolt” and therefore “was a significant, perhaps the most significant, identifiable social form taken by nascent Jewish rebellion against the Romans” (1981, 410-411).<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Horsley had consulted MacMullen’s study.

<sup>210</sup> Horsley identifies a group called the “Fourth Philosophy” as being started by Judas of Galilee as initially distinct from both the Sicarii and the Zealots, though the former arose out of the “the descendants of Judas” (1981, 409). In any event, Horsley says that the Fourth Philosophy likewise cannot be attributed as starting the Revolt.

<sup>211</sup> In his discussion of what precedes or facilitates banditry Horsley associates this with “[t]imes of economic crisis...[where p]easants who cannot keep up increasing rents or taxes become cut off from the land and vulnerable to the exactions of landowner and others of the ruling class...[while] those long since cut loose from land, the rural proletariat of day-laborers and farm-hands—or escaped serfs—are extremely vulnerable to the vicissitudes of a subsistence agricultural economy or the extraordinary exactions of the landowners and officials.” (1979, 44) Additionally, Horsley emphasizes a close connection between “brigandage and economic crisis” and paints a grim picture of the plight of the peasant at times when these are heightened (1979, 50-51). He refers to “periodic measures taken to tie people down to

Horsley disputes two “misconceptions” which he sees in the work of Hengel and Rengstorf, one of these being that Josephus’ use of the term bandits is generally polemical (Horsley 1979, 37-38) though Horsley himself concedes that Josephus’ use of the term was polemical “in a very few passages” (1979, 38). In light of studies by Grünewald and McGing, it would seem Josephus’ use of the term may have been polemical more often than Horsley admits. As we saw in Grünewald’s study, there are two distinctions of importance in Roman literature, one between the *latro* as a literary trope and what he referred to as real-life instances of banditry, and the other between malefactors of a general nature and those guilty of *latrocinium*.

Some of the methodological difficulties cited earlier arise then in Josephus’ assessment of banditry. As we have done throughout this study, and in line with the *modus operandi* of MPT, we should pose the question: from which class did the leaders of the First Revolt emanate? Horsely cites the examples of Hezekiah the Zealot, John of Gischala, and Judas of Galilee who are all referred to as bandits in Josephus’ work (Horsley 1979, 37). Yet all three appear to have had specific political agendas which were nothing short of establishing an independent Jewish theocracy and which also were, at least in the short term, to some extent realistic. Additionally, those around John of Gischala, when besieged in the temple, had access to writing when communicating with the Idumeans which suggests that he had support of members of the *literati* even if John himself was not a member. The point is that if the leaders of the First Revolt, whom Josephus designates as bandits, whether Zealots, Sicarii or the Fourth Philosophy, or otherwise disparate groups, emanated from classes other than the peasantry, then the model of the social bandit is not applicable.

In at least one instance of sedition Josephus refers to a popular rebel quite certainly not from the upper classes. Athronges was a shepherd who according to Josephus was “a person neither eminent by the dignity of his progenitors, nor for any great wealth he possessed,” (*A.J.* 17, 10). Instead, that which qualified him as a leader was his immense size and strength. Josephus does not label Athronges a bandit though (Horsely 1979, 39). According to Horsley, while Josephus labels both the Sicarii and the Zealots bandits, regarding the former he does so only in a “qualified sense,” while he sees the Zealots as “as a coalition of actual bandit groups and leaders” (1979, 39). Horsely says that according to Morton Smith, from 68 CE the Zealots emerged as a coalition of peasants where “Josephus charges these bands with pillaging and brigandage throughout the countryside, and then says explicitly that it was the “brigand-chiefs” who, joined by other brigands from the country, merged forces against the nobles and other upper-class citizens in Jerusalem” (1979, 41). At this point in Josephus’ *War*, “bandits” and Zealots are used synonymously.

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their jobs, homes, and farms [presumably to secure their labour], and the corresponding (and well-publicized) destruction of public debt records in every century of the Empire” (1979, 51).

Even if this is the case, Horsley maintains that Josephus' use of the term *bandit* cannot be confined to a "pejorative term for the Jewish liberation movement generally" (1979, 42). He says that while Josephus does use the term in a less qualified sense he also includes "numerous descriptions of what is called social banditry" where his "use of the terminology is usually quite precise" (1979, 41).

In summary of Hobsbawm's position, Horsley lists four attributes of social banditry. Of these we can only endorse the first and, to a lesser extent, the last two. These are respectively that social banditry arises out of a context of class antagonism and often expropriation and disenfranchisement of the regular means of subsistence available to the peasantry.<sup>212</sup> Of the various examples we have considered of revolt leaders, those of the Maccabean Revolt, Roman pretenders to the throne, those of the First Revolt, and those of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, it seems clear that none of these can rightly be said to emerge from lower social strata and certainly not from the peasantry. Given too the close links between banditry and patronage, it seems completely feasible to assume that when local leaders or chiefs have their own populations impinged upon by overarching extractive regimes to the extent that they themselves are no longer able to derive subsistence (where they might have been exploiting their own local population) they resort to incitement or rebellion themselves.

The last two attributes which Horsley lists are, respectively, the altruistic intentions or attitude of the bandit, and that bandits share the values and religious views of the larger peasantry (1979, 45-46). The second attribute which Horsley lists, that bandits enjoy wholesale support of the communities from which they arise (1979, 45) is the most contentious and one which we cannot wholeheartedly endorse especially since many of the historical incidents are not in fact of social banditry, but rather political opponents of the Roman Empire. The extent to which they enjoyed support of the local populace possibly varied depending on their nature of patronage.<sup>213</sup>

As we have seen, based on Grünewald's study and even Boer's theory, given the complex overlap of banditry, institutional forms of kin-ship household and patronage, a complex nexus of power dynamics becomes evident overlapped with more localised and particular forms of peasant-resistance. This is not to dispute therefore the presence of social banditry amongst the peasantry of First-century Judea and Galilee, but rather that this form of banditry was not at the forefront of the First Revolt, though it quite possibly was exploited through the course of the Revolt. It is therefore more realistic to view bandits (even the so-called social bandit) as opportunistic,

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<sup>212</sup> The three examples from Hobsbawm's work – Pancho Villa, Angiolillo the Neapolitan bandit, and Guiliano the Sicilian – are cited in instances of class conflict. However, Horsley also indicates that military desertion can be a contributing factor as well as those deemed criminals or outlaws by a "foreign legal system" (1979, 43). He writes further, "Blood feuds or marriage by abduction bring many into trouble with the law determined and administered by strangers in distant places...After a homicide which is "justifiable" according to local customs, men flee to the hills from a foreign legal system which does not recognize their customs or understand peasants." (1979, 43)

<sup>213</sup> Horsley though does make numerous references to ancient sources in support of this as well as citing the seeming often general prohibition to the public against sheltering bandits (1979, 51).

using and being used by larger networks of power and patronage. In summary while the bandit invariably stole from the rich, or in our case, at the very least, Romans, he probably far less regularly gave to the poor.<sup>214</sup>

Our assessment thus far seems to line up more accurately with Boer's institutional form of patronage where patronage straddles contestable or transitional ground between the allocative regime of subsistence-survival and extractive regimes of the palatine (estates) and plunder, where patronage itself can be either allocative or extractive. Regarding the support bandits enjoyed by the peasantry, my own position is closer to Fiensy's (2014, 22) where the average peasant, even in the context of first-century Judea and Galilee, regarded bandits with a healthy respect. In any event, that we cannot endorse the second and third of Horsley's assumptions does not detract from the heuristic value of banditry understood as a socio-economic phenomenon and indicator of economic disruption, even if banditry, as a general phenomenon was not always constituted by members of the peasantry. I maintain that banditry as such arises ordinarily out of antagonist class relations, though not necessarily between the elite and the peasantry, where the level of banditry correlates to wider dissent and disenfranchisement. In many of the examples we have considered, it seems clear that local leaders, not members of the peasantry, exploited opportunities, perhaps out of necessity, to seize power in the face of structural change. In this sense banditry, remains an indication, or symptom, of the inherent limitation of extractive regimes. Understood within Boer's application of MPT, banditry is one example of a systemic crisis which Boer and Petterson said were inherent to extractive regimes. To use their terms, whether described as endogenous, potentially exogenous, structural or ultimate, and if there is validity in Horsley's claim that banditry was a leading factor ultimately in the destruction of Jerusalem,<sup>215</sup> then it helped precipitate the demise of the dominant economic regime for that period and place, i.e. Jerusalem and its temple complex as a *polis*.

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<sup>214</sup> There is a fifth feature which, though not listed, emerges out of Horsley's engagement with Hobsbawm, which is namely the invulnerability or undetectability of the bandit (which is why Horsley links this to the support and shared concerns of and with the peasantry) (1979, 52). While we cannot say whether this feature was true generally of bandits in ancient Rome, in terms of his portrayal in the Gospels, it seems it may have applied to Jesus given his ability to repeatedly evade the authorities (e.g. John 10:39). Indeed, another feature of this supposed invulnerability is that frequently, the social bandit has to be betrayed by someone on the 'inside' (cf. Judas' betrayal of Jesus).

<sup>215</sup> Note, as mentioned previously, Horsely sees forms of social banditry leading to or facilitating the initial Revolt while the Zealots (whom Josephus also labels 'bandits') were a significant factor once the Revolt started. Horsley says for example, "It is clear that once a sizeable portion of the population had become outlaws and thus had little to lose from increasing disorder, banditry became a major factor leading eventually to the massive uprising against the Romans." (1979, 58) And again, "The dramatic increase in banditry in the early 60s apparently brought more into open opposition to the established order, and the brigands played a major role along with the "revolutionaries" in the defeat of Cestius and the expulsion of the Romans from Judea." (1979, 60-61) Horsley further sees bandits as making up "a major if not the dominant element in rebellious forces" in Galilee, as well as "one of the main revolutionary factions" (i.e. the Zealots) during the war (1979, 61).

## CHAPTER SIX: DISCOURSE WITHIN PEASANT-AGRARIAN SOCIETIES

### 6.1 Introduction

We have up until this point undertaken a long theoretical journey where I believe in spite, or because, of such efforts we have arrived at position where we can better understand the socio-economic features of first-century Judea and Galilee. We have also seen how banditry features as a symptom of changing and challenged modes of production and as a form of resistance for various classes. We now consider other ways in which members of the peasantry may have responded to economic pressure for obviously not all were engaged in banditry.<sup>216</sup> To this end we should consider forms of resistance available to the peasantry. The most helpful theory for this task is that of James Scott around the hidden and public transcript. Notions of resistance feature prominently in our theorising around discourse in peasant-agrarian societies of which the parables are an example.

A puzzling thing strikes one when introduced to the parables in the Synoptic tradition. In Mark 4, we are presented with the so-called Parable of the Sower which acts as a springboard for the parables in the Synoptic tradition. It acts as a springboard because apart from being the first parable told in the Synoptic corpus, it is the only parable (apart from that of the weeds in Matthew) for which a detailed explanation appears on the lips of Jesus. Additionally, we are furnished, in the material following the Parable of the Sower, not only with an explanation of this parable but with an explanation of the parables in general, or of their purpose. In the NRSV, the interpretative heading above v.10 reads "The Purpose of the Parables". At this point we may count ourselves lucky to have been provided such an explanatory passage regarding the purpose of the parables.

And yet the explanation leaves us strangely more perplexed than had we not been provided one. From a devotional perspective, if we assume that the Son of God came to proclaim a message of universal significance and salvation, based on Mark 4:10-12, it appears this message is intentionally designed to obfuscate and mislead. Jesus describes in v.11 what he is entrusting to his disciples (a message, a tradition?) as a secret or mystery, where the Greek word is *μυστηριον*. Astonishingly, Mark 4:12 (a quote from Isaiah 6:9, Jeremiah 5:21, Ezekiel 12:2, or a combination of these) indicates that the purpose of the parables is to *prevent* the repentance of their hearers. And as if all of this was not sufficiently perplexing, in Mark 4:33-34, we are told that when Jesus spoke publicly he did so exclusively in parables.<sup>217</sup>

What we can acknowledge is that the corpus of parables in our canonical Gospels is important for

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<sup>216</sup> A fundamental assumption of Scott's hidden transcript is that is often unfeasible to engage in banditry precisely because this breaks with the official or sanctioned public transcript. Forms of resistance among the peasantry by nature are more subtle and surreptitious.

<sup>217</sup> Mark 4:33-34 may be an example of hyperbole. Young, based on Hunter, estimates that almost a third of Jesus' "instruction" is parable (Young 1989, 2). We make the distinction though, as is made in Mark 4:34, between public discourse and teaching, the latter sometimes being done privately among disciples. Cf. also Jeremias who contended early on that Mark 4:11ff. was not original to Jesus but reflected the context of the early Church.

understanding who Jesus was and something of his aims and so we might at this early stage be helped by asking: to what end did Jesus use parables? In the Synoptic use of parables, we may admit some influence of the Graeco-Roman mystery religions and of the early Church. Jeremias maintained that Mark 4:11ff. was not original to Jesus but reflected the context of the early Church and its initiatory rites. But there are other avenues worth pursuing which may prove relevant given what we know about the socio-economic context in which Jesus operated. Accordingly, a case will be made to see the parables as form of coded speech, not based exclusively on Mark 4:11ff., but on the work of discourse theorists and forms of resistance in peasant-agrarian societies. In addition, we are helped by noting that the Hebrew מִשָּׁל (*mashal*), from which we often translate the English *parable* in the Old Testament, has a long heritage and wide semantic field which includes connotations of *riddle*, *trick*, *game*, *saying*, *maxim*, *byword* (as in the context of prophecy) and even *spell*. The Hebrew context out of which the parable emerges is therefore already couched in some degree of obscurity.

From a social-scientific point of view, in terms of analysing the way discourse operates within peasant-agrarian societies, we are helped by writers like Redfield, Scott and Herzog, who all suggest that discourse, and particularly public discourse on the part of the peasantry, is often veiled, subtle, subversive or satirical. We will attempt to read or understand the parables against the backdrop of these theorists.

## 6.2 James C. Scott

The central insight of Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990) relates to the effect of class relations on public discourse (1990, x). Given the premise that the parables of Jesus functioned exclusively as a form of public discourse (Mark 4:34) we should consider the extent to which class relations of first-century Judea and Galilee affected Jesus' parables. We have already offered an assessment of the socio-economic context in which Jesus operated and how the overall mode and means of production, and the extractive nature of these, might have affected the lives of members of the peasantry. Though we have not provided a specific assessment of Jesus' socio-economic standing or status as an individual we may note the following basic features of his public ministry: the ministry is thought to have lasted for a period of three years and begun when Jesus was about thirty; due to the length of this period, and because the ministry was itinerant, it is likely that Jesus and his immediate followers were freed of obligations in terms of land or family or, at the very least, had deserted these (Mark 10:28-29); in light of this, they therefore also had no direct form of income or subsistence and had to depend on the good will of others or potential benefactors (Luke 10:7; 8:3); they avoided public/urban spaces (cf. Luke 4:30; John 7:1; and verses which support the so-called Messianic secret, e.g. Mark 3:12; 5:43; 8:30) and finally; they carried weapons (Luke 22:36-38; Mark 14:47).

For what might have been various reasons Jesus sought to evade the authorities, or at least escape public purview, and yet he had also undertaken what was at times a very public ministry of healing and teaching. The

question then arises: how does one teach, orate, and expound in public while maintaining some degree or form of anonymity? This leads us to the helpful distinction which Scott draws between the hidden and public transcripts. Let us consider how he defines these and in what relation they stand.

The “public transcript” is the “open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate” where *public* refers to “action that is openly avowed to the other party in the power relationship” and *transcript* is used “in its juridical sense... of a complete record of what was said.” (1990, 2) Elsewhere, Scott says the public transcript is “the self-portrait of dominant elites as they would have themselves seen” where it “is designed to be impressive, to affirm and naturalize the power of dominant elites, and to conceal or euphemize the dirty linen of their rule.” (1990, 18) Scott also says that the “public transcript, where it is not positively misleading, is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations...[for i]t is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation.” (1990, 2)

Scott offers the following as a general rule, namely that “the greater the disparity in power between dominant and subordinate [groups] and the more arbitrarily it is exercised, the more the public transcript of subordinates will take on a stereotyped, ritualistic cast.” (1990, 3) What Scott refers to as “dominants” and “subordinates” represents forms of colonial oppression and appropriation. Though first-century Judea and Galilee were Roman colonies, Jews were granted a degree of autonomy and self-governance, so long as local Jewish rulers could guarantee payment of the tribute and a level of stability within the colonies. It is true that, as Roman colonies, they experienced the full might and brutality of the Roman Empire, not least in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple following the Jewish Revolt. But a contention of sociological assessments of first-century Judea and Galilee, as we have seen, is that the peasantry were particularly burdened by excessive extractive regimes prior to the revolt, i.e. where Roman involvement was supposedly much less overt. The balance of weight therefore of the burden felt by the peasantry came from the temple which represented not only the highest concentration of material wealth in first-century Judea and Galilee but the ideological legitimation for this concentration.

In much of his analysis, Scott cites examples of the antebellum South where domination takes, amongst other forms, that of institutionalised slavery. As Scott points out, in these contexts, religion functions not only as a place of solace for slaves but as potential place of foment where the hidden transcript can be hashed out and articulated. While the ancient or slave mode of production presided over first-century Judea and Galilee, slavery was less central in these colonies, at least in the agricultural sector, than in other parts of the Empire. The excess of burden felt by the peasantry and the vehement religious and nationalistic responses to this from different classes must have arisen outside of the slave relation. Additionally, orthodox religion or the state-sanctioned religion of the temple, represented an articulation of the public transcript. We know from the Synoptic tradition that the Jerusalem temple, in its ideological legitimation of the larger mode of production and

in its representation of the public transcript, becomes the central target of Jesus' own expressed public resistance. The hidden transcript must therefore be articulated by Jesus in the shadow of the temple.

Scott shows how “[t]he dialectic of disguise and surveillance... pervades relations between the weak and the strong... [and] help[s] us... to understand the cultural patterns of domination and subordination.” (1990, 4) As a point of interest, we notice how the Synoptic writers endow the Pharisees with an omnipresence in their surveillance of Jesus. When plucking heads of grain in the wheat fields (Mark 2:23-24), for example, it is scarcely possible even at narrative level that the Pharisees would be camped in the fields ready to catch Jesus flouting Sabbath laws. While this may be a stylistic trope, it may still reflect the (historical) dialectic of disguise and surveillance to which Scott refers.

In terms of defining the *hidden transcript*, Scott says that this is ordinarily “discourse that takes place “offstage,” beyond direct observation by powerholders,” consisting of “those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript.” (1990, 4-5) Whereas the public transcript is a declaration of the status of domination by the powerful, the hidden transcript is an attempt to undermine the public transcript without ever owning up to this. Such attempts must be subtle and surreptitious for, as Scott explains, “[t]he first open statement of a hidden transcript, a declaration that breaches the etiquette of power relations, that breaks an apparently calm surface of silence and consent, carries the force of a symbolic declaration of war” (1990, 8).

Scott says twice that the hidden transcript may include aspects of the apocalyptic (1990, 6, 9, 15-16)<sup>218</sup> and later lists three characteristics of the hidden transcript which he deems noteworthy. Firstly, he says, “the hidden transcript is specific to a given social site and to a particular set of actors” where each “hidden transcript... is actually elaborated among a restricted “public” that excludes – that is hidden from – certain specified others.” (1990, 14) The second is that the hidden transcript “does not contain only speech acts but a whole range of practices” which may include “activities such as poaching, pilfering, clandestine tax evasion, and intentionally shabby work for landlords” (1990, 14). Importantly, Scott later mentions that, particularly among slaves, acts of sabotage were common in the repertoire of resistant measures going hand in hand with the hidden transcript (1990, 127, 188, 203).<sup>219</sup> The third feature, Scott says, is the “frontier between the public and the hidden transcripts” and is a “zone of constant struggle,” where he further says the “unremitting struggle over such boundaries is...the most vital arena for ordinary conflict, for everyday forms of class struggle.” (1990, 14)

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<sup>218</sup> The hidden transcript may take, among other forms, that of “offstage parody, dreams of violent revenge, millennial visions of a world turned upside down” (1990, 9). Scott later suggests that the hidden transcript can even incorporate messianic hopes (1990, 15-16).

<sup>219</sup> This form of resistance is important for our consideration of at least four parables that appear early in the early Synoptic corpus but also for the parabolic material of John 10. Keener (2008, 803), for example in his treatment of John 10, cites different forms of sabotage but seems to individualise them thus voiding them of their class-conflict context.

Scott's purview is communities subject to domination and the relations, and articulation of the relations, between the dominant and subordinate groups. His assumption is that the subordinate group is aware of their subordination and of some of the reasons for it. Having such awareness, the subordinate group collectively articulates their subordination, laments it, and expresses their hope and desire to overcome it. In light of this, Scott suggests four areas for political discourse to take place. The first and safest is in the context of the public transcript but here there is a limited political leverage or concession which can be worked and so any political discourse is likely to affirm the status quo. The second and predominant area in which political discourse can flourish is in the context of the hidden transcript proper, outside the purview of the state, since this by nature lies outside realms of surveillance (1990, 18). The most relevant areas, for our purposes, in which political discourse can take place are what Scott lists as the third and fourth possibilities. Scott says that the:

*"third realm of subordinate group politics... lies strategically between the first two. This is a politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors. Rumor, gossip, folktales, jokes, songs, rituals, codes, and euphemisms –a good part of the folk culture of subordinate groups– fit this description."* (1990, 18-19)<sup>220</sup>

We see here clear resonance between the parables of Jesus and this third form of veiled political discourse. As mentioned, and based in part on Mark 4, the parables, though a form of public discourse, are intentionally designed to obfuscate or conceal, to have a double meaning (which is why still today those not cognizant of class dynamics too quickly are consoled by what they believe to be the true or original meaning of a parable). They functioned as coded speech which only those with "ears to hear" (Mark 4:9) were able to perceive and understand.<sup>221</sup> Those with ears to hear are those in the know, those who have access to and are familiar with the hidden transcript. As Scott describes, this third realm of political discourse is a version of the hidden transcript declared publicly in a guise which provides only partial access to those who are listening.

If we consider the fourth possibility for the expression of political discourse, we see additional resonances with the ministry of Jesus. Scott describes this fourth possibility as "explosive" and constitutes moments when the hidden transcript is laid bare in a public setting, essentially tearing down the façade which is the public transcript. Unlike the third realm of public discourse just mentioned, there is no attempt to veil or disguise what is being communicated here. Scott says that "such moments of challenge and open defiance typically provoke either a swift stroke of repression or, if unanswered, often lead to further words and acts of daring" (1990, 19). A

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<sup>220</sup> Scott states furthermore that "a partly sanitized, ambiguous, and coded version of the hidden transcript is always present in the public discourse of subordinate groups" where "[i]nterpreting these texts which, after all, are designed to be evasive is not a straightforward matter." (1990, 19)

<sup>221</sup> The phrase "Let those with ears, listen/hear!" is closely associated with the Parable of the Sower which within the Synoptic tradition sets a precedent for all the parables. But the saying is used by Jesus in public discourse in general, e.g. Mark 4:23; Matthew 11:15. It appears repeatedly in a similar rendering through the book of Revelation.

clear example of this fourth kind of discourse would be Jesus' cleansing of the temple,<sup>222</sup> which in turn provoked a swift reprisal from the authorities in the form of his arrest, trial and execution.

Following this, we can consider a volume dedicated to the influence of Scott's work on New Testament studies edited by Richard Horsley. He begins by lamenting the atomistic nature of historical Jesus research which results in the "sayings" of Jesus being examined in isolation apart from their cultural and political context (2004, 61).<sup>223</sup> Horsley says that about twenty years ago scholars reached an impasse in their dichotomous understanding of religion and politics and of where Jesus stood in relation to these. Having a "narrow" view of politics and self-consciously subscribing to a separation of Church and state it was not possible to understand Jesus' speech or activity as overtly political (2004, 63). In similar ways to what we have described above, Horsley suggests the following in terms of how Scott's work may be helpful in understanding Jesus' ministry:

*"Scott's work can help us... by discerning an ordinarily unrecognized area of political activity and forms of popular resistance to power present in many historical circumstances. In Scott's terms, Jesus operated in this area between quiescence and revolt, (1) by cultivating the "hidden transcript" of Galilean and other villagers, (2) by spearheading peasant politics of anonymity and disguise, and (3) by bold declaration of the "hidden transcript" in the face of power—that is by exercising three of the four types of the politics that Scott suggests are available to subjected people (18–19)." (2004, 63)*

Horsley says that if "examined with fresh eyes Jesus' teaching exhibits all of the features of what Scott discusses as a "hidden transcript"... [where] the earliest Gospel sources Mark and Q portray Jesus as delivering most of his teaching as a hidden transcript." (2004, 64) Thus Horsley arrives at similar conclusions regarding Scott's work in relation to the public discourse of Jesus. Horsley does not focus exclusively on the parables as an articulation of the hidden transcript but on all of Jesus' teachings (2004, 64-68). Indeed, he does not isolate the parables as a particular manifestation of the hidden transcript.

He does however go on to examine what he says is a more overt expression of the hidden transcript in the form of *rumour*<sup>224</sup> and, in turn, highlights Jesus' 'cleansing' of the temple as an example of the fourth realm of political

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<sup>222</sup> We mentioned earlier that a recurring feature of the hidden transcript can be the millennial and apocalyptic which indeed may be thought of as a feature of the parables and a recurring motif of the New Testament in general (it is in this sense a theological feature) since many of the parables are about God's ultimate justice or judgement. Walter Benjamin was among those who maintained the uniqueness of Jewish apocalyptic discourse as a genre. As we will see in considering Horsley's appraisal of Scott's work in relation to the ministry of Jesus, the question may be asked to what extent such apocalyptic or millennial components were unique or accentuated in Jewish culture and history.

<sup>223</sup> Horsley, R. A. 2004. "The Politics of Disguise and Public Declaration of the Hidden Transcript: Broadening our Approach to the Historical Jesus with Scott's "arts of resistance" theory" in *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul*. Horsley, R. A. (Ed.) SBL. Semeia Studies. Yee, G. A. (Gen.Ed.), no.48. Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature.

<sup>224</sup> I wondered if Horsley in his treatment did not confuse or conflate rumour of actual uprising or dissidence or even of imminent liberation (i.e. the arrival of the "kingdom of God" in the case of the Gospels) with what appears to be an inevitable eschatological or apocalyptic component of the hidden transcript which we referred to earlier. The question

discourse which is as an outright breach of the public transcript (2004, 73). In spite of this overt breach and the hostility it occasioned, as well as the willingness of Jesus to engage in violent forms of protest himself (Jesus' disciples were armed and he apparently instructed them to procure arms cf. Jn.18:10; Lk.22:36, 28), Scott says that the hidden transcript is seldom characterised by violence as it cannot afford to be. Once more this has implications for the ministry of Jesus who, for much of history, has been understood as pacifist in orientation. Perhaps in light of Scott's theory, Jesus' reticence to use violence was not out of choice but expediency in the face of severe reprisals by the authorities. This may also inform our understanding of concepts like the Messianic secret (the reticence of Jesus to disclose his identity publicly) and his preference of avoiding *poleis*. The same logic might be applied to the injunction to turn the other cheek. Scott uses the example of the "dirty dozens" to illustrate this point saying:

*"Nowhere is the training in self-control more apparent than in the tradition of the "dozens" or "dirty dozens" among young black males in the United States. The dozens consist in two [African Americans] trading rhymed insults of one another's family (especially mothers and sisters); victory is achieved by never losing one's temper and fighting, but rather in devising ever more clever insults so as to win the purely verbal duel. Whereas the aristocrat is trained to move every serious verbal insult to the terrain of mortal combat, the powerless are trained to absorb insults without retaliating physically. As Lawrence Levine observes, "The Dozens served as a mechanism for teaching and sharpening the ability to control emotions and anger; an ability which was often necessary for survival." There is evidence that many subordinate groups have developed similar rituals of insult in which a loss of self-control means defeat."* (1990, 136-137)<sup>225</sup>

Scott later says that "ideological resistance" is often "disguised, muted, and veiled for safety's sake" (1990, 137) and that familiarising ourselves with such ways "requires that we enter the world of rumor, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, anonymity." (1990, 137) He goes on to say that "the realities of power for subordinate groups mean that much of their political action requires interpretation precisely because it is intended to be cryptic and opaque." (1990, 137) He says that among the techniques used to give expression to the hidden transcript we can distinguish between "those that disguise the message and those that disguise the messenger," (1990, 139) i.e. those which codify or conceal the content of the message and those which provide anonymity to the deliverer of the message.<sup>226</sup>

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arises in the treatment of the Gospels: was Jesus' announcement of the kingdom of God an articulation of *rumour* (in the sense that Horsley describes) or of the messianic or apocalyptic hope attendant to the hidden transcript or, in particular, to the cultural heritage of subjugated people prone to subscribing to messianic and apocalyptic beliefs?

<sup>225</sup> Another example of this tendency is the Afro-Brazilian martial art *capoeira* which is said to have originated among African slaves in Brazil. It is supposed that the slaves, wary of their masters but eager to cultivate their own defences, would train surreptitiously disguising their combat as a dance. In the present day, particularly among *Angoleiro* schools of the sport, *capoeira* is described as a game and as a dance-fight. It is seldom violent or directly confrontational but instead dependent on outplaying or outmaneuvering one's opponent in a skillful and strategic manner.

<sup>226</sup> Graffiti, or the defacement of public statues, might be an example of the latter.

Among forms of anonymous expression of resentment by the dominated, Scott groups gossip, magic, and rumour, saying that gossip is the “linguistic equivalent and forerunner” of witchcraft (1990, 143), and that rumour is the “second cousin of gossip and magical aggression.” (1990, 144) In this sense, one supposes that gossip conveys an ill will toward an enemy or oppressor.<sup>227</sup> The content of the gossip is designed to besmirch the name or reputation of the person or people in question as Scott points out (1990, 143). This same ill will then, to follow his line of thinking, is made efficacious or is hoped to be efficacious, in the form of a curse or spell as it takes the form of “magical aggression” or “witchcraft”. Scott does not treat the use of magic, or spells or curses, extensively though he acknowledges their use in expressing the hidden transcript.

He cites an example of a curse from the 1920s deep South:

*“O Man God, I beg that this I ask for my enemies shall*

*come to pass*

*That the South wind shall scorch their bodies*

*and make them wither and shall not be tempered to*

*them*

*That the North wind shall freeze their blood and numb*

*their muscles.*

*I pray that death and disease shall be forever with them*

*and that their crops shall not multiply and their*

*cows, their sheep, their hogs and all their living*

*possessions shall die of starvation and thirst.*

*I pray that their friends shall betray them and cause*

*them loss of power, of gold and of silver, and that*

*their enemies shall smite them until they beg for*

*mercy, which shall not be given them.*

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<sup>227</sup> This dynamic is evident in patriarchal contexts where women are more likely to engage in gossip not because they are ‘gossip mongers’ but because, unlike men, they do not have ready recourse to more overt physical retaliation, and gossip therefore is an expression of their hidden transcript. This possibly explains why, stereotypically or historically, witchcraft has been associated more predominantly with women.

*O Man God, I ask you for all these things because they  
have dragged me in the dust and destroyed my good  
name; broken my heart and caused me to curse the  
day that I was born. So be it.*<sup>228</sup>

I quote this curse in full because, though at first seemingly unrelated to the parables, it gives us some insight into the use of ancient Semitic curses. Again, at first this might seem unrelated to the parables but recall that one of the semantic connotations of *mashal* is 'spell', i.e. used in a context either of prophecy or magic. As somebody familiar with the liturgy of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, I often wondered why some Psalms or parts of Psalms in the Psalter of *An Anglican Prayer Book, 1989* are parenthesised.<sup>229</sup> The parenthesising referred to takes the form of bracketing either whole Psalms or parts of Psalms, which indicates to the person leading the Psalm in the context of public worship, that those parts of the Psalm are not suitable for reciting. In our training, we were told that the reason these verses are parenthesised and thus omittable is because they contain particularly graphic or violent imagery. This in general is true however I have since discovered that in all instances the parenthesised verses are examples of curses.

Of the three Psalms in the Hebrew bible which contain extensive curses, two bear striking similarities to Scott's example above. In Psalms 69 and 109,<sup>230</sup> a prayer for desolation is invoked upon the adversary of the Psalmist, followed by a lament of the Psalmist's own pitiable condition. There are at least thirteen Psalms which contain overt curses, some of which are identified by Mowinckel (Mowinckel 1967, vol.2, 44). A helpful preliminary guide in identifying Psalms which contain curses is the Liturgical Psalter,<sup>231</sup> found in the *APB, 1989* as mentioned. Interestingly, Psalm 58, which in its entirety is a curse, makes reference to charmers and spell binders while Psalm 109 (already cited) specifically refers to the popular use of curses. Perhaps the most striking example of an outright curse in the Old Testament is 2 Kings 2:23-24, Elijah's cursing of the young boys in retaliation for calling him "bald head," after which forty-two of the boys are mauled by she-bears.

In Mowinckel's (1967) comprehensive study of the public and private use of Psalms, he says that "[a]mong the psalms there are some that are formed as—or contain—blessings on the congregation and its individual members... and curses against the enemies of the people and against sinners and felons who endanger the security and happiness of community and individual" (1967, vol.2, 44). In describing the context and content of

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<sup>228</sup> Quoted in Scott 1990, 43.

<sup>229</sup> *An Anglican Prayer Book, 1989* contains the standard liturgy for most Anglican churches in South Africa.

<sup>230</sup> The other Psalm which in fact is a curse in its entirety is Psalm 58 but it does not bear the same similarities to Scott's example.

<sup>231</sup> Originally published as Frost, D.L., Emerton, J.A., Macintosh, A.A. (1977) *The Psalms: A New Translation for Worship (The Liturgical Psalter)*. Glasgow: William Collins Sons&Co.

such blessings and curses, Mowinckel mentions “the idea of the effectual word, ‘creating what it mentions.’” (1967, vol.2, 44) He goes on to say that the “effectual word accompanies—‘materializes’, and intensifies—the act.” (1967, vol.2, 45) Mowinckel indicates that while “[i]n very ancient times the blessed person may possibly have created blessing for another person out of his own power and by means of the effectual word” ultimately the power to confer blessing and indeed to curse was understood to derive from God (1967, vol.2, 46).

Mowinckel resonates with the work of Godbey and Johnson (see below). His approach, which perhaps can be described in terms of a sociology of religion, is to focus on the cultus of antiquitous Judaism, to see especially in the use of Psalms, an expression of cult and of the festal cult. Commenting on the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles which, at that early stage according to Mowinckel, was the main feast of the year he says:

*Through the acts and words of the festal cult, laid down in fixed, sacred ritual, the reality which is to be created—the renewal of the herd, of the field, of the forces of life, of righteousness, of blessing and life—is portrayed ('acted') in visual and audible form. The actualization takes place through the representation. This does not mean that the representation, the acts and words, are seen as 'magic' which by itself creates life and renewal. It is the 'powers', or the deity, Yahweh, who acts and creates through them; to that extent they are 'sacramental'. (1967, vol.1, 19)<sup>232</sup>*

Would it not be true to say, at least at an anecdotal level, that of all the Scriptures used for the purpose of personal and communal protection – what is understood from a sociology of religion as apotropaic magic – as well for the conference of blessing, the Psalms are among the most common? Whether in the form of little amulets or inscriptions above lintels, the Psalms have from their inception served some of these purposes. There are other instances in the Hebrew bible of the use of sympathetic magic and there is evidence of performative aspects of certain prophecies which arguably help to render prophecies effective. One could ask, for example, in 2 Kings 13:14-19 what the purpose of the bow and arrows were if not to make efficacious the prophecy of King Joash’s victory over Syria. Joash’s insufficient striking of the arrows is directly related by Elisha to Joash’s eventual fate against Syria. What in turn is the role of Jeremiah’s loincloth in Jeremiah 13, or the clay vessel in Jeremiah 19, if not to provide potency to his prophecy? Or the function of Joshua’s spear in Joshua 8? Or Ahija’s garment in 1 Kings 11? Or the elaborate rituals in Ezekiel 4 to demonstrate the imminent siege of Jerusalem? We see many such examples in the Hebrew bible. To answer the question of their function, one needs to arrive at a more thorough understanding of the nature of Hebrew prophecy, it’s cultic background

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<sup>232</sup> Mowinckel goes on to write that “[t]he words of the cult seem originally to belong to the acts as interpretation and complement—that also being one side of the cult’s dramatic character. The power inherent in the act is also concentrated in the word; the holy word is effective and creative. Word and act co-operate in the creation of reality. We find many instances of this in Israel’s cult, both in the old clan and tribal cult as well as in the temple cult of the people.” (1967, vol.1, 20)

and context, as well as the links between these and the development of Semitic magic.

In summary of this section, we have seen from a consideration of Scott's work and Horsley's application of it, that the parables clearly fall into the third category of discourse which Scott provides, that which takes place on a public stage but in some way is concealed or coded, such that only members of the dominated class have access to it. It is an expression of the hidden transcript in public which is nevertheless designed to remain hidden. In terms of the fourth category, an outright breach of the public transcript by the hidden, we saw that Jesus' cleansing of the temple is a clear example of this.<sup>233</sup> Finally, we saw again from Scott's work how phenomena like rumour, gossip and magic (or cursing) are features of the hidden transcript and, in turn based on the work of Mowinckel, how magic might have featured in forms of biblical prophecy. I consider later the implications this has for Jesus' ministry. For now it may be helpful to consider briefly the work of Redfield.

### 6.3 Robert Redfield

One of Redfield's most highlighted contributions to the study of peasant communities is the notions of the *little* and *great traditions*.<sup>234</sup> At the outset, it may seem Redfield's distinction of the little and great traditions bears some similarities to Scott's of the hidden and public transcripts. Importantly, where the hidden transcript often contains an oppositional or hostile element, the little tradition seems to reflect the general culture of a peasant community more broadly where it has assimilated, adapted to and incorporated, aspects of the dominant or "high" culture (1956, 82). Furthermore, it was pointed out earlier that whereas Scott is concerned with contemporary forms of colonialism where religion does not play as overt a role in achieving domination, Redfield shows how the great tradition imparts itself to the little tradition precisely through religion.

In commenting on the work of V. Raghavan on ancient Hindu culture, Redfield refers to the "the religious and ethical instruction of the philosopher and religious thinker," of "compositions, notably the epics... which were made expressly to broadcast Vedic lore to the people at large." (1956, 82) He goes on to say that "[w]ith regard to south India, Raghavan traces an unbroken tradition of deliberate provision, by ruler and teacher, for recitation in the vernacular languages of the ancient Hindu epics" and that "stories were not only recited, they were also expressed in devotional hymns sung by traveling singer-saints." (1956, 82) Based on Redfield's observations we see how what might be described in Scott's parlance as the public transcript is used to disseminate values and principles of the elite, through official religious channels, to the general population.

At this point though Redfield, in reference to G. von Grunebaum, indicates that there can be tension between

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<sup>233</sup> In as much as the crucifixion might be viewed practically as logical consequence of the cleansing of the temple it can also be seen as an overt and unashamed reassertion of the public transcript, i.e. an attempt (usually effective) to restore the disorder brought about by the breach.

<sup>234</sup> Redfield, R. 1956. *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

the little and great tradition. The great tradition particularly in terms of religious expression is presented as authoritative and is dismissive of the little tradition where this diverges from the great and where aspects of it may be regarded as superstitious (1956, 84). In consideration of the little traditions in India, Redfield infers that the distinction between the little and great traditions, again in terms of religious expression, can include that between officially sanctioned religion and magic (1956, 87-88).

Redfield goes on to say that "the learning of the great tradition is an outgrowth of the little tradition and is now an exemplar for the people who carry the little tradition. Great and little traditions are dimensions of one another; those people who carry on the lower layers and those who maintain the high alike recognize the same order of "highness" and "lowness."" (1956, 87) It may therefore be fair to say that Redfield adopts a more nuanced position than Scott. At the very least, it is inaccurate to equate the distinction *public transcript/hidden transcript* and *great tradition/little tradition*. Whereas Scott characterises the hidden transcript as intentionally articulated in reaction or opposition to the public transcript, and being outrightly disdainful of it (therefore presupposing a high level of conscientisation), Redfield shows that the little tradition usually unconsciously or uncritically adopts or incorporates aspects of the great tradition even lauding or aspiring to some of these.<sup>235</sup>

The point of commonality highlighted though in the notes included on both Scott and Redfield, whether one thinks in terms of a religious spectrum or whether one thinks in terms of forms of resistance, is that for both the hidden transcript and the little tradition, magic is a common feature. We will now briefly consider the subject of semitic magic and the role of the *mashal* within this as an alternative, obscured, non-violent form of resistance.

#### 6.4 Use of Parables in Ancient Israel

By now we may be familiar with the Hebrew term which we often render in English as *parable*. But as already mentioned, *mashal* (*meshalim* pl.) has a wide semantic field and can mean anything from a wise saying, to a riddle, a trick, or a spell. Therefore, understanding some of the nuance, and if possible being able to understand the relation of the context of the parable to its intended purpose, will be important.

There is a body of work done in the first half of last century pertaining to the function of the *mashal* which seems in more recent scholarship to have been neglected. One possibility as to why may have to do with the divergent trends in the study of the Psalms. In the wake of Herman Gunkel's definitive form-critical study on the Psalms (1967, abridged version) there appeared the work of Sigmund Mowinckel who was credited as an astute scholar of the Psalms in his own right. But whereas Gunkel had used a form-critical approach and classified the Psalms in terms of genre thereby inferring their intention and purpose Mowinckel focused on performative aspects of the cult in Israel and tried to determine where and how various Psalms might have been used cultically and

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<sup>235</sup> In this sense, there may be a nefarious ideological element operative in the little tradition not articulated, or not present, in the hidden transcript.

liturgically. This led Mowinckel to conclude that many of the Psalms were liturgical, performative and somehow efficacious in helping to bring about a desired result in a cultic context.

Following Mowinckel's focus on the role of the cult, and also with more extensive reference to terms used by Frazer relating to sympathetic magic, scholars like Godbey (1923) and Johnson (1969) consider the role of the *mashal* in cultic and other settings in ancient Judaism. Their analysis suggests a far broader range of the use of the *mashal* than is conventionally thought of. In this vein, it is not understood simply or exclusively as a proverb or parable but could also mean a spell or a prophecy. In addition, the rationale suggests that the *mashal* was not simply something spoken but something performed, where the utterance and the action were two sides of the same coin.<sup>236</sup> The *mashal* in certain settings was believed to have an efficacious power where, understood within the framework of sympathetic magic (i.e. having a mimetic function), the *mashal* or performance resembles what it will effect or bring about.

In this sense even in the context of Proverbs, i.e. in a more conventional sense, there can be said to be a mimetic function to *meshalim* since, as Johnson says, the aim of the proverb is to effect a certain action in or by its hearer. Johnson however writes "there is no reason to doubt that basically the term implies "likeness", and the recognition of this fact is of the first importance for understanding the different shades of meaning which it seems to have acquired." (1969, 162) As Johnson says, recognising the most immediate meaning of *mashal* as "likeness" is important in relation to what he and Godbey identify as the mimetic function of the *mashal* – it is an imitation, an enactment of something. Johnson wrote quite extensively on the cultic function or office of the Hebrew prophet where part of his analysis considers the performative aspects of the prophet's utterances and the ways in which the *mashal* features in this. Seemingly the prophecy, which sometimes was referred to as a *mashal*, was not only inextricably linked to a prophetic act but thereby embodied or performed, and so was efficacious toward the intended purpose of the prophet/God.

Using Frazer's references to homeopathic and imitative magic, Johnson claims that in the context of Hebrew prophecy, the *mashal* could function as type of spell. In his discussion of what he referred to as sympathetic magic, Frazer had designated two branches based on two "laws" – the law of similarity upon which homeopathic or imitative magic is based, and the law of contact or contagion upon which contagious magic is based. To these we may add the well-attested branch of apotropaic (protective) magic designed to ward off evil.

Johnson details the use and function of the *mashal* by exploring the semantic field of the word and words with which it overlapped. He states that the use of *meshalim* as short, pithy, illustrative or didactic sayings was "developed as a means of instruction in the professional circles of "the wise", whose teaching was important

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<sup>236</sup> Godbey's article also cites numerous instances where *mashal* is used, not in the sense of a prophetic word, riddle or spell, but meaning to rule or have authority over (Godbey 1923, 105).

enough to be classed along with that of the priest and the prophet... Thus, in the first place, we have to note the development of such lore in the form of similar pithy sayings which could be used to communicate moral and spiritual truths in an arresting and memorable way." (1969, 164) In this sense, the *meshalim* represent an attempt to inculcate principles of action or modes of behaviour by means of colourful word-pictures or object-lessons, drawn from the many and varied experiences of everyday life which will bring about the desired end by moving the hearer to consent to a particular line of action.

Johnson also explains that there are examples of the *mashal* being used as a taunt-song (*Spottied*) which have a "dirge-like quality, and each anticipates some form of retribution which will make the person or persons concerned an object-lesson in the abuse of power" (1969, 166). Very interestingly, Johnson links this usage with contexts in which *mashal* is sometimes rendered in English as "byword," i.e. in situations of large-scale disaster or calamity such that the individual or community in question becomes a known example or lesson. Johnson goes further in saying that the *mashal* could function as a denouncement, having the effect of conviction and resulting in the downfall of the targeted party and even as "a spell which can be effective in and of itself," one which possesses "magico-religious properties". In this vein, writes Johnson, "there is reason to believe that the term מִשָּׁל could be used to denote a parable and originally, maybe, a spell which was expressed not merely in words but also in mime." (1969, 167-168)

In a slightly older publication, citing Ahab's counsel with Zedekiah in 1 Kings 22 and Elisha's counsel to Joash in 2 Kings 13, Johnson states that both examples illustrate "the principle of what has been called homeopathic or imitative magic; and there is reason to believe that in Israel an acted spell of this kind might be classed as a מִשָּׁל (EVV. 'proverb, byword, parable')." (1962, 40) In connection with this, Johnson highlights the sense in which the *mashal* is used as "a parallel which was first pictured in the mind and then given colourful expression in words alone or through some form of symbolic action and a corresponding oral pronouncement with a view in either case to its subsequent reproduction as an actual fact." (1962, 40) He cites the example of Numbers 23:7, where Balaam is asked by Balak to curse the Israelites where *curse* is translated from מִשְׁלֹ.<sup>237</sup> Johnson also cites a passage from Hosea "which emphasizes the fact (and this is the actual testimony of Hosea) that the prophets are Yahweh's instruments in fashioning the future; their actions and words have creative (or destructive) power." (1962, 44)

## 6.5 Conclusion

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<sup>237</sup> Johnson sees in Psalm 48 the same idea of mimesis as being originally attendant: "The context [of the psalm] shows... that this depicting of the future is something more than a mere mental picture. It belongs rather to that type of acted 'picture' which is connected with the above-mentioned practice of homoeopathic magic or the influence of 'like' upon 'like', although in this particular case one must recognize the transition to a mimetic ritual which, with its attendant psalmody, is to prove effective, not in any magical way, but through its influence upon the minds and hearts of the worshippers." (1962, 43)

In the first section of this chapter, we considered how theory around discourse in peasant-agrarian societies helps us understand how class dynamics affect, or have a bearing on, discourse within dominated groups and on that between dominated and dominant groups. We saw too that in the face of domination, the dominated have recourse to various forms of resistance which either give articulation to the hidden transcript or represent subtle reprisal of some kind. It may be helpful to think of these occurring along a spectrum, where initial measures are more subtle or surreptitious and include media such as fable, gossip, rumour, trick, riddle, spell, moving towards more overt measures such as sabotage, theft and outright protest or revolt.

My sense is that the parables of Jesus potentially had a variety of functions and thus can be understood in different ways. We considered earlier in this study how they might be legitimately seen as instances of codification in the Freirean sense, i.e. presentations of limit situations or situations of exploitation or oppression for their hearers to problematise thus facilitating conscientisation. To my mind the most fruitful way to understand the parables, their function and meaning, is as an articulation of the hidden transcript. This accounts for their intended opaqueness and obscurity, as well as for their prophetic component, which is often one of critique and denouncement. In this vein, we also considered some of the ancient Jewish heritage of the *mashal*, noticing that it has an efficacious component which lies partly in the fact that the *mashal*, but prophecy in general in ancient Judaism, often had both mimetic and performative aspects. It seems plausible to suggest that at least some of Jesus' parables, not least the parable of the wicked tenants and the cleansing of the temple, were intended to be an efficacious denouncement of some kind, even his ministry as a whole possessed the quality of a denouncement in the prophetic sense and although it is true that he issued an actual prophecy of the temple's destruction.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: INSIGHTS FROM ARCHAEOLOGY

*All that first opens the womb is mine, all your male livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep.*

(Exodus 34:19)

*On that day men were appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the law for the priests and for the Levites from the fields belonging to the towns; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered.*

(Nehemiah 12:44)

### 7.1 Introduction

We now come to the penultimate section of this study, where we consider more closely some of the specific features of the means of ancient caprine husbandry attendant to temple complexes. The study is augmented by archaeological insights into the nature and degree of caprine exploitation in and around Jerusalem and other urban centres from the eighth-century BCE to the first-century CE. The findings of studies such as Sapir-Hen, Gadot, Finkelstein (2014; 2016) and Hartman, Bar-Oz, Bouchnick and Reich (2013) support the position of higher levels of caprine exploitation around the cultic centre of Jerusalem as we will see. It is important to bear in mind that temples in antiquity represent high concentrations of material culture meaning that in practice they represented high concentrations of wealth and people. For our purposes, as a result, these sites are attended by relatively larger patterns of consumption and thus high deposits of faunal remains.

While it is taken for granted that temples represent a high concentration of material culture, nomadic and other forms of non-sedentary life, and life of the peasantry in the rural periphery in general, leave little to no archaeological trace. Our theoretical framework nevertheless allows us to posit a centre-periphery dynamic which in turn suggests a high concentration of material culture at the urban centre or *polis*. Though it may seem rudimentary, this position in turn allows an additional inference: so-called 'urban' centres represent higher population densities which were largely non-productive. The inference therefore pertains from the outset to the quality of relationship between such 'urban' centres and their rural peripheries. In contrast to the so-called 'urban' centres, within the rural periphery and in what Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017) refer to as the *chōra*, the main means of production or institutional forms are often combinations of subsistence survival and tenancy. As already mentioned, there is a comparatively low concentration of material culture in the *chōra* or rural periphery which in turn means insignificant archaeological data. While urban centres or *poleis* represent higher material concentrations the temple, functioning as the nerve-centre of the *polis*, represents a higher concentration still particularly of faunal remains. The self-evident reason for this is the presence of cultic sacrifice housed in temples. Therefore, while urban centres ordinarily represent higher consumptive habits than

the rural periphery, these are exacerbated, but to some extent also legitimated, by the supposed need for animal sacrifice. Therefore temples, in some sort of nascent form, represent pseudo-industries with quasi-religious underpinnings or, alternately, pseudo-religions with quasi-industrial undertones. We will therefore interpret the data related to faunal remains in light of the information disclosed from other temple sites and additionally in light of the theoretical framework provided by Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017).

From faunal remain data in Jerusalem and in what was ancient Judea and Galilee, we can draw conclusions on methods and means of sheep and goat husbandry for the investigation of this study. As we consider this data, Sasson indicates the importance of faunal remains for reconstructing, or at least better understanding, the economy of ancient Israel where he says that “[a]nimal bones are, in most cases, the second most common find in archaeological sites. Relative frequency of species and their mortality profile reflect the economy of ancient sites and, furthermore, point to the subsistence strategy of their inhabitants.” (Sasson 2008, 113)

The chapter is supplemented by archaeological studies of other temple sites in Ancient Mesopotamia. Though the economies of these would not have exactly matched that of the Jerusalem, valid inferences based on similarities can be drawn. The studies of Lapin (2017a, 2017b) and Kleber (2013) reveal insights about the economy of the late Babylonian temples and suggest the Babylonian elite engaged in a form of ‘commercialised’ agricultural practices as a means of maintaining their economic base (2013, 176).

Kozuh (2010, 2014) compares the consumption of sheep and goat by Babylonian temple complexes, suggesting a clear preference for sheep (and particularly lambs) over goats (2010, 556). We are fortunate to have extensive archival material for the Ur-III period Eanna temple at Uruk and the Ebbabar temple at Sippar on which I have consulted three studies. These temples, as invariably was the case, functioned as socio-economic hubs within the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Here sheep feature as a staple, though as we will see not necessarily or always for the production of wool. Based on these studies, we are able to understand better how sheep were produced in this context and to what end. These then serve as preliminary examples of how insights from archeology can inform our understanding of first-century caprine husbandry in our reading of biblical material.

The chapter therefore seeks to answer several questions but most basically to ascertain the level and nature of caprine exploitation in first-century Judea and Galilee. To do this, it is also helpful to gain a better understanding of the temple economy of first-century Judea. As already mentioned, it is assumed by the theoretical framework compiled for this study that the Jerusalem temple represents not only the highest concentration of material culture but the ideological legitimation which enabled this concentration. As in as much as caprine production featured centrally in the economy of the Jerusalem temple, Lapin’s studies (2017a, 2017b) in the final instance provide a helpful model for reconstructing this. But before consulting the relevant archaeological studies it may be best to get a general sense of the significance of sheep and wool in ancient Mesopotamian economy. I have

provided some summary remarks from an influential study on the wool economy of ancient Mesopotamia toward this end. To refer to wool as a significant commodity is misleading and anachronistic, as will be discussed, though it is undeniable that wool featured prominently as an item of value (cf. Jursa 2007, 228).

## 7.2 Wool production in ancient Mesopotamian economy

Following are some representative remarks about the historical significance of wool for the Ancient Near East from a volume by Michel and Breniquet (2014). According to the authors, “large-scale textile production” which used wool “began during the second half of the 3rd millennium.” (2014, 3) In both Mesopotamia and Aegea, “scribes recorded standardized production goals for both palatial wool production and for textile production in workshops” where “[t]housands of textile workers, primarily women and children, were supervised and sustained by the central authorities” (2014, 3). In the second millennium, “international trade in textiles expanded” where there was “diversification of wool-bearing sheep breeds” (2014, 3). In Mesopotamia, “merchants to market the wool” were employed while “private entrepreneurs also engaged in such commerce” (2014, 3). By the first millennium, wool was “used to finance international trade” (2014, 3).

The authors go on to say that third-millennium sources attest to the use of wool in the following ways: wool distributed to the king and royal court; wool used in a ration system; wool used as currency or for exchanges and thus as a source of wealth (2014, 5-6). From the late Uruk period (34<sup>th</sup> to 32<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE) the “link between wool and power (chiefdom, royalty whatever its name) is...documented by the first written sources: wool and woollen textiles are collected as taxes, stored, redistributed to the people of the court, and of course are involved in long-distance exchanges” (2014, 6).

The authors suggest that through the Akkadian period (24<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE) there are variations in the way wool is produced. There is evidence of flocks being communally managed in an urban environment and there are higher standards of quality control (2014, 6). They then go on to consider the “trade” of wool in Mesopotamia, Anatolia and the Aegean. Wool is described as the “main commodity” and “used as a means of payment to buy various products,” where “it is even sold in long distance trade.” (2014, 7) They write further that “[p]alaces had important needs of wool for the production of textiles to clothe the royal family, the palace population, to distribute as allocations to its workers or to offer to foreign kings...[where] textile production was almost exclusively for internal consumption and for diplomatic gifts” (2014, 7).<sup>238</sup> Michel and Breniquet continue to say that the “commercialization of wool produced by palace sheep” at Sippar “concerned very small quantities implying that... the palace’s surplus was quantitatively unimportant” (2014, 7). But by the Mycenaean

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<sup>238</sup> The authors do go on to say however that “the surplus of the private contemporaneous Assyrian production of textiles was sold abroad, in Anatolia (C. Michel). Assyrian merchants were also largely involved in the Anatolian local wool trade where most of the wool ended up in the Anatolian palaces or other major households where it was used for textile production (A. W. Lassen).” (2014, 7)

period (15<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE) it “is clear that wool is an important part of the Bronze Age Mycenaean palace economies... [where] palaces mobilize hundreds of men for managing the sheep flocks and the plucking of wool, and set annual production targets for groups of women workers in villages, characteristic of ration system, or *corvée* work.” (2014, 8)

In spite of reservations about the terminology, we get a sense of the scale on which wool featured in ancient Mesopotamian economy. Michel and Breniquet see wool as a “commodity” featuring prominently if not centrally in ancient Mesopotamian trade. One may wish to dispute some of their terms on the basis of the anachronism that commodities do not feature in ancient forms of economy, or may debate the precise nature and extent of trade in wool and wool products (cf. Boer’s position on preciousness). It is clear though that wool, regardless of its precise status in economic terms, was highly prized. Having said this, the extent to which wool featured universally in temple economies is disputed and we will consider some of this debate momentarily. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine its precise role at the Jerusalem temple. My own position, aligned more closely with that of Kozuh (2014), which we consider later, is that the demand for high volumes of sheep was linked in the first instance to cultic sacrifice where wool could be an important and valuable by-product.

### 7.3 Studies on Babylonian Temples

We now consider the work of Jursa (2007) on the Babylonian economy of the first millennium. I have included this review because though it is by no means comprehensive, his assessment gives a general picture of the Neo-Babylonian temple economy where this corroborates the theoretical models proposed thus far by. Having said this, in as much as Jursa’s assessment is helpful, like those Boer critiqued earlier, he unassumingly infers aspects of ‘market’ economy into antiquity.

Jursa says it is important to distinguish “between the agricultural landscape in close vicinity of the cities and that in more remote parts of the country...[where] and use around the cities was always much more intensive and geared towards supplying the urban centres and less towards subsistence agriculture for the benefit of the rural population.” (2007, 226) He continues to say that “the immediate hinterland of Babylon was characterised by very intensive market gardening.” (2007, 226) This supports the model of the institutional form of *chōra-polis* put forward by Boer and Petterson (2017) in which the *chōra* is that agricultural land often in the immediate vicinity of the *polis* and directly controlled by the urban elite toward meeting their consumptive needs.

Jursa says the “single most important land owners were the institutions” (2007, 226) i.e. the temples, as opposed to the monarch (royal families), where here (cf. now though the previous point) “numerous estates were, in fact, situated at a considerable distance from the urban centre.” (2007, 226) Continuing, Jursa writes that “[in] the sixth century [BCE], one frequently hears of land that had come into the hands of upper-class families as a result of land allotment schemes sponsored by king, temple, or city authorities... [where a]t least

some city-based families were also part of the land-for-service system by virtue of holding titles to estates encumbered with service and tax obligations of different kinds.” (2007, 226) This means that the process of latifundialism dates to the sixth century BCE in Babylon and, depending on the dating of Isaiah but given also the prominence of the Omride dynasty in the northern kingdom of Israel (see discussion later), probably began at around the same time in Israel.

Regarding institutional forms like tenure or estates, in the Babylonian economy, Jursa says that “[w]ell-to-do families would normally own date groves of not much over a hectare of surface area, mostly within easy reach from the city, if not actually within the walls... where [such g]ardens were most often rented out to free tenants, less frequently they were entrusted to family slaves or managed (and worked) directly by the proprietors.” (2007, 227)<sup>239</sup> Of the subsistence-based villages in the rural periphery, Jursa attests to the fact that they leave “next to no trace” and where they do appear in the historical record they do so in their relation to the labour supply they represented for the urban centres (2007, 227).

Regarding animal husbandry in the Babylonian economy, Jursa says that large-scale sheep breeding is “amply attested in first-millennium sources of institutional origin.” (2007, 227) He cites the common practice in Neo-Babylonian economy of issuing contracts to stockbrokers whose responsibility it was to produce specified quotas of sheep and sometimes wool for temple and state authorities (2007, 227-228). Such contractors did not tend flocks but employed shepherds of “West Semitic origin” (2007, 228). Jursa suggests that these shepherds were traditionally or historically semi-nomadic pastoralists. As a result, the hired shepherds and their flocks might travel extensive distances from the temple complex or urban centre which had engaged the contract.

In contrast to Kozuh (2014) who maintains that at least at the Eanna temple, live animals, i.e. lambs, for the purpose of sacrifice and consumption, were the primary products of sheep husbandry and wool only a secondary product, Jursa maintains that the “principal product of animal husbandry was wool, the raw material for Babylonia’s textile industry; [while] meat and milk products were of lesser importance” (2007, 228).

Jursa goes on to explain the economic status of the temples and what, for want of a better term, we might refer to as different classes within the Babylonian system. He says that though there may have been a pretence at political and economic independence, in reality the temples were dependant on and controlled by the dynastic households.<sup>240</sup> Members of these households not only occupied positions as royal officials in the temple but also “the ranks of the numerous specialist professions employed in the cult” (2007, 229). If the temples formed

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<sup>239</sup> “Private involvement in agriculture beyond the rentier kind of property management described above is likewise attested; agricultural contracting, leasing and subleasing, occurred not just in the institutional sphere. Some city-based entrepreneurs [of which more is said later] specialised in managing estates in private as well as institutional hands or invested...in the purchase (and amelioration) of land on a large scale.” (2003, 227)

<sup>240</sup> “The highest echelons within the temple administrations were” royal officials (2003, 229).

the economic core or nexus of Babylonian society, the offering cult lay at the centre of this. To service such a cult, Jursa says that “[b]elow the level of the prestigious holders of temple prebends” was a stratum of unfree serfs or oblates who were paid in kind but increasingly in wages of silver (2007, 229).

Jursa explains that in addition to the political and economic dependence on the dynastic families, temples were compelled to seek sources of wage labour. At Ebabbar, the increased specialisation in date farming, and at Eanna in wool production, presumably created a greater demand for wage labour and, according to Jursa, led to the monetisation of the temple economy in both instances (2007, 229). Jursa emphasises this ‘monetisation’ as an important feature of the Babylonian economy in reference to the demand for silver in taxation by the Babylonian monarchy. He then deals with what are termed “‘prebendary’ families [who] held prestigious temple offices and lived to a large extent from these benefices” (2007, 229). They established themselves by providing a service within the line of the provision of livestock, for example, to the extent of monopolising this service and earning a prebend in return. A second income stream was afforded this class through their owning of land which was used in a form of ‘commercial’ date farming (2007, 230). The management of these farms was outsourced or alternately they would be rented to a third party. Beer was also produced on the date farms.

Jursa goes on to discuss a group of people he describes as “entrepreneurs” (2007, 230), or “businessmen” (2007, 231) which were “without any known family background” and who displayed an “absence of tight links to temple households” (2007, 230). He places this group in the same category as that of tax farmers where, with regard to land and livestock, these were contract-bound to produce quotas where they in turn outsourced the labour required for this (2007, 231). There is furthermore evidence for ‘joint capital ventures’ (to paraphrase Jursa’s description) (2007, 231) which attest to the investment of “sleeping partners or ‘capitalists’” who were often royal officials (2007, 231). And although the “volume of domestic trade in primary goods cannot be quantified reliably... [this] must have been significant,” (2007, 231) something borne out “by individual texts documenting very important transactions, by the evidence for large-scale cash crop agriculture, and by the fact that, in all likelihood, a numerically significant part of the urban population seems to have been dependent on a food-market for their livelihood” (2007, 231).

Jursa further states that while “[i]nternational long-distance trade is even more difficult to get to grips with” Babylonia imported “slaves, iron, copper, wine, wood, alum and dyes (for the Babylonian textile industry) and prestige goods such as aromatics, scarabs and glass” and exported “slaves, barley, dates, wool and garments” (2007, 231). He attests to the likelihood “that textiles were the most important export product” but says this “cannot be verified on the basis of the available sources” (2007, 231). Finally, while the “monetisation of economic exchange in Babylonia” was “obvious” and this meant “much silver was coming into the country” the “two main sources were trade and tribute, as well as booty” where furthermore “it is impossible to tell which may

have been more important” (2007, 231).

When considering the “‘lower strata’ of the urban population,” Jursa finds evidence that “a large urban work-force must have found continuous employment... for years on end, earning money wages” (2007, 232).<sup>241</sup> This implies that such a work-force was not self-sufficient in terms of food either from farming or rations but instead had to rely on the purchase of their food from markets (2007, 232). In summary, all this “suggests the existence of an urban ‘working class’, a genuine ‘proletariat’ of considerable size, which was embedded in a monetised economy and subsisted without a firm base in the production of primary agricultural goods” (2007, 233).

Part of the difficulty in assessing Jursa’s contribution is that it contains much meaningful information yet is presented uncritically through a neo-classical lens. Boer critiques Jursa’s work saying that “[m]any continue to fall into this trap [i.e. of anachronistically inferring aspects of modern economy into antiquity], including those who write on biblical economics and ancient Southwest Asia, assuming the “economy” is an autonomous realm of self-regulating patterns, of private individual “entrepreneurs” who operate in terms of self-interest and comparative advantage, quite apart from socially determining forces” (2015, 14).<sup>242</sup> If one adopts Boer’s position, one should maintain that a large portion of scholarship on the subject – either on biblical economies or economies of the ancient Near East – is prone to similar criticism and, on that basis, should be measured with caution. But we see there is a hermeneutical (or even epistemological) problem which presents itself which also formed one of Boer’s critiques of modern scholarship and which is recurrent in my own review of sources.

Studies like Breniquet and Michel’s *Wool Economy*, though legitimately claiming to be interdisciplinary, are coloured by an overall scientific empiricism. Secondly, as indicated from the terms quoted above, such scholarship infers aspects of modern market capitalism into antiquitous economies (the point which Boer had laboured in his own critique). And herein lies the crux for it seems that with few exceptions scholarship on ancient economy is guilty of this. If we maintain that such scholarship falls into this anachronistic tendency and that there is an “economics imperialism” (Boer 2015, 11) within scholarship on ancient economy, we should go further in saying there is a science imperialism, or an empiricism imperialism, in modern scholarship based on an epistemological privileging of the so-called hard sciences.<sup>243</sup> Without having the luxury of further exploring this, we must press on to consider the relevant source material regarding archival and archaeological data. In a short while we consider the work of Sasson who, though working in the field of archaeology, is not encumbered

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<sup>241</sup> Jursa says that “the large-scale building activities under the Neo-Babylonian kings were, to a significant extent, financed on a monetary basis and depended primarily on hired labour, not on conscripted workers.” (2007, 232)

<sup>242</sup> The particular work of Jursa which Boer critiques is found in Baker, H. and Jursa, M. (Eds.) *Approaching the Babylonian Economy: Proceedings of the START Project Symposium Held in Vienna*, 1–3 July 2004. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2005.

– “Introduction.” In *Approaching the Babylonian Economy: Proceedings of the START Project Symposium Held in Vienna*, 1–3 July 2004, edited by Heather D. Baker and Michael Jursa, 1–6. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2005.

<sup>243</sup> This is probably reflected, in the subject of New Testament economy, in the division between sociological and archaeological oriented perspectives.

by the limitations thus far mentioned.

For now, we continue our consideration of the Babylonian temple economy via Kozuh's (2014) *Sacrificial Economy*, providing more detailed information on the temple cult in Neo-Babylonian Eanna and posing questions as to the means of caprine production. Under normal circumstances, the temple at Eanna sacrificed on average 9 lambs a day, but for the provision of festivals and special occasions, this number could rise to as high as 90. On average about 4300 lambs were sacrificed per year with "more than 120 herdsman connected to the Eanna at any given time" to oversee the production of such numbers with "tens of thousands of sheep and goats under their responsibility" (2014, 1). Kozuh writes further that "contractors held the Eanna's animals in a type of share-breeding agreement," (2014, 2) where "all the Eanna's contractors appear to be in debt" (2014, 2). He then poses pertinent questions on the relationship of the Eanna administrative authorities and such animal husbandry contractors:

*"Why...do all the Eanna's contractors appear to be in debt? From where does extra-temple intake in animals derive, and what does this tell us about the nature of that intake? How does the Eanna deal with the misappropriation of its animals, whether in the form of outright theft by outsiders or deliberate misconduct on the part of its contractors? And how do we explain the fact that the royal administration is associated with various aspects of the Eanna's livestock management?"* (2014, 2)

Such questions speak to the dynamics of the means of caprine production particular to the Eanna temple complex, as well as to the class relations which arise out of these. Kozuh poses highly pertinent questions which require answering if we are to better understand the nature of ancient caprine production in general for the same questions are pertinent to caprine production attendant to the Jerusalem temple. Another crucial question which is debated in the context of the Eanna temple archive material is whether the production of the vast numbers of sheep was motivated by the consumption of meat (primary exploitation for the purpose of sacrifice) or by the sale of wool (secondary exploitation). As Weszeli later points out, scholarship prior to Kozuh leaned toward understanding the Eanna temple in the context of a wool economy (Weszeli 2019, 457) which is understandable given the modern penchant for specialisation in a so-called 'market economy,' i.e. that Eanna traded in a 'commodity'. But an economy driven by a temple cult is by no means capitalist. Apart from lacking all features attendant to capitalism its *raison d'être* derives not from trade but sacrifice and so, strictly speaking, while it might be concerned with producing higher volumes sheep as well as the overall consolidation of its power, it is not motivated by profit.

Kozuh cites the work of Jursa (2004, 2007) who, as we have seen, maintains that wool production was the main aim of Eanna's sheep farming enterprise and that such an enterprise was one of the important sources of

Eanna's silver which it in turn used to facilitate trade in bulk goods (Jursa in Kozuh 2014, 7).<sup>244</sup> Kozuh fundamentally disagrees with this position (2014, 7ff.). He does not deny that the Eanna temple traded or sold wool, and in large quantities, but says the evidence is simply lacking to suggest this was the temple's main aim in engaging sheep production. His position is supported by what he says is a complete lack of evidence in temple records. The lacuna consists in the complete absence of references to wool-producing breeds of sheep, an absence of references to the quality of wool produced, or of that which may have been kept in storage, an absence of references to castrated rams "which are ubiquitous in wool producing herds," and finally an absence of references to the necessary infrastructure for collecting, sorting and processing wool (2014, 7-8).

Kozuh finds these omissions glaring, which one is able to appreciate when comparison is made between the Eanna temple records and those at Uruk and Ur III Mesopotamia, for these latter do indicate a 'specialisation' of sort in the production of sheep for wool.<sup>245</sup> Additionally, while there is a complete lack of evidence suggesting a 'specialisation' in wool at Eanna, Kozuh citing the work of Payne (1973), says there is "atypical clarity" indicating that Eanna's herds were bred for the purpose of meat consumption. Basically, herds bred for wool have a different profile to those bred for meat consumption. The latter, due to the high cull rate of juvenile males for their quality of meat, contain few adult males (the ratio of rams to ewes is low). By contrast, herds bred for wool have a high ratio of rams where these however have been castrated (2014, 8-9).<sup>246</sup>

Adopting a position which sees Eanna's sheep production geared toward the sacrificial cult, Kozuh addresses how the animals were farmed. Based on a similar contract system which we have seen attested to thus far, he says of these that "[n]o text suggests that the herdsmen [i.e. contractors] themselves tended the animals; instead, they employed shepherds for this purpose, although the terms of the relationship between any herdsman and his shepherd(s) remain outside the purview of the texts." (2014, 68) It is worth quoting information from a footnote included in Kozuh where he says:

*"[t]here is in fact very little information on shepherds (rē 'u, pl. rē 'utu)...As noted by Jursa...many of the herdsmen's shepherds have West Semitic names and were probably associated with (semi-) nomadic peoples. This is the only distinctive feature that the texts divulge. Shepherds often appear in texts associated with the theft of temple animals, either as witnesses to a theft or defending themselves against accusations of misappropriation. Shepherds are most often described as "of" (ša) a particular herdsman" [i.e. contractor –*

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<sup>244</sup> Without disputing Jursa's position, which Kozuh does, trade for profit, currency-oriented trade, and trade in bulk goods are all features of capitalist economy which Boer (2017) said are absent in antiquity.

<sup>245</sup> We see in these cases that Ur III has a "rich vocabulary for types of sheep and wool," designating at least five classes of wool as well as evidence for "an extensive infrastructure" for its processing (2014, 9-10).

<sup>246</sup> "In short, the proportion of rams to ewes in any given herd should reveal its production strategy. When ewes vastly outnumber rams, we know that the herd was managed for meat; herds with a high ram-to-ewe ratio are for wool. This does not preclude, of course, wool-managed herds from supplying some meat; nor, obviously, does the wool of meat-managed herds go unused." (2014, 9)

indicating shepherds were hired by individual contractors] (2014, 68).

At this point it is helpful to consider studies by Weszeli and Van Driel on the archival records of the Eanna and Ebabbar temples, and specifically on the forms of contract between temple authorities and livestock brokers. This will help us understand more precisely the nature of the means of ancient caprine husbandry attendant to temple complexes and specifically, the relation of hired shepherds to the so-called stock brokers. Papers published by Michaela Weszeli (2019) and Govert van Driel (1993) indicate that temple sites in first-millennium Babylon supported what may be referred to as larger-scale sheep husbandry enterprises, in comparison to the nomadic or sedentary subsistence sheep husbandry practices more common to the general population.

In the papers of both Weszeli and Van Driel, inferences are based on archival records from the Eanna temple at Uruk and the Ebabbar temple at Sippar, as well as on earlier analysis done of these records by H. W. Kümmel. Weszeli says that the requirement for temples to breed their own animals for sacrifice, i.e. for non-subsistence purposes, was present as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE (2019, 456) echoing what Michel and Breniquet had said earlier about heightened demand for sheep production. Both Weszeli and Van Driel describe economic relations based on different types of contract issued by the Eanna temple complex. Van Driel's examples are of one issued to a prince named *Aršam* who has a herd of considerable size; a contract issued to an "entrepreneurial" herdsman who again has a herd of considerable size; and a contract that is referred to as a "private" contract concerning a smaller herd (1993, 222-224).

Of interest is that the contract involving the "entrepreneurial" herdsman stipulates payment of an existing debt to the temple (a feature Kozuh referred to) before the contract could take effect. This debt amounts to a thousand head of animals of both goat and sheep, of both sexes, and of various ages. Van Driel surmises that whereas larger "entrepreneurial" enterprises, as in the example of the second contract, might be able to resist such debt payment or even full payment of the quota stipulated in their contracts, smaller "private" herdsman, as in the example of the third, could not and would possibly have had property seized in the face of defaulted payment (1993, 223-224).

As both Van Driel and Weszeli make clear, there are distinct internal and external aspects to the mechanisms of sheep husbandry at the Eanna temple where the former is dealt with more favorably. This 'separation' of the means of production was due in part to the sheer volume of sheep required for sacrifice by the temple cult. Weszeli estimates an average of 358 male sheep per month were sacrificed not counting sheep used as rations within the temple complex or to feed the royal household (2019, 463). Because of these high volumes, a means of sheep husbandry which was both mechanised and outsourced was required. The authors refer to classes or offices pertaining to this "external" management of sheep husbandry, i.e. to the raising and grazing of herds, carried out in the rural periphery, sometimes far away from the temple by third parties not associated with the

temple complex; as well as the “internal” component of this means of sheep husbandry, represented mainly in the fattening of animals for sacrifice by temple officials within the temple precinct (1993, 224; 2019, 458-459).

Kozuh had previously cited Van Driel’s work in helping to distinguish between personnel external to the temple and that internal to the temple, primarily by observing which personnel are included on the temple ration lists. However, Kozuh qualified his distinction based on the type of documentation in which they appear or in which they are involved.<sup>247</sup> In short, the two branches or categories of personnel represent “two different legal and social relationships with the temple ...[which] are functionally connected but socially and juridically separate.” (2014, 5) In line with the theoretical framework used in this study, it may be helpful to establish the relations of such groups to the means of production and, if possible, ‘ownership’ of the means of production with regard to the Eanna temple complex and their production of sheep.

Van Driel, for example, in the start of his analysis of the three exemplary contracts says that “[t]he texts [i.e. contracts] from Sippar and Uruk reflect the interests of the administrators who managed the herds for their human or divine owners,” (1993, 222) where such administrators were attendant to the temple, i.e. not the contractors or stockbrokers. In some cases, such “administrators” may have been a priestly or royal class in charge of animals ‘belonging to’ the deity at Eanna. Regarding the ‘external’ component of Eanna caprine production, Van Driel cites a “three-tiered hierarchy” of offices (1993, 224ff.) which is also based on Kümmel’s work. The distinction between external and internal offices is made, as mentioned, on the basis of ration lists of the temple where those internal to the temple’s operation, i.e. those on the temple’s ‘payroll,’ received rations while those outside did not (1993, 224).

But the office or class both Van Driel and Weszeli refer to as the *nāqīdu* (external to the temple) represents a form of livestock broker (1993, 225; 2019, 458). The *nāqīdu* does not own the stock but leases the stock, i.e. is contracted by temple representatives to oversee the stock, often in remote grazing areas, and to facilitate the stock’s growth through breeding thereby providing the temple with a seasonal quota. Any dividends in excess of the prescribed quota, in actual livestock and secondary products like wool, are for the *nāqīdu* to keep. One may note that this bears similarities to the leasing practices of the vegetal agricultural sector of a slightly later period, whereby a quota or portion of produce was contractually guaranteed to the estate owner.

Again, crucially we see from Weszeli’s and Van Driel’s analysis, which affirms that offered by Jursa and Kozuh, that the actual oversight and herding is in turn undertaken by a third party and not directly by the *nāqīdu*. The

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<sup>247</sup> “This dichotomy affected the form of the written records. Relationships among the immediate temple members, and movements of temple assets among them, are mostly recorded in administrative texts (e.g., in unwitnessed memoranda, notes, ledgers, inventories, and audits). Relationships between the temple and its contractors, and the movement of assets between them, are mostly recorded in legal texts, such as leases, promissory notes, surety agreements, and receipts, which require witnesses and mark the creation, or end, of specific obligations.” (2014, 5)

*rē'û*, or what we might term hired shepherd, appears at the very bottom of the whole transactional arrangement, much like the day or wage labourer had in agricultural tenancy. The social status of the *nāqīdu*, based on the comments of Van Driel and Weszeli, is higher than that of a lowly shepherd (yet nowhere near that of the aristocracy) and they therefore would not conceivably tend sheep themselves.<sup>248</sup> They engaged the services of the *rē'û* on the basis of a form of wage labour (1993, 225; 2019, 458). It is helpful to consider some of the contract stipulations which the *nāqīdu* would have been bound by which we can take as being representative.<sup>249</sup>

Van Driel and Weszeli list the following obligations and stipulations being typical of such contracts: 66 male and female lambs per 100 ewes; 66 male and female kids per 100 nanny goats; 0.75kg of wool for every male and female sheep; 0.42kg of hair for every male and female goat; with 10 head per 100 being the limit of acceptable loss (1993, 222-223, 234; 2019, 462). An additional stipulation related to herd losses: the skin of every fallen animal as well as 2,5 shekels (which, if 1 shekel was equal to about 11g, amounts to 33g) of tendons of the perished animal (1993, 241; 2019, 462).<sup>250</sup>

The first noteworthy feature of such contracts is that, astonishingly, the ratios of lambs and kids (the most important component of the quota) guaranteed to the temple, in relation to the rest of the herd, are at at least two-thirds of the lamb and kid population, assuming that each female produces at least one juvenile per season, the very same ratio we see in sharecropping agriculture arrangements. Additionally, we see that apart from the dividends contractually due by the *nāqīdu* to his contractees (in this case a member of the royal family and the temple administration), a limit of 10% was the acceptable percentage of loss of a herd. Crucially though, in such instances of loss, the *nāqīdu* was contractually bound to provide proof that livestock had died by predation or natural cause by presenting the skins and tendons of these animals. Because the *nāqīdu* never had direct oversight or management of the herd all of these contractual obligations devolved to the *rē'û*, or hired shepherd.

Later we will see that Talmudic literature commonly recognises such a class of hired shepherd, as well as such cases of livestock loss and the legal onus placed on hired shepherds as a result. Loss, even by predation, did not exempt the hired shepherd from personal financial responsibility for the animal. If he could not produce proof of the animal's demise, or that reasonable effort was made to ward off predators, he incurred penalties.

Van Driel and Weszeli's analyses of the structure and arrangement of caprine husbandry enterprises of the Eanna temple is helpful and affirms what was suggested by Jursa and Kozuh, viz. that Neo-Babylonian

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<sup>248</sup> Van Driel says that “[i]n Uruk the *nāqīdu* was a person with sometimes wide ranging interests in cattle and sheep herding and in arable farming. As an entrepreneur he had acquired a position between the temple-administration and its herds in the external organization of sheep breeding.” (1993, 225)

<sup>249</sup> Van Driel provides as exemplary contracts issued by or on behalf Achaemenid prince *Aršam* and one issued by the Uruk temple administration (1993, 222-223).

<sup>250</sup> Van Driel indicates that written contracts were not always required but that *nāqīdu* could also be bound contractual obligations by custom (1993, 222).

temples, partly because of the high volume of animal sacrifice required, outsourced breeding and management of herds to something like a stock broker or lessee who, in exchange for a dividend of the flock, was legally bound to produce a quota of sheep to the temple per season. Such brokers however in turn engaged the services of hired shepherds who, according to Jursa and Kozuh, were of west-Semitic origin and from a background of pastoral nomadism. According to Kozuh, the *rē'û* or hired shepherd was also associated with stock theft. One can therefore understand that it was in the interests of the *nāqīdu*, the stock broker, as well as the temple administration, to mitigate against the potential theft of stock by the *rē'û* or hired shepherd by imposing stiff penalties. The Talmudic literature we consider just now even prohibits hired shepherds from grazing herds in areas known for banditry, presumably because of the possible collusion between shepherds and bandits in arranging stock theft.<sup>251</sup> As a result, regulations and requirements were imposed, normally explicitly in contracts between the temple and *nāqīdu*, requiring material proof of an animal's demise in the case of stock loss. These obligations however were ultimately the responsibility of the *rē'û*.

It is perhaps worth including here a brief consideration of an article by Andrew Mein (2007) as it has some overlap with this study.<sup>252</sup> Mein touches on some of the salient points of ancient caprine husbandry without fully articulating it and without appreciating the aspect of social critique (i.e. of the temple and its administrators) that the prophetic literature which bears this imagery often invokes. Additionally, I thought it helpful to include a consideration of Mein's article because I too had initially intended to include Ezekiel 34 in my own analysis, though as a background to the so-called parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-33ff.) which cannot be understood without Ezekiel 34 as a background. In this sense too, just as is the case in Ezekiel 34 itself, Jesus may be offering a direct critique or denouncement of the sacrificial cult.

Mein's article intends to consider Ezekiel 34 "in the light of the economics of animal husbandry" of ancient Israel (2007, 493).<sup>253</sup> Though ostensibly, at least in the English text, there is no clear indication as to the means of caprine husbandry reflected in Ezekiel 34 which suggests a form of contracting, Mein takes this for granted, on the basis of the data<sup>254</sup> he considers in the course of the article (2007, 493).<sup>255</sup> One aspect of the discussion

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<sup>251</sup> Kloppenborg and Callon also make a case for shepherds being associated with banditry and stock theft. They say "the mobility and weapons of shepherds afforded them the means and opportunity for theft; and the wages typically paid to herdsmen made forms of criminality a temptation if not a necessity." (2019, 230)

<sup>252</sup> Mein, for example, is the only scholar to my knowledge to have placed Amos 3:12 in its correct historical context, viz. as an act of retrieving evidence of an animal perished by predation so as to avoid contractual penalties.

<sup>253</sup> Mein states at the outset that "[i]n [Ezekiel] 34.1-16, YHWH is presented as the owner of sheep, whose hired hands, the 'shepherds of Israel', have failed to perform their duties of care and protection. In economic terms, the problems are those of misappropriation of property and the failure to produce an adequate profit, and the disadvantage to the owner is of more significance than the suffering of the sheep." (Mein 2007, 493) In reality, apart from the argument that such economic relations may be inferred from the actions described on the part of the shepherds and God in Ezekiel 34, no such relations or distinctions are referred to in the passage. See below for discussion of some of the related terminology.

<sup>254</sup> Mein's data is sourced from material from Ancient Mesopotamia, from the Old Babylonian period to the Persian period, dealing mainly with "temple flocks" (2007, 497).

<sup>255</sup> It perhaps should be noted that Mein's overall interpretive concern is not with the means of ancient caprine production but rather with the interpretation of Ezekiel 34 and that the supposedly pastoral imagery of Ezekiel 34 is at odds with the

which Mein's article perhaps inadvertently draws attention to is a degree of ambiguity in the terminology. In Ezekiel 34, the LXX uses ποιμήν (the most common Greek word to designate "shepherd") to translate רעה. But clearly, רעה has etymological links to the Akkadian *rē'û* which, we saw earlier, is the term used in Neo-Babylonian contracts to designate a hired shepherd, as opposed to either the owner of the sheep, or one who leases the sheep (i.e. he is the one who actually does the manual labour of tending the sheep). Of the eight verses in Ezekiel 34 which reference shepherds, all but one are translated from ποιμήν in the LXX, while in v.15, the verb βόσκω is used (though this is still from the Hebrew רעה in the MT) which is defined as "(prop. of herdsmen), [to] feed, tend".<sup>256</sup> Kloppenborg indicates, as we will see momentarily, that in Egyptian papyri νομέυς is used to designate a herdsman in distinction to a herd owner (2010, 222).<sup>257</sup> In other words, where there is clear terminological differentiation in Neo-Babylonian cuneiform contracts and in later Egyptian papyri, at least superficially this clarity is lacking in Ezekiel 34, although as mentioned, the terms *rē'û* and רעה must be understood as being linked.

Mein himself however makes no distinction, or no reference, to the *rē'û* which is cited in Van Driel's research (1993) which Mein himself includes in his paper. As a result, in speaking of the "shepherds" in Ezekiel 34, it is never clear whether Mein means something like the sheep merchants, or sheep contractors, of Zechariah 11, and of which the *nāqīdu* would be the equivalent, or the more menial hired shepherds who we know featured in such contractual arrangements, or indeed if he even had these distinctions in mind.<sup>258</sup>

As mentioned, while there is no clear differentiation between sheep owners, sheep contractors and sheep herders, this may be inferred based, perhaps tentatively, on the action of the so-called shepherds in Ezekiel 34, but more soundly on what is known of caprine husbandry practices (particularly attendant to temple complexes) in ancient Mesopotamia. Mein early on cites the practice of enlisting the services of "specialist shepherds,"

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rest of Ezekiel's theocentric image of God (2007, 493-495). In this sense, and in citing the stark reality that "sheep are rarely if ever farmed for their own good, but only to meet some human (or perhaps divine) need" (2007, 496) it seems Mein may be problematising the metaphor of the "good shepherd" more generally. He says, for example, that "[t]his rather tougher aspect of flock management [i.e. that sheep in one form or another were invariably bred for consumption] is emphasized with the result that 'the metaphor "YHWH is a shepherd" means something different in Psalm 23 and in Ezekiel 34.17-22" (2007, 496).

<sup>256</sup> <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/βοσκω>

<sup>257</sup> The other term sometimes translated as "shepherd" in Greek literature is βουκόλος, possibly related to βοσκω, meaning "a cowherd, herdsman" (<https://logeion.uchicago.edu/βουκόλος>). It is from the former that we get the English "bucolic" and etymologically it designates the tending of cows.

<sup>258</sup> Mein's comments regarding Hebrew sentimentalities around sheep also suggest that he is perhaps stuck within a dichotomous way of thinking. He says, for example, "Nathan's parable of the ewe lamb (2 Sam. 12.1-6) suggests that ancient Israelites might feel genuine affection towards their livestock and treat them as pets, but on the whole we can be confident that they were kept for their economic benefits rather than for more selfless motives." (2007, 496-497) He is stuck between two modern, and somewhat anachronistic ways of thinking: the notion of 'pets' endowed with all manner of subjective properties is a particularly modern, western phenomenon while, likewise; the notion of rearing animals purely for "economic benefits" is equally modern. In connection with the latter, he uses the words "surplus" and "bank" (2007, 497) suggesting he is uncritically applying modern capitalist terminology to the text's context. As we have mentioned previously, nascent Hebrew culture, in as much as this was represented by forms of pastoral nomadism, or nomadic pastoralism, would have enjoyed a mutually constitutive and symbiotic relationship with its animals.

which “would have been even more necessary in the case of wealthy men, whose animals were counted in the thousands” (2007, 497). Mein goes on to say that it “is this relationship between absentee owner/breeder and hired shepherds to which Ezekiel 34 alludes.” (2007, 497) Referring to Deist (2000) in the case of Ezekiel 34, God (or Yahweh) is characterised as the sheep owner and the ruling elite (Mein cites “royal court, bureaucrats” – 2007, 497) as the hired shepherds who have failed in their task.<sup>259</sup>

Mein says the contractual arrangements represented “an entrepreneurial system, at which successful shepherds could do well” though there was a risk, through defaulting on stipulated quotas, that shepherds could fall into debt (2007, 498). Contracts made provision only for a certain amount of losses, for which proof had to be provided (i.e. as to the animal’s cause of death). Mein cites Amos 3:12 in this regard. Any losses not accounted for went against the shepherd’s account (2007, 498).

Mein’s application or understanding of the metaphor, as it appears in the prophetic denouncement, ultimately is confused. He has made the mistake of identifying God, in the last instance, as the owner of the sheep, i.e. owner of the means of production (2007, 500-501). In light of this, the prophetic denouncement loses its efficacy, since it is surely directed precisely at the real owners of the means of production, or owners of the sheep, the temple custodians and those of the royal/ruling household. This confusion stems from the fact that he has identified the target of Ezekiel’s critique as the “hired shepherds” (2007, 502) where, as mentioned, at least in Mein’s treatment it is not clear precisely what rank of shepherd this refers to.<sup>260</sup>

He also mentions, for example, what to him is the anomalous verse of 16, in which God says “the fat and the strong [sheep] I will destroy,” but he explains this away by citing the “owner’s right” (2007, 501) to ultimately do with the sheep what he sees fit. Whereas it is true that in a general theological sense, as creator, God is the owner of the sheep, to make the identification too early on of God as the owner of the means of the production deflates the prophetic denouncement. Mein does not mention vv.17 and 20 which, together with v.16, make sense only as a denouncement of the sacrificial cult in general. In other words, the sacrificial cult (attached inextricably to the temple) was prone to sacrificing “the fat and strong sheep” (v.16), distinguishing “between rams and goats” (v.17), as well as “between the fat sheep and the lean sheep” (v.20) on the basis that, the former of the last two pairings were preferred for sacrifice (and eating), i.e. as a function of the temple cult. The sheep which receive negative valuation in Ezekiel’s denouncement are the fat sheep (given their association

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<sup>259</sup> Elsewhere he had said that the “shepherds... most likely stand for Judah’s Davidic monarchs” (2007, 494). Mein summarises the contractual arrangement between the temple (or royal class) and hired shepherd as follows: “The basic principle contained within these documents is that a hired shepherd took over management of a flock of mixed sheep and goats for a period of a year at a time. Contracts stipulated a minimum return to the owner in terms of both young animals and products such as wool and cheese. The shepherd was entitled to any surplus over and above the minimum, but had to make good any shortfall out of his own resources.” (2007, 497-498)

<sup>260</sup> Mein writes “[t]here is a striking parallel between these sins of commission and the Arsham herding contracts, which specify milk products, wool and young animals as belonging to the owner of the flock.” (2007, 499) I.e. Mein’s point is that the so-called hired shepherds are in breach of their contract.

with the temple cult) while those which receive positive valuation are the lean sheep (possibly representing the poor and disenfranchised, whether sheep or people). Again, had Mein engaged more extensively with the work of Van Driel, perhaps this would have been evident, as Neo-Babylonian records attest amply to the division of labour regarding temple caprine production, viz. that a class of temple prebends were responsible solely for the fattening of sheep once they had been handed over from the sheep contractors.

At this point, however tentatively, we may begin to discern resonance around the thief (κλεπτης), bandit (ληστης), and hired shepherd (μισθωτος) of John 10 although we have yet to make qualifications or inferences regarding the practices of sheep husbandry specifically for first-century Judea and Galilee. Official records and anecdotal accounts throughout antiquity, as we have seen, often equate shepherds with bandits. That (hired) shepherds were associated with the stock theft in Eanna archival material should not surprise us.

#### 7.4 Archaeology of ancient Israel

We have thus far considered scholarship on archival (cuneiform) data. We will now consider archaeological data in the form of faunal remains which speak to sheep husbandry practices in ancient Israel. We begin with two studies by Aharon Sasson (2008, 2010)<sup>261</sup> who, to my knowledge, is one of the few scholars transcending the paradigm limitations of a neo-classical approach within the field of archaeology.

##### 7.4.1 Aharon Sasson

In the first study (2008), Sasson challenges a fundamental assumption of most if not all modern archaeological and antiquitous economic research, viz. that populations in antiquity were motivated in their economic strategies by the production of a surplus and this to the end of increasing wealth, prestige and power. Such an assumption is modern, anachronistic and fallacious. As Sasson indicates, and in agreement with Boer, the vast majority of populations in antiquity lived very close to subsistence level (2008, 115). Sasson prefers the term *economic strategy* to 'economy,' one presumes to avoid the anachronistic baggage the term may carry into studies of antiquity (2008, 114). He describes the prevalent economic strategy in use in antiquity as that of *survival subsistence strategy* (2008, 115), a term similar to that used by Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017).

The aim and orientation of such a strategy is entirely at odds with anything like a 'market'-related one since its primary focus is survival and maintenance of flock size at "optimal level" (2008, 115). In other words, with regard to caprine husbandry, flock expansion beyond optimum level would be counterproductive and potentially

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<sup>261</sup> Sasson, A. (2008) "Reassessing the Bronze and Iron Age Economy: Sheep and Goat Husbandry in the Southern Levant as a Model Case Study" in *Studies in the Archaeology of Israel and the Levant during the Bronze and Iron Ages in Honour of Israel Finkelstein*. Fantalkin, A. and Yasur-Landau, A. (Eds.) Leiden: Brill; Sasson, A. 2010. (2014) *Animal Husbandry in Ancient Israel: A Zooarchaeological Perspective on Livestock Exploitation, Herd Management, and Economic Strategies*. Series: Approaches to Anthropological Archaeology. Levy, T. (Ed.). London: Routledge. (Adobe Digital Editions version)

disastrous. The concept of carrying capacity features here where the livestock owner had to be fully cognisant of the level of caprine heads a given area of land could support. Anything beyond this would risk depletion of pasturage and therefore the livelihood of the flock. The focus instead in subsistence economies in general was “on preserving...subsistence resources in order to sustain...overall [and long-term] survival.” (2008, 115).

In terms of his research data and methods, Sasson explains that the “majority of sites [which he considers] date to the Bronze and Iron Ages...[though s]ites dating to the Persian, Roman, and Islamic periods were also included in the analysis to broaden the spectrum of sites examined.” (2008, 116) Sasson further indicates that “sites are located in various geographical regions in Israel: the Galilee, the northern valleys, the Central Hill, the Coastal Plain, the Shephelah, the northern Negev, and the southern Negev”. (2008, 116).

The findings of Sasson are of interest in that he addresses sheep-goat ratios in caprine populations and explains the differing advantages of the two species and their relative attractiveness for breeding. Given the superior resilience of goat over sheep one might wonder why goats were not universally favoured.<sup>262</sup> In Sasson’s opinion, though sheep produced a higher caloric intake in both milk and meat, the main reason they were preferred was their wool. This reality is attested by historical trends. After the industrial revolution when the importance of wool diminished data suggests a significant drop in sheep populations (2008, 120).

Based on the utility of wool and other features which made sheep rearing attractive, but based on the relative resilience of goats, Sasson indicates that an expected ratio might be anything from one half to two thirds sheep in a given population and the remainder goat (2008, 117, 119). The reason it was unusual and unfeasible for populations to consist solely of sheep was due to risk mitigation, so much a feature of the subsistence economy we have examined up until now. Goats were hardier and if pest struck, having one’s herd varied between sheep and goat meant greater risk mitigation. Following these principles, Sasson’s study sought to answer three questions: was there a fluctuation in ratio between urban and rural areas; was there a fluctuation in ratio between northern and southern Israel (as had been suggested by previous research) and; are trends in exploitation and preference for bi-product present across the different types of settlement?

Regarding primary and secondary exploitation Sasson cites the work of Payne (1973) who had posited the theory that a high prevalence of juvenile specimens in faunal remains indicates a high sub-adult cull rate and therefore primary exploitation, i.e. meat consumption or sacrifice (2008, 121). From the data of the fifty-four sites examined, only eight indicated high sub-adult cull rate (2008, 122-124). The principle stands that a high

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<sup>262</sup> The mixture of sheep and goat in a flock or herd is to mitigate risk. Goats are hardier than sheep, more resistant to disease, require less water, and can travel further distances and, crucially, can regenerate faster, meaning herd numbers of goats are replenished faster after unforeseen herd reduction (Weszeli 2019, 460). Potentially, as mentioned, sheep offered greater material benefit in the superior meat and milk and certainly for wool. Mixed herds with a 2:1 ratio in favour of sheep maximized material benefit while mitigating risk posed by scarce resources, harsh climate, and disease.

sub-adult cull rate suggests primary exploitation, but Sasson highlights the mistaken tendency to interpret this as indicative of “meat export” or market forces”, i.e. as a form of specialisation in the production of meat (2008, 126). The assumption drawn in my own study is that a high sub-adult cull rate, especially when in proximity to a cultic site, is evidence for demand in meat not by ‘market forces’ but by the temple cult. Of the fifty-four sites considered in Sasson’s research, only three are categorised as “sacred” of which two have a high sub-adult cull rate (2008, 122-124). Forty-six of the fifty-four sites (85%) indicate exploitation at “all” levels (2008, 122-124), i.e. do not have high sub-adult cull rates but indicate meat exploitation at all ages.

One might have expected, whether due to a high demand in cultic sacrifice or the supposed ‘specialisation’ in meat consumption, due to the higher quality meat of younger specimens, to find a higher prevalence of sub-adult cull rates generally. But Sasson points out that sub-adult culling is not a reliable indicator of a greater demand in sacrifice or meat consumption for this reason: sub-adult culling was a common practice and not done necessarily for the purpose of primary exploitation, or because it was determined by ‘market forces,’ but because it kept herds at optimal level. In other words, it was done for the purpose of herd maintenance, entirely in line with subsistence strategies predominant for the period and region (2008, 126). Thus, whereas some scholarship has interpreted a high sub-adult cull rate as evidence of a “market economy,” Sasson interprets this to mean the opposite – the desire to maintain optimal (often lower than higher) populations for the purpose of long-term sustainability. Additionally, the fact that data shows exploitation of biproducts at many sites negates the idea of specialisation and further supports Sasson’s idea of a survival subsistence strategy (2008, 127).

In Sasson’s more extensive publication on animal husbandry (2014), he employs four approaches, three based on zooarchaeological data (comparative, spatial, sagittal), and one based on ethnographic data, to come to essentially the same conclusions regarding animal husbandry in the southern Levant. At least from an ethnographic perspective, Sasson says that the contribution of animal products to the human diet was “diminutive” (2014, 23). Sasson writes that though his study pertains to sites in ancient Israel, his conclusions are applicable for the “whole region of the Southern Levant” (2014, 23). One gets the sense too, given that Sasson’s ethnographic approach presents data from the modern period, that he sees this status quo as enduring for much of the Southern Levant’s history even into the modern period.<sup>263</sup>

It is worth noting again that Sasson is one of the few archaeologists who challenges the prevailing trend within studies of ancient economy and within archaeological studies of ancient Southwest Asia. Most scholars uncritically infer division of labour and thus specialisation into ancient societies which feeds the notion of a

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<sup>263</sup> Sasson writes that “the conclusion arising from all studies [i.e. from within the four approaches he adopts] is that the economy (as reflected in animal husbandry) in ancient Israel was self-sufficient and managed conservatively. The survival subsistence strategy rather than a market economy was paramount among most parts of the Southern Levantine population.” (2014, 23).

'market economy,' where producers supposedly trade out of self-interest for profit (2014, 24). Instead, as Boer had done in *Sacred Economy*, Sasson prefers to see any and all transactions as being socially embedded. As he points out, the commodity is attendant to capitalism and has no place in ancient economy. It is only under the auspices of the commodity that transactions and 'sales' or trade can become relatively disembedded (2014, 25). Citing the work of Polanyi (1957), Dalton (1971), Sahlins (1972), and Renfrew and Bahn (1991), a more plausible framework from which to view such transactions in antiquity, as Boer had also proposed, is that of gift exchange and reciprocity (2014, 24).

Indeed, though strictly speaking working in different fields, Sasson and Boer are similarly oriented theoretically, citing even the same authors to support their positions. Citing Wilson, for example, both point to the difficulty modern studies have in comprehending the sheer difference in scale in ancient economies. Boer had gone to some lengths in emphasising this by showing that populations by today's standards were miniscule.<sup>264</sup> Since both Boer and Sasson question the validity of using the word "economy" in referring to antiquitous societies, it is worth including a quote from Dalton in Sasson:

*"It would be better to say that there is no awareness of the 'economy' as a distinct set of practices apart from social institutions. Transactions of material goods in marketless economies are expressions of social obligation, which have neither mechanism, nor meaning of their own apart from the social ties, social obligations, and social situations they express. In the Western meaning of the word, there is no 'economy' in traditional society; only socio-economic institutions, processes, and transactions."* (Dalton in Sasson 2014, 25)

Sasson has already highlighted another anachronistic concept inferred in questions of ancient economy, namely that of surplus.<sup>265</sup> The assumption of scholars of a neo-classical bent is that the self-interested, profit-driven subsistence farmer, when blessed with good rainfall and a bumper crop, takes his 'surplus' to the market to enrich himself, or at least to improve his lot by procuring more technologically advanced tools, buy additional land, to in turn to reap more profit. As Sasson explains, in a subsistence economy, no such inclination or concept exists. Any surplus which the subsistence farmer might be lucky to accrue is used as a buffer for lean seasons, when his crop inevitably fails due to drought or pest, or when levels of rent and taxation exceed that which is feasible. Alternately, it may go to his ever-threatened cultural fund to meet cultural obligations.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> "As examples, the "little kingdom" of Ugarit had a total population of ca. 32,000–33,000, with perhaps 8,000 in the town itself and the rest scattered over 150 villages. In the Persian era Jerusalem had no more than 3,000 inhabitants, out of approximately 30,000 in the province, although earlier it may have had a little over 10,000 inhabitants, again at perhaps 10 percent of the population. Even the largest Mesopotamian imperial centers could rarely muster more than 100,000." (Boer 2015, 178). It should be noted that Finkelstein maintains Jerusalem was essentially uninhabited during the Persian period, placing the population virtually at zero.

<sup>265</sup> "The Western concept of the terms market economy and surplus have been projected falsely onto ancient economies." (Sasson 2014, 118)

<sup>266</sup> Fiensy attests to the same dynamic: "The peasants and the ruling elites viewed the land and its labor in a very different way. The ruling class regarded their land and the peasants as income for themselves; the peasant saw his land and work

Again, as Sasson explains, a subsistence regime, or what he terms a survival subsistence strategy, is at odds with anything like a market-related strategy or system. The former seeks to mitigate risk through conservation of resources. Expansion, or the attaining of higher volumes of livestock in our case, is at odds with such an approach (2014, 31). Accurately gauging the carrying capacity of a given area is among the most essential tasks in animal husbandry still today. When one exceeds carrying capacity one risks the depletion of pasturage and thereby the viability of the flock or herd. The principle of carrying capacity, as Sasson shows, is also applicable to human populations, especially in subsistence survival strategies which do not have the advantages of modern technology. The environment, of which flock numbers and agricultural produce are factors, can support only finite populations. It is therefore in the interests of such populations to remain at levels below that supported by an environment's carrying capacity (2014, 35).

On the question of the relationship of pastoral nomads to sedentary agriculturalists, whereas the prevailing hypothesis has been that the former traded animal products with the latter for produce they could not acquire due to their nomadic way of life, feeding the fallacious idea of a specialised market economy,<sup>267</sup> Sasson maintains that the two existed simultaneously and to a large extent independently. Independence was maintained because pastoralists engaged in agriculture and agriculturalists engaged in pastoralism, and even as Finkelstein has maintained and as Sasson himself later emphasises (2014, 50-51), populations feasibly switched from one means of production to the other depending on what environmental factors dictated.

Sasson further addresses a two-fold bias which mainstream scholarship has against pastoralism. The first one results from inferences based on observations of pastoral communities in modern periods, the circumstances of which are entirely different when compared to those in antiquity. Secondly, there is an unconscious moral or cultural bias which arises from scholars who are themselves "sedentists and are descendants of many generations of settled people" where nomadism is viewed as uncouth and uncomfortable and therefore undesirable (2014, 46). And yet Sasson makes the case that, when viewed objectively, pastoralism is strategically preferable (2014, 47). We may ask the question: what is the single greatest mitigation against risk? The answer, which featured briefly in Boer's treatment of the transition to sedentary forms of agriculture, whether the risk is in the form of limited environmental capacity, unforeseen disaster like pest, drought, or marauding army, is mobility. In the face of any such risk, where risks are life-threatening, immobility means death (2014, 48). Sasson concludes by pointing to the prevalence of nomadic forms of life and the lacuna in the archaeological record based on the impermanence of the nomadic material record saying that:

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as the means of feeding his family and not as a business for profit. Peasants worked for subsistence. They were not trying to become wealthy or even comfortable. They wanted to feed themselves." (Fiensy 2014, 71)

<sup>267</sup> Another reason that this hypothesis has been uncritically accepted is because of studies on modern pastoral nomadic communities, many of which were forced to engaged and even be subsumed within market-related economies. The economic landscape of such situations is fundamentally different compared to antiquitous societies (2014, 41-42).

*“transhumance was a successful, if not the most successful, survival subsistence strategy in the Bronze and Iron Age. Most likely, it was prevalent among large sectors of the population, possibly larger than the sedentary sector. Archaeology is misleading due to the disproportional amount of evidence coming from sedentary sites compared to nomadic sites.”* (2014, 51)

In broad or general terms, there appears to be bias or an historical class antagonism between nomadic and sedentary peoples where the latter eventually coincide with ‘urban’ non-productive populations. Boer attempted to pose a similar question to that intimated by Sasson: why would people become sedentary when a nomadic lifestyle was strategically preferable? Not flippantly, one of Boer’s suggestions was because of the advent of alcohol. A more obvious answer, though admittedly for a very small percentage of the population, would be that people prefer sedentary forms of life only if they are guaranteed a means of appropriating a surplus from others to support this. Thus, they become unproductive, and are never compelled to be nomadic because they possess the means of re-appropriating a surplus others have produced. Having said this, Sasson maintains that, whether for pastoral-nomadic or sedentary communities, animal husbandry must be viewed through “the zooarchaeological evidence [which] show[s] an economic strategy that strived to minimize risks and sustain a long-term survival,” i.e. for the majority of the population, that of a survival subsistence strategy (2014, 64).

Returning to his findings, it seems the data Sasson uses in the first section of his 2014 study overlaps that of his 2008 study. To reiterate these, the assemblages represent both rural and urban contexts and a diverse geography in ancient Israel. Pertinent from this study is that out of 57 sites reviewed three quarters do not exceed sheep percentages of 67% which corresponds roughly to the 2:1 ratio based on Redding’s hypothesis (2014, 71, 73). Such a trend is consistent in the data yielded throughout the sites which indicates no proclivity toward sheep in urban areas as opposed to goats. In other words, where one might expect to find a higher proportion of sheep in urban areas, based on them being more lucrative and urban tendencies more extractive and less risk averse, the ratio is seemingly consistent in both urban and rural areas.

Of the 57 sites Sasson reviews, only 1 represents a sheep population of 100% and only an additional 3 above 80%, where these four sites also represent different geographical regions and social settings – Coastal Plane – Rural; Central Hill – Rural; Shephelah – Urban; Northern Negev – Fortress, (2014, 76). Data from a modern census on the Palestinian Mandate territory suggests two trends: a dramatic drop in the proportion of sheep in the modern period (due to lower reliance on wool since the industrial revolution) and a higher proportion of sheep in the Coastal Plane as compared to mountainous areas such as Galilee, Samaria and Jerusalem, attributed to superior pasturage in the Coastal Plane (2014, 78-79).

In considering the “strategies of caprine exploitation (for meat, milk or wool)” Sasson presents a similar argument as in his 2008 study regarding the culling of sub-adult males. Whereas the tendency is to interpret

prevalence of juvenile faunal remains as evidence of a high cull rate, suggesting primary exploitation, and by extension the provision of meat to a form of 'market' economy, Sasson arrives at the opposite conclusion, viz. sub-adult culling is practiced universally among subsistence pastoralists as a means of ensuring optimal heard size and performance (with regard to lactating ewes) (2014, 82-83).<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, while one may expect higher demand for high quality meat in urban (i.e. elite) vicinities, the data suggests no such tendency. There is fairly uniform practice of sub-adult culling across the geography of Bronze and Iron-age Israel at both urban and rural sites which not only negates the notion of higher demand for premium meat in urban areas but that of specialisation too (2014, 85).

It is perhaps worth noting that in his examination of bovine faunal remains Sasson sees a similar tendency. He clusters these assemblages in three groupings: those with low or relatively negligible cattle percentages, those with an average of 13%, and those with a relatively high percentage of 33%. Whereas one might expect the higher percentage assemblages to be at urban sites because of what might be imagined as intensified farming practices, this is not the case. Instead, as with caprine specimens, higher ratios are displayed on the lowlands (Northern Valley, Coastal Plane, and the Shephelah) where resources, water, and pasturage, are more plentiful (2014, 108, 113, 118). The tendency in previous studies was to interpret higher cattle percentages as representative of intensified agriculture since cattle were used almost exclusively as traction animals.

In summary, Sasson's findings are consistent with what he believes was a survival subsistence strategy for the period. The prevalence of sub-adult culling is not an indication of specialisation in meat production but of safeguarding to promote optimal heard size in accordance with this strategy. The data is not indicative of a higher concentration of sheep (as opposed to goats) or of sub-adult culling or of bovine specimens at urban centres, which may have indicated 'specialisation' or more intensified agricultural practices. Instead, the data suggests that the survival subsistence strategy was practiced fairly uniformly in the service of rural and urban areas. Indeed, Sasson's contention is that this strategy was prevalent through the Southern Levant for the duration of the Bronze and Iron-ages. Based on this, as well as what he interprets as a complete lack of specialisation, Sasson refutes the existence of anything like a market-related or market-based economy.

How then are we to interpret Sasson's findings within the theoretical framework provided by Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017) and in light of other scholarship covered thus far? Boer too testifies to the prevalence and resilience of the institutional form of subsistence-survival throughout the region and for much of its history. Given the geographical marginality of ancient Israel, that populations were of much lower density in

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<sup>268</sup> "Culling of sub-adults as well as mature animals is a coherent ecological mechanism in herd management that coincides with the survival subsistence strategy. The logic behind this mechanism was to refresh the herd and regulate its size in order to free pasturage and water for the females. Consequently, milk produced by females is diverted to the household consumption." (2014, 84).

antiquity, that the Southern Levant itself was sparsely populated, and given too Boer's insight that in the absence of extractive and erstwhile dominant regimes, the subsistence-survival institutional form proliferated, it seems Boer and Sasson's positions agree.

While Sasson's findings are consistent with the theoretical framework provided by Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017) in this respect, Boer's framework still posits the institutional form of the *polis-chōra* or an extractive urban centre, where Sasson's findings do not seem to support this. Without wishing to avoid the import of this finding there are a few possibilities as to why. One pertains to the relative marginality of the southern Levant already mentioned, as well as to the period under examination in Sasson's studies.<sup>269</sup> Data for Jerusalem during this period possibly would be inconclusive due simply to the lack of development during the early- to middle-iron Age. Another possibility which Sasson's study does not account for could reflect an interpretational difficulty regarding the data, namely that assemblages located in what are designated 'rural' areas may indeed represent remote and rural contexts but still represent herds owned or controlled by an urban centre. That is, apart from population size, sheep-goat ratio, as well as degree of exploitation, information pertaining to ownership or control of a herd in all of Sasson's assemblages is lacking. As we have seen, intensified areas of agriculture need not be, and in fact often were not, in close proximity to urban settlements. This was particularly true of Jerusalem during the late-Iron age and by the time of the Hellenistic period, since it is not well-endowed in its immediate vicinity with either plentiful agricultural land or suitable pasturage. In our consideration of Jerusalem as a *polis*, archaeological evidence suggests large flocks controlled or administered under the auspices of the temple were farmed in remote and rural parts of Judea and Galilee.

Before we consider this there is one last implication of Sasson's work worth noting. On average, three of every four assemblages considered in his research showed roughly two-thirds sheep population. As we have seen, it was desirable under harsh conditions to keep herds of mixed populations (sheep and goat) as this mitigated risk. Jursa himself mentioned that were it not for the material advantage presented in sheep, much higher proportions of goat might have been prevalent because of the resilience they provided. Sasson's research confirms this in citing the modern census on the Palestinian Mandate territory which showed a reversal of the sheep to goat ratio after the industrial revolution because of a decline in wool demand.

In light of this, where we do see examples of sheep populations at 100% or close to this, this should strike us as odd. Granted, in Sasson's research only a single population of the 57 assemblages showed such a demographic and only three in addition above 80% but, if we were allowed hypothetically to posit the existence of herds with such populations, it may suggest two things. Firstly, whoever owned or managed them would by

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<sup>269</sup> It is unlikely that extensive intensified forms of agriculture, whether pastoral or vegetal, were prevalent in Bronze-Age Israel. During the early- to middle-Iron Age, based on the work of Finklestein, greater agricultural intensification would have been associated with the Omride dynasty in the northern kingdom, while only in the late-Iron Age in Jerusalem.

implication be far less concerned with risk mitigation than the average subsistence pastoralist. Secondly, and this is a more tentative suggestion since Sasson's research does not explicitly support it, given the supposed benefit of sheep over goats (whether due to wool or more fatty meat), a herd consisting exclusively of sheep might suggest a form of specialisation, that the concerns of its owners are 'commercial' or at least more intensified as opposed to the aim of a subsistence survivalist. Alternately, the motivation for the presence of herds consisting solely of sheep need not be commercial in the conventional sense. We explore this in the next section, viz. the effect on caprine husbandry of the Jerusalem temple in the first century CE. Ultimately, the first century CE is our concern because of the New Testament material under discussion. But from an empirical viewpoint, this period is also important since the two most productive periods for Jerusalem were the late-Iron Age, Iron II C, the period covered in the study by Sapir-Hen et al. (2016), and the early-Roman period. Therefore, if we were to find evidence of higher levels of animal exploitation it would be in these two periods.

#### 7.4.2 Faunal remains at Iron-age Jerusalem

We begin this section by reviewing a study by Sapir-Hen, Gadot and Finkelstein (2016) which examines faunal assemblages at two sites in Iron-Age Judah and makes inferences on caprine exploitation in the context of urban-rural relations.<sup>270</sup> It is worth noting that the period under discussion in their study covers that just before the Babylonian destruction of the first temple, i.e. the second most productive period in Jerusalem's history prior to the First Revolt. This period represents a consolidation of the northern Israelite elite with their southern Judahite neighbours where the former brought with them more advanced technologies. This applies to literacy, for example, but probably also corresponded to more advanced, and more exploitative, agricultural technologies. Bear in mind too that Judah, in the wake of the destruction of the northern kingdom, would have become a vassal state of Assyria and, as a result, have added pressures placed on both the ruling elite as well as the general population to provide tribute.

By reviewing data retrieved at the Western Wall Plaza and Tell Moza the authors draw insights on urban-rural relationships and "sociopolitical mechanisms" in Iron Age Levant (Iron Age IIB–C) (2016, 103). The data pertains to the types of animal domestication present and degree of their exploitation. As the authors state, the "study of animal economy is related to the intensity of agricultural activity, prevalence of redistribution systems, and settlement hierarchy...[which] in turn are linked to socioeconomic and sociopolitical conditions." (2016, 104) A study of animal economy and the insights thereby gained help to draw conclusions about broader sociopolitical and socioeconomic relationships.<sup>271</sup> The stated intention of the study is furthermore to "formulate

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<sup>270</sup> Sapir-Hen, L, Gadot, Y, and Finkelstein, I. (2016) "Animal Economy in a Temple City and Its Countryside: Iron Age Jerusalem as a Case Study" in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 375 (May 2016), pp. 103-118.

<sup>271</sup> The authors state that "the Neo-Assyrian Empire of the first millennium B.C.E. indisputably featured an unprecedented degree of specialization and government-organized exploitation of the landscape...including the expansion of city life and the establishment of specialized production sites in the countryside. A network of territorial

an integrated picture of the economic relations of Iron Age IIB-C Jerusalem with its hinterland” where, upon examining data on exploitation of domestic animals, the results are “incorporated into a discussion of political and economic interactions between the capital [Jerusalem] and the rural population” (2016, 104-105).

According to the authors, a centralized redistributive economy may be inferred by the “different patterns” of meat consumption (2016, 104). Along this line of thinking, and in citing a number of similar studies, the authors predict that “the urban elite of Jerusalem (i.e. “consumers”) would receive meat through a distribution chain and would have scarce contact with its producers.” (2016, 104) The authors explain that while the immediate surrounds of ancient Jerusalem were inhospitable, areas to the northwest, west and southwest are dominated by the Soreq and Repha'im valleys which were the “food baskets of ancient Jerusalem.” (2016, 104)

The authors state that Jerusalem, as capital of the vassal state Judah, experienced significant growth in the late eighth and seventh centuries attended by significant economic centralization. This coincided with the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BCE, whereupon some of the ruling elite fled south and were consolidated at Jerusalem. Finkelstein is of the opinion that they brought with them more advanced technologies, e.g. around literacy (see Appendix B). It is this consolidation of the ruling elite at Jerusalem, together with its positioning as a now vassal state of Assyria, which facilitated the economic growth and intensification. Accompanying this growth was a reorganization of the economic means and mode of production. Estates are established in the vicinity of Jerusalem presumably for more specialized farming, i.e. movement toward monoculture, while we see large portions of the Repha'im and Soreq valleys devoted to single or specialized crop outputs (2016, 104).

In terms of their methodology, the authors designate archeologically active sites within four ‘tiers’ in and around Jerusalem. Tier one consists of Jerusalem itself; tier two consists of the centres of Tel Moza and Ramat Rahel where the former functioned as a “redistribution and cultic center” (2016, 104-105);<sup>272</sup> tier three consists of a number of villages, the relationships or activities of which are not stipulated while; tier four consists of about 33 “farmsteads,” most which at their centres have a single building and; tier five consists of “isolated wine presses, a small number of olive presses, and tumuli” (2016, 105). According to Greenhut and De Groot, say the authors, Tel Moza operated as a “provincial administrative center” in support of Jerusalem in the seventh and eighth centuries (2016, 106). Greenhut and De Groot (2009) noted that “the amount of grain that could be stored in the

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kingdoms and estates assured the flow of surplus goods and labor to the imperial capital cities. The influence of imperial rule is also evident in the animal economy of the Levant, where Assyrians, and possibly also the Egyptians, of the late seventh century B.C.E. promoted the production of secondary sheep products, which were transported outside of the country as trade goods or paid as taxes”. (2016, 103)

<sup>272</sup> The authors go on to say that Tel Moza’s “location in the landscape, the number and size of the silos, the well-built structures, and the epigraphic finds all point to the site’s role as a collection center of agricultural products for Jerusalem’s non-productive population” while Ramat Rahel was a “royal Judahite administrative complex” functioning as a collection point for tax and cultic activity (2016, 105).

silos and hole-mouth vessels greatly exceeded the requirements needed to sustain the local inhabitants of the site. From this they infer that the surplus grain was stored therein and then delivered to Jerusalem.” (2016, 106)

To move to the specific finds of the study, the faunal assemblage at Tel Moza consists of 2 262 NISP (number of identified specimens),<sup>273</sup> while the Western Wall Plaza consists of 2 451 NISP. Both sites are dominated by the same species of livestock. The Tel Moza assemblage comprises about 30% cattle and 68% caprine (sheep and goats) and about 1% pig and different wild animals (2016, 106). A somewhat different proportion of the species is present at the Western Wall Plaza with cattle making up about 8% and caprine about 90% (2016, 107). The study shows that the ratio of sheep to goats differs between sites and also between strata at each site. The eighth-century “stratum V” at Tel Moza represents a ratio of 55% sheep to 45% goat while the number of sheep decreases in the seventh-century “stratum IV,” represented by 32% sheep and 68% goat. Interestingly at the Western Wall Plaza there is a higher occurrence of goat in earlier material and a roughly equal ratio in the later material. However as there appears to have been intermingled debris between strata the authors suggest that the NISPs at Tel Moza might contain a higher proportion of sheep in the latter period (2016, 107).

Determining the age of an animal’s termination by the degree of epiphyseal closure indicates the nature of its exploitation. Juvenile remains suggest primary exploitation (consumption, sacrifice or both) while adult remains suggest secondary exploitation (milk and wool, and in the case of bovines, traction) (2016, 107).<sup>274</sup> Among caprine specimens at the Western Wall Plaza, there is a high cull rate at the ages of between 12 and 30 months which is indicative of primary exploitation (i.e. meat consumption) (2016, 107). By contrast, at Tel Moza there is a relatively high survivorship rate with 85% surviving past 18 months and up to 70% passed 45 months, indicative of secondary exploitation for biproducts milk and wool (2016, 107). Bone density measurements of specimens also indicates “different economic goals at each site” (2016, 107). The relatively high survival rate among cattle at Tel Moza is consistent with secondary exploitation for agriculture, i.e. traction (2016, 108). Although cattle at both sites show a high survival rate, Tel Moza represented a much higher proportion of cattle specimens of up to 30%. This is consistent with the theory that Tel Moza, situated nearer the Soreq Valley with its extensive storage system, was an intensive agricultural site. It is also consistent with other sites known to have been agriculturally intensive which show high proportions of cattle specimens (2016, 108).

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<sup>273</sup> See Appendix E which explains the features of this method.

<sup>274</sup> Sapir-Hen, Gadot, Finkelstein (2016) also find evidence for latifundialisation as early as the eighth-century BCE based on the presence of estates in the vicinity of Jerusalem at the time, as well as large portions of the Soreq and Repha'im valleys being devoted to single or specialized crop outputs (2016, 104-105). Sapir-Hen, Gadot, Finkelstein (2014; 2016) and Hartman, Bar-Oz, Bouchnick and Reich (2013) reveal a high prevalence of juvenile sheep specimens at Jerusalem as indicative of their primary exploitation and both studies indicate a large proportion (perhaps majority) of these needing to be pastured outside of Jerusalem, i.e. exploitation of juvenile caprids outside of Jerusalem for the purpose of temple sacrifice and consumption (2016, 112; 2013, 4369). Lapin has two studies (2017a, 2017b) in which he uses a hypothetical model to postulate the size and consumptive habits of the Jerusalem temple. He too suggests a high level of caprine exploitation and importation (2017b, 448-449).

One can already see that, while not necessarily contradicting Sasson's conclusions, inferences based on the data presented by Sapir-Hen et al. supports the position of Jerusalem as an extractive urban centre, perhaps mainly because their study focuses on a productive period in Jerusalem's history. The Western Wall Plaza indicates, by the high cull rate and prevalence of upper body parts which are preferred for eating, exploitation for consumption. The objection which Sasson had raised to the prevalence of high culling as indicative of greater consumption of meat is not valid here because those residing in Jerusalem, the consumers of the specimens in this case, were members of the non-productive elite therefore culling, as a feature of subsistence survival strategy, would not have applied to them. The authors raise the question of whether such livestock was cultivated at the site or instead in the rural hinterland and brought to Jerusalem specifically for consumption (2016, 112). Other sites previously excavated such as the "Ophel" and the Giv'ati Parking Lot, both in close proximity to the Western Wall, indicate similar patterns of meat consumption. These apparently housed the elite of Jerusalem who preferred and could afford choice parts of young caprine animals (2016, 111-112).

As to the question of supply, the authors postulate a source somewhere in the rural hinterland, one of the main reasons being that there was little arable land or land suitable for pasturage (apart from a small portion in the Kidron valley) to support large herds in and around Jerusalem. The authors go on to say that the employment of "specialized herders of caprines [by the Jewish elite] is well attested in other studies," citing Davidovich (2015) and Hartman et al. (2013), and that attendant to this was the practice of importing caprine specimens for sacrifice to Jerusalem (2016, 112). Based on these assertions and their own results, the authors support the position that the ruling elite did not personally participate in raising the livestock they consumed (2016, 112).

The authors state that while archeological evidence for supply and distribution patterns pertaining to the temple in Jerusalem is lacking, based on the distribution patterns discerned at other temple sites, it may be deduced that Jerusalem functioned in a similar way, redistributing meat to the elite housed at sites such as the Western Wall Plaza, "Ophal" and the Giv'ati Parking Lot (2016, 112). Importantly, the authors indicate that a preference for sheep both in Judah and in the former northern kingdom in Iron Age IIB-C is consistent with Assyrian domination and aligns with the requirement to pay tax in wool (2016, 112). Against this background, they answer the question as to the apparent higher frequency of goat at Tel Moza. They suggest that Tel Moza was something of a production site where "higher quality sheep were probably transferred to Jerusalem and the temple," therefore accounting for a lower prevalence of sub-adult males and sheep at Tel Moza (2016, 112).<sup>275</sup> Indeed, in their concluding remarks and acknowledgement that both sites were part of a single socioeconomic

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<sup>275</sup> "It is important to remember that a faunal assemblage represents the meat-consumption refuse rather than production waste—that is, what was actually eaten at the site and ended up in the garbage. Tel Moza stands out for its secondary supportive role as the source of meat for the capital. In other words, the low sheep frequencies do not imply that Tel Moza did not raise wool for tax; rather, it reflects local meat consumption after higher-quality sheep were probably transferred to Jerusalem and the temple there." (2016, 112)

system (i.e. the Western Wall Plaza representing the consumptive city and Tel Moza the distributive centre supplying that city) the authors state the likelihood of Tel Moza serving as a royal granary as well as a supplier of sheep to Jerusalem and its temple (2016, 114).

In the study by Sapir-Hen, Gadot and Finkelstein, we have considered some archeozoological data as potential evidence for what might be termed an exploitative relationship of Jerusalem and its temple with its rural hinterland, in as far as the production of caprine populations was concerned. As pointed out in their study, such a relationship is consistent with the operation of other major temple sites in ancient Southwest Asia. We now consider a model presented by Hayim Lapin (2017a, 2017b) based not on archaeological data but on a reconstruction of the consumptive patterns of the second temple in Jerusalem using literary sources.<sup>276</sup>

Josephus took for granted that Pentateuchal laws were followed in first-century Jerusalem. In other words, these requirements, in conjunction with population estimates for first-century Jerusalem and surrounds, give us some idea of the volume of animal sacrifice required (Lapin 2017a, 241). It is worth noting that Lapin describes the calculations which inform his model as “minimizing,” (2017a, 242) i.e. as conservative, so as to avoid exaggerated or inflated figures. Before detailing his model, he writes that “Jerusalem and its Temple provide a case study of a consumption-driven regional economy that must be taken into account when theorizing about economic production and growth in the Roman world.” (2017a, 242) Lapin indicates the significant transition undergone by Jerusalem and its hinterland from the Persian to Roman periods saying that “the population of Jerusalem itself and with its basic subsistence needs grew by more than twenty times.” (2017a, 247).<sup>277</sup>

Citing Josephus and Philo, the volume of estimated animal sacrifice in the first century should also include offerings to Rome which was “two sheep and one bull daily” (2017a, 247). Even without accounting for this the total area required to sustain Jerusalem’s population and the temple cult was an area more than 80% in size of what had been the Persian province of Yehud (roughly 1900 sq km) of which half provisioned the temple (2017a, 247). Lapin maintains that whereas in the Persian period, the sourcing and provision of mandatory sacrifices offered by the priests posed a challenge, in the Roman period it was provision of animals for the votive offerings by the populace (including pilgrims) which posed the greatest challenge. Hence, Lapin suggests the ‘importing’ of livestock from regions further afield became the only feasible way to meet this demand (2017a, 248).

Analysis of faunal remains of the Kidron Valley (Hartman et al. 2013) just south of the Old City in Jerusalem

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<sup>276</sup> Lapin, H. 2017a. “Temple, Cult and Consumption in Second Temple Jerusalem” in *Expressions of Cult in the Southern Levant in the Greco-Roman Period: Manifestations in Text and Material Culture*. Tal, O. and Weiss, Z. (Eds). Turnhout: Brepols; Lapin, H. 2017b. “Feeding the Jerusalem Temple: Cult, Hinterland, and Economy in First-Century Palestine” in *Journal for Ancient Judaism*. Vol.8 (Issue 3). pp.410–453. Schöningh: Brill.

<sup>277</sup> Finkelstein, perhaps controversially (but to my mind persuasively), maintains that Persian-era Jerusalem was relatively uninhabited (see Appendix B).

indicate that at least a third of caprine species from this sample were grazed in desert areas at least 20km from Jerusalem (2017a, 249).<sup>278</sup> Although we have seen that inferences as to the nature and levels of exploitation in such cases can be tentative, Lapin indicates that the “age and gender profile” suggests “maximizing meat production rather than wool or dairy” (2017a, 249) and furthermore that such flocks were managed by herders rather than “domestic holders” (2017a, 249). On this basis, he suggests that “whether organized commercially or administratively, herders raised animals [in outlying areas] for specific markets in Jerusalem” (2017a, 249).

In a more extensive presentation, Lapin again bases his model on “minimum requirements” but says nevertheless that the Jerusalem temple would have “mobilized resources comparable to those of a city” (Lapin 2017b, 410).<sup>279</sup> He continues by saying that “[i]f we cannot reconstruct anything like a history of the Temple, we can at least model it” (2017b, 411).<sup>280</sup> From here, we then begin to ask the question – what was its relationship to the people of Jerusalem, its hinterland, in Judea and Galilee?<sup>281</sup> The reason Lapin prefers the application of a hypothetical and heuristic model is that, in his opinion, “very little of the evidence for economic history, even papyrological evidence from Egypt, is of the quality, density, and consistency that would allow us to do [the] kind of empirical work” one might expect from a ‘hard sciences’ approach (2017b, 411).

Having said that, in terms of the required land (both for agriculture and pasturage), Lapin offers projections based on low, medium and high population figures for Jerusalem for the Roman period where low is at 16700 and high is at 33400 (2017b, 416). On this basis, if one were to imagine concentric circles around Jerusalem these would have to extend outward between 16-22 km to include sufficient cultivable land to support just the population of Jerusalem. As Lapin points out, the notion of concentric circles is representational since most of Jerusalem’s immediate surrounds are unsuited for either agriculture or pasturage. In reality, based on Lapin’s population estimates, 830-1600 sq.km of cultivable land interspersed throughout the greater regions of Judea and Galilee would have been required to sustain Jerusalem’s population.<sup>282</sup> Ideally, we should want to be able

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<sup>278</sup> I consider the study by Hartman et al. (2013) in more detail later.

<sup>279</sup> Lapin, H. 2017b. “Feeding the Jerusalem Temple: Cult, Hinterland, and Economy in First-Century Palestine” in *Journal for Ancient Judaism*. Vol.8 (Issue 3). pp.410-453. Schönningh: Brill.

<sup>280</sup> Perhaps to elaborate on the rationale behind Lapin’s approach, we could use an illustration from historical Jesus research. Scholars of the historical Jesus use various criteria to discern what might reliably be called historical data about the life and ministry of Jesus. What might be thought of as a bare minimum in terms of historical data suggests something that few dispute – a man called Jesus of Nazareth, about whom a genre of literature we call ‘gospels’ was produced, existed roughly 2000 years ago. Likewise, with regards to the second temple, as a bare minimum, we can say too that the temple existed. Asking the questions: what relationship did the temple enjoy with the people of the area and what effect did it have on them allows us to begin to understand how it might have functioned.

<sup>281</sup> “We can think through the resource and population parameters that would have gone into keeping a working Temple functioning, and consider how such an imagined Temple might have been affected by and in turn affected the regional economy, and consider, too, the cultural and political implication of an institution like the Temple operating in Jerusalem.” (2017b, 411)

<sup>282</sup> The range is based on a consideration of his lower figure of 83,000 hectares and higher figure of 159,000. There is a slight variance if one uses the diameter of Lapin’s concentric circles – 16km (lower) yields 800 sq.km, while 44km yields 1520 sq.km. The latter is in fact the figure given in the publication by Lapin discussed previously (2017a, 247).

to determine what percentage of total cultivable land this represented in the first century CE. Though it may not be an acceptable comparison, we can consider such proportions for the modern state of Israel, at least to give us a sense of this. We see that even by today's standards, on the basis of the World Bank's figure, that 29,7% of modern-day Israel is arable,<sup>283</sup> that the total land mass of modern-day Israel is about 21671 sq.km,<sup>284</sup> the higher figure of 1600 sq.km represents as much as a quarter of the total arable land.<sup>285</sup>

In his second study, Lapin takes into account that the Roman period, unlike those which preceded it, introduced a certain level of monetization in the economies of first-century Judea and Galilee though, as he points out, these territories were not fully integrated in the larger economy of the Empire. With respect to this monetization, Lapin employs the notion of GDP. Without wishing to undermine the heuristic value of his efforts in this regard, one wonders if this is applicable to antiquitous economies and in particular to that of first-century Judea and Galilee. Behind the concept is the notion of tangible, or measurable, value added to the economy of a region or society. An example of the concept's shortfall is how to interpret holocaust offerings which constitute a large percentage of those offered at the temple but apparently add little material value to its economy (2017b, 439).

Having said this, Lapin's estimates, for volumes of animals consumed or required by the temple for sacrifice, are as follows. Based on Pentateuchal prescriptions, at a minimum the temple would have provisioned over 1000 caprids and 100 bovine annually for mandatory offerings (2017b, 444). Lapin acknowledges that the population in Jerusalem peaked in the first half of the first century and, with it, the number of pilgrims offering sacrifice at various festivals throughout the year. Of these votive offerings, Lapin estimates 15 500 birds and 27 000 lambs annually would have been sacrificed (2017b, 444). One can see that according to Lapin's estimates, voluntary sacrifice in the case of lambs is 27 times that of the minimum mandatory sacrifices of caprids and sits at an astounding average of about 74 a day.

The next question to address is how this massive volume was provisioned. According to Lapin, if these figures are accurate, "the amount of grazing land required solely to raise animals for purposes of sacrifice would have come to the astonishing figure of 43,000–80,000 hectares (430–800 square kilometers)" (2017b, 445).<sup>286</sup> Lapin cites Barukh's (1998) study which suggests only a paltry 4-6 km of the area immediately outside Jerusalem was

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<sup>283</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.AGRI.ZS?locations=IL> (accessed on 20 November 20, 2024).

<sup>284</sup> <https://embassies.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/Maps/Pages/Israel-Size-and-Dimension.aspx#:~:text=The%20total%20area%20of%20the,km%20is%20land%20area>. (accessed on 20 November 2024)

<sup>285</sup> 29,7% of the total land mass which is 6436.29 sq.km. One imagines, given the enormous advances modern-day Israel has made in technologies related to agriculture, that the area of available arable land in antiquity would have been significantly less.

<sup>286</sup> As a rough indicator, the pasturage required for one ewe per year is one hectare. This figure is taken from a South African context which, technically, is semi-arid. Higher estimates of pasturage would apply to regions with higher rainfall, where one hectare may support 5-7 ewes. Needless to say, estimates based on the former equation align better with the climate of ancient Israel. Lapin's estimate works out to 0.66 hectares per sheep (2017, 243).

suitable for either agriculture or pasturage given its rocky and spartan nature. In light of this, the vast bulk of the 430-800 sq.km of land required for pasturage, just for votive offerings, would have been sought further away. To repeat the exercise above, using the modern state of Israel as a comparison, if we combine the arable land required only to sustain Jerusalem's population with that required for the rearing of the volume of livestock indicated by Lapin, using his higher estimate of 800 sq.km, we see that in terms of the available cultivable land in modern Israel, a whopping 37.29% of this would be required to sustain Jerusalem and its temple complex.

In the study discussed previously by Lapin he cites the quite unique research of Hartman et al. (2013).<sup>287</sup> Though the findings in Hartman's study are based on only one assemblage, this assemblage was of a significant volume of specimens and spanning a relatively long period over the first century CE. At least 37% of sheep specimens of this assemblage were deemed to have come from desert areas more than 20km east of Jerusalem (2017a, 249). As a result of the high consumptive demands of Jerusalem and its temple, Lapin finds that "the urban population of Jerusalem will have found itself competing to gain a share of the productive resources surrounding the city with both the consumption needs of rural residents of Judaea and those of the Temple itself." (2017b, 448) There is "considerable evidence" indicating farmsteads within Judea went into disuse after the revolt of 66 AD which may correlate with an unprecedented drop in demand for supply after the start of the First Revolt and then with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 AD (2017b, 449).

To my mind, Lapin does not do justice to the findings of the study by Hartman et al. and so it is worth considering these in more detail. Garbage deposits between the reign of Herod the Great and the destruction of the temple which had accumulated on the western slopes of the Kidron valley, outside the walls of the old city, were found to contain a large faunal assemblage (2013, 4370). Through isotopic analysis the authors were able to determine the provenance of the caprine specimens specifically whether they originated in areas of higher or lower rainfall (2013, 4370-4371). Lapin had rightly said that at least 37% of the caprine specimens of the assemblage originated in desert regions. In fact, according to the study, up to over a half of the specimens in the assemblage originated in desert areas (2013, 4374).

Again, based on isotopic analysis and the amount of rainfall required in the area of provenance to support the caprine specimens, the nearest matching habitat is no less than 20km east of Jerusalem which importantly is outside the ambit of a day's journey (2013, 4374). Additionally, according to the authors, this area of the Judean desert would have supported only a small percentage of the population size indicated by the data, meaning that the provenance of the bulk of the specimens originating in desert areas would have lain even further afield outside the province of Judea entirely. This according to the authors is "strong evidence" of "large-scale

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<sup>287</sup> Hartman, G.; Bar-Oz, G.; Bouchnick, R.; and Reich, R. (2013) "The Pilgrimage Economy of Early Roman Jerusalem (1st century BCE–70 CE) Reconstructed from the  $\delta^{15}\text{N}$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  Values of Goat and Sheep Remains." *Journal of Archaeological Science*. Vol.40, pp. 4369–76.

organized inter-provincial trade” of sheep and goat so as to meet the high demand created by Jerusalem and the temple (2013, 4374).

The authors see this trend as a means of supplying not just the demands of the temple cult but the local economy of Jerusalem in its totality. Whereas Lapin had tenuously cited references from the Synoptics and John for the sale of animals at the temple or in Jerusalem to support votive offerings, Hartman et al. cite Leviticus 22:27 and Deuteronomy 17:1, suggesting that personal animals may frequently have been disqualified on the basis of inferiority and that the temple provisioned their own, superior animals by the aforementioned means of outsourcing large-scale sheep production over widespread parts of Judea and Galilee (2013, 4374).

### 7.5 Conclusion

There are a number of salient points we would do well to recap before proceeding to the next chapter. From the research we have consulted, it is clear that temples in ancient Southwest Asia vastly increased the demand for the production of caprine specimens. The volume of sheep required by the Jerusalem temple in the first century, on the basis of Lapin’s model, even by today’s standards is staggering. This number translates into the commensurate area of pasturable land required to support such volumes. Given the sparsity of arable land in general, but particularly around Jerusalem, it is fair to assume that the means of production related to temple caprine husbandry encroached upon or, at the very least, competed with what we might term subsistence pastoralists. And yet we know, again based on the data and information covered, that members of this sector also serviced, i.e. provided labour for, the means of caprine production attendant to temple complexes.

Both Jursa (2007) and Kozuh (2014) attest to the fact that, at least in the Neo-Babylonian period, hired shepherds were of West-Semitic origin. There are examples in the papyri presented by Kloppenborg (2010) that tenants in agricultural leases were sometimes designated as “Judeans of descent”. It is possible that this term connotes a degree of inferiority or stigmatisation, similar to that of the term “Persian of descent”, which eventually connoted legal inferiority, as well as that of the somewhat derogatory “Canaanite” of the LXX, which designated merchants and, in the case of Zechariah 11 (as we go on to see), sheep merchants.

With the widescale prevalence of latifundia in first-century Judea and Galilee, we saw how shifting and changing means of production impinged upon and disrupted, not only the means of subsistence survival of the peasantry, but labour patterns in general where, somewhat intentionally, this was designed to co-opt labour into new and extractive means of production in service of the elite. It seems more and more clear that a similar process, with similar effects attendant to the animal husbandry sector, was at play in first-century Judea and Galilee. The sheer volume of sheep required by the Jerusalem temple and the population of Jerusalem itself resulted in this changed means of caprine production. Not only was this sheep supply pastured throughout Judea and Galilee because of the vast area required, but a new division of labour, new labour relations, were

required to function within this intensified form of animal husbandry. It was common, not only to the Jerusalem temple, for temple and aristocracy to acquire vast numbers of caprine heads which they nevertheless could not pasture or shepherd themselves. Much like the absentee estate owner so replete in the ancient sources, this stock had to be leased to a form of broker or middleman whose responsibility it was to raise dividends on the herds as prescribed by contractual quota. These proportions usually represent two-thirds of the flocks' productive capacity, a ratio common to the vegetal agricultural sector. Guarantees and penalties were normally also contractually in place to ensure that said dividends were provided and to mitigate against livestock loss. Particularly in this last instance, these conditions or penalties devolved to the hired shepherd who, much like the day or wage labourer in the vegetal sector, represents the lowest rung in the whole transactional arrangement.

The debate in the case of the Eanna temple over primary or secondary exploitation, i.e. whether increased sheep production was motivated by the desire for wool or meat, is not definitive for this study. What is of ultimate significance is the strong evidence of the production of sheep in high volumes attendant to temple complexes, regardless of whether this was motivated by primary or secondary exploitation. To my mind, given our reiteration that concepts like surplus, profit and trade (in a commercial sense) were completely foreign to the ancients, it seems far more likely that intensified forms of caprine production resulted from high volumes of animal required for cultic sacrifice with wool as an important and valued by-product.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: EXEGESIS

### 8.1 Seeds of Sabotage

As a prelude to an exegesis of the pastoral parables I have selected a handful of Synoptic parables to illustrate, in a very cursory way, the theoretical approach we have thus far developed. Essentially, there are two aspects of the parables brought to the fore by such an approach. The first is the material means of production attendant to the context of a particular parable. In the parables which follow, these will not always be articulated explicitly (that was the task of much of this study thus far) but the material means of production will always be front of mind. As such, we are better attuned to class antagonisms and class conflicts which arise out of the material means of production, the second aspect of importance, as well as the various forms of resistance enlisted in response to these.

#### 8.1.1 The Parable of the Weeds/Tares (Matthew 13:24-43)

The protagonist/antagonist<sup>288</sup> is the *οικοδεσποτης* who has, at his disposal, a retinue of slaves (*δουλοι*) whose labour he uses on his estate (Matt.13:27). It is commonly accepted that the weed referred to in this parable, *ζιζανιον*, is the weed which is sown in his field by an enemy (*εχθρος*) at night (Matt.13:25). *ζιζανιον* is a difficult term since, as Davies and Allison indicate, it appears only here in Matthew (Davies and Allison 2004, 412). Normally, however, it is taken to mean darnel or false wheat (Latin: *lolium temulentum* – the name itself has connotations of deceitfulness) (2004, 412; Keener 1999, 530 [Epub]). Scholarship is divided as to whether the interpretation of the parable which follows (Matt.13:37-41) is original to Jesus and to the parable itself (Carson 1984, 315). The single most basic reason it cannot be is that, like the interpretation of the parable of the sower, it is a spiritualisation too far removed from the material realities of the parable's original context.

Also sometimes known as false grain, or false wheat, darnel is the bane of wheat producers even sometimes still today. The reason for this is its very close resemblance to real wheat and the fact that it is poisonous and, in certain cases, even deadly. The danger the weed poses is that, without knowing, it can be mistaken for wheat, harvested, threshed, and consumed, sometimes with dire consequences. The ease with which the darnel and wheat are distinguished once both have matured is debatable. Keener, for example, says that on maturing it is possible to distinguish between and separate darnel from wheat, but then also cites its preservation in some Egyptian tombs, suggesting its easy and inadvertent mixture with wheat (Keener 1999, 531, 543 [Epub]). On the one hand certain features are meant to distinguish darnel at the point of maturity: grains which are black rather than brown; ears which stand upright and do not droop like wheat which are heavier when ripe. In any

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<sup>288</sup> The central figure or 'main character' of the parable can be either protagonist or antagonist depending on which values are vested in him by the reader/hearer. Almost without exception we tend to vest him with positive values. Using class as an hermeneutic inverts those values and thereby often reverses the meaning of the parable.

event, the perniciousness of the weed lay in the potential risk.

Thus there is an irony in the parable of the weeds which undermines its traditional import. The traditional lesson or moral gleaned from the parable is either a.) that, in an eschatological sense, judgement of the righteous and unrighteous must wait until the close of the age or b.) that discernment and patience (perhaps even in a contemplative sense) must be exercised in judging between the supposedly righteous and unrighteous. The irony which would have been apparent to the original hearers of the parable is precisely that the wealthy landowner is not able to distinguish the weeds from the wheat, for this was conceivably not possible and, in any case, potentially very risky should some darnel go undetected. The reality then is that once the darnel is sown, the field and whatever wheat it produces, are ruined. Consider, for example, the comments by Beasley-Murray (1986, 369 n.66) who cites numerous instances of agricultural sabotage of such nature and even one of an evicted tenant in Ireland who, to get revenge for his eviction, sowed the field with wild oats. It is likely for this reason that intentionally sowing darnel in field was a punishable crime under Roman law (1999, 530 [Epub]).

Already we get a sense of what can only have been the original context of the parable. The fact that the οἰκοδεσπότης is the protagonist/antagonist (but see proponents of an earlier version of the parable ending at Matthew 13:26) as well as the mention of slaves (δουλοῖ) signals immediately that we are dealing with an estate. It is entirely conceivable that a member of the peasantry, e.g. someone acting at the behest of another tenant, or a disgruntled labourer whose family may have farmed land now converted to an estate, is the 'enemy' (εχθρός) mentioned by the land-owner. Such action fits well within the framework provided by Boer and Petterson and Scott as one of resistance to forms of exploitation, viz. as an act of vengeance or sabotage. The darnel is weaponised. It is a more subtle, first-century agricultural equivalent of a Molotov cocktail.

#### 8.1.2 The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31–32, Mark 4:30–32, Luke 13:18–19)

In light of this reading of the parable of the weeds, in which we see an act of sabotage performed using an invasive and potentially destructive weed we are next, in the Synoptic corpus, presented with the parable of the mustard seed. Far removed from contemporary and heavenly interpretations, in which the mustard seed represents the general benevolence of God's kingdom and care, we make a case in what follows to see the mustard, in a similar vein, as a destructive agent of sabotage.

Van Eck (2013) and Crossan (1973)<sup>289</sup> have both treated aspects of the subversiveness of the mustard seed, its image and hence that of the parable. It has, since Pliny, been acknowledged as a highly destructive plant and one which wreaks disastrous effects on a crop should one's field fall prey to a mustard seed invasion. The

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<sup>289</sup> Van Eck, E. (2013) "When Kingdoms are Kingdoms no more: A Social-Scientific Reading of the Parable of the Mustard Seed," *Acta Theologica*. 2013 Vol.33 (2), pp.226-254; Crossan, J. D. (1973) "The Seed Parables of Jesus," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 92, No. 2, 1973, pp. 244-266;

reason for this is its rapid propagation and prolific spreading which soon renders a field inarable.

Against Van Eck who favours the version in Luke/Gos.Thom. as being original, Mark's version is preferred as earlier. In the socio-economic context we have provided, and in light of what is known about mustard historically, it is completely nonsensical for someone to sow mustard in their own field thereby ruining it. Instead, Mark's more general "when sown on the ground" (Mk.4:31) is to be favoured, i.e. more specifically, when sown on the ground of an adversary.<sup>290</sup> Thus, in the same way that darnel was sown in the field of an enemy or adversary – never in one's own field – mustard was used as an agent of sabotage to render the field of a foe uncultivable. Consider however that Gos.Thom. uses the phrase "tilled soil" (Gos.Thom. 20) which may provide another interpretive insight. Logically, the mustard would be far more effective as a means of sabotaging once the field has been tilled. If the saboteur is able to surreptitiously scatter mustard seed between the time the ground is tilled and good seed sown or shortly thereafter this would guarantee maximum efficiency.<sup>291</sup>

### 8.1.3 The Parable of the Leaven/Yeast (Matthew 13:33, Luke 13:20-21)

Jülicher was among the first to propose that the parable of the leaven or yeast be paired with the parable of the mustard seed. In so doing, together with the vast majority of modern scholarship since, he understood the action of the woman and the meaning or symbolism of the yeast positively. For example, Viviano, interprets the action of the woman and the symbolism of the yeast positively, saying "here Jesus uses leaven positively, as a symbol for the power of God." (Viviano 2005, 656)

The interpretative key in the parable is the verb *εγκρυπτω* (from which we get the English *encrypt*, to knowingly or intentionally hide or conceal). This suggests, if not obviously indicates, surreptitious activity. If the purpose or intent of the parable was to communicate the spontaneous and rapid growth of the yeast as representative of God's kingdom, why not use the Greek for "mix" which our English translations use? The noun *φύραμα* occurs five times in the New Testament and derives from the verb *φύρω* which in fact does not appear in the New Testament. But the noun *φύραμα* occurs four times, once reference to the mixing of clay (Romans 9:21) while the remaining four with reference to the mixing of leaven/yeast with dough (Romans 11:16; 1 Corinthians 5:6, 7;

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<sup>290</sup> Crossan also contends that the "biblical allusions" in Matthew and Luke (Q) "represent a later addition to an earlier version of the parable" (Crossan 1973, 255). Crossan maintains that the parable of the mustard seed as well as the other seed parables in the Synoptic (or Markan) tradition are all tailored by later traditions toward an eschatological meaning/purpose (1973, 259). As Crossan points out, this would alter in a quite strained way the import or meaning of the parable. In spite of his form-critical work Crossan fails to appreciate the immediate socio-economic dynamics of the seed parables.

<sup>291</sup> Cadwallader seems to understand full-well the subversiveness (even maliciousness) of the action of the mustard-seed sower (he prefers Mark's version in this regard). He says, for example, "[w]hoever the figure is who plants the seed... anonymity and opposition lie behind...[its] peculiar use" (2019, 71). At the same time, though, seemingly dropping the ball, he maintains that peasants might have valued the seed for its "nutritional," "medicinal" and seasoning purposes (2019, 71-72).

Galatians 5:9).

If we understand the woman's actions as being secretive or surreptitious and imagine for a moment that she was part of a retinue of slaves on a large Jewish *oikos*, the mixing of yeast in a batch of dough could only be understood as malicious. It would however be easy to accomplish and not readily traceable since it was possible for dough to become leavened even by accident. In returning to the word *εγκρυπτω* we should ask under what circumstances one would wish to intentionally hide or conceal yeast in dough. A plausible scenario would be to intentionally ruin the dough of a Jewish *oikos* as the Passover festival is approaching. Whereas the elite were overly concerned (and had the financial means) to maintain ritual purity, subordinate classes were not always that way inclined, partly for the simple reason that it cost money to keep Torah. Thus, additionally, were the leavened dough to be discarded the retinue of slaves would possibly be gifted a free batch of dough.

#### 8.1.4 The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1–23, Mark 4:1–20, Luke 8:4–15)

The oft-called parable of the sower stands out in the corpus of Jesus' parables for a number of reasons. In the Synoptic tradition, it is the first parable Jesus tells in the course of his ministry. It is the only parable (along with the parable of the weeds/tares in Matthew) for which the Gospel writers, on the lips of Jesus, provide a detailed interpretation. Lastly, and not insignificantly, it is presented as a basis on which to understand further parables (cf. Mark 4:13) in a framework which suggests an explanation of the purpose of parables in general.

It has long been accepted that the interpretation provided for the parable reflects a later tradition in the context of the Early Church. It is thanks in no small measure to this interpretation that the Church, for the greater part of two millennia, has understood the parable in a quite rigid way far removed from its original context and meaning. Perhaps here we should ask the question: to what extent do Jesus' parables represent real life scenarios in the life of first-century Jews? A helpful position is to see them generally depicting plausible scenarios while realising they do not necessarily relate situations of actual historicity. Indeed, one may argue that the very plausibility of the scenario in a parable is necessary to guarantee the engagement of the hearer. It may also be the case that while the parable begins with a plausible setting or scenario, the outcome deviates so sharply from what is normal or expected so as to give the parable its shocking and challenging effect.

In the parable of the sower, however, we are presented with a scenario that would have struck the ordinary first-century listener immediately as being implausible or farcical. While scholars of first-century Judean and Galilean economy may debate many things, one thing which to my mind seems undoubtable is the prevalence of what Boer referred to as the subsistence-survival institutional form, and what Sasson called the survival-subsistence strategy. In light of this, the vast majority of the population was fundamentally conservative, living at most times close to the bread line. It then becomes obvious why the action of the sower would have struck the average first-century hearer as non-sensical, since none of them would have scattered grain so carelessly or liberally,

wasting as much as three-quarters of one's retainer seed. This leads us to assume one of two things. Either, and in contravention with the rest of Jesus' parables, the parable of the sower presents us with an entirely implausible scenario, or the parable and the action of the sower must be understood in a context of sabotage.

Before making conclusive statements, we might be helped by reminding ourselves of the subversive action of the so-called wicked tenants. Class dynamics are plainly evident in this parable to the extent of motivating the action of the tenants. What is less clear is whether the tenants, in Jesus' hypothetical portrayal of them, intend to get away with their heinous act or merely to perform it as a means of defiance, protest, or sabotage.

As mentioned previously, based on Scott's work, sabotage was a common weapon in the arsenal of hidden forms of resistance, part of the reason being that it caused material damage to the power wielder whilst not being easily traceable. Both Boer and Wolf had referred to the phenomenon of *anachoresis* which, properly understood, comes from the context of the colonate, whereby members of the peasantry would abscond their designated places of residence and thus escape the appropriation of either their labour or produce.

Again, in the case of the so-called wicked tenants, we are not sure of the ultimate outcome. If the parable was meant to be plausible, and not simply vicarious (to use Herzog's word), it is conceivable that having performed their heinous act of revenge, they simply absconded with the year's harvest. If we are to understand Jesus presenting us with a realistic or plausible scenario in the parable of the sower, the only way his actions can be understood are as an act of intentional subversion or sabotage. What the consequences might have been, and what the sower did thereafter, as with the case of the so-called wicked tenants, is left open-ended.

## 8.2 The Pastoral Parables

We have arrived at the climactic section of this study in the form of a consideration of the New Testament texts in question which relate the pastoral parables of Jesus. A contention of this study, based on the information we have considered, is that the image of the shepherd throughout the history of the Hebrew people and enduring into the life of the early Church is an ambiguous one. From their roots in nomadic pastoralism, shepherds occupied a tenuous relationship with the ruling class and even those predisposed to a more sedentary lifestyle. Shepherds were at times bandits and thieves. They also at times likely constituted a group whose means and mode of subsistence had been impinged upon, to the extent that they were compelled to seek other forms of subsistence. In this capacity, it is also entirely likely that they harboured resentment to the changed owners of the means of production. To the extent that they engaged in itinerancy, thievery, and even banditry, they would have been regarded by authorities with suspicion and disdain.

But the shepherd, as we know from more stereotypical imagery, has paradoxically favourable connotations too. This may come from a romantic idealism in the Hebrew psyche, not dissimilar to that applied to the bandit,

harking back to what might have been the pastoral roots of the Hebrew people. In its truest form, the relationship between a pastoral people, particularly nomadic pastoralists, and their animals, was one of symbiosis with mutually constituted identities. In this sense, but wary of falling back onto such romantic ideations, one can easily understand the self-sacrificial love of a shepherd for his sheep.<sup>292</sup>

In what follows, we consider two of the most well-known pastoral images of the New Testament – that of the shepherd in search of his sheep (Matt.18:12-14/Lk.15:4-7) and that of the Good Shepherd (Jn.10:1-16) who lays down his life for his sheep. To this end, and for the purpose of providing a more detailed context of ancient caprine husbandry, I have considered Zechariah 11:4-17. Although this is not a New Testament passage and is not the primary focus of this study, it seems to me that a study on caprine husbandry as a means of production in ancient Israel cannot exclude a consideration of Zechariah 11:4-17. Additionally, I have included Talmudic references which I believe shed light on the changing means of caprine husbandry in antiquity.

I include also a section here on the historiography of Israel Finkelstein which can be read in conjunction with Appendix B. The reason I have included this, as I hope will become clear, is that if we accept the premises of Finkelstein's revised biblical chronology, the dating for Zechariah is much later than traditionally held and much closer in proximity to the period of history under examination in this study.

### 8.2.1 Historiographical insights from Israel Finkelstein

Historiographical insights from Israel Finkelstein suggest no scribal activity for the Persian period, i.e. roughly 600-200 BCE, in Jerusalem. Though this claim may seem shocking, Finkelstein says it is based on clear archaeological evidence or, indeed, lack thereof. There is simply no evidence for settlement in Jerusalem for this period apart from some scattered potsherds around the spring of Gehon. There is no evidence of built structures which suggests that the spring was only used by people living elsewhere. Furthermore, there is no evidence of any fortifications of the Jerusalem city for the Persian period contra Ezra-Nehemiah. In terms of stratigraphy for the city wall, fortifications end with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC and begin again only during the Hasmonean period some 400 years later. Finally, there is little to no epigraphic evidence for the period, i.e. no bullae, ostraca, monumental inscriptions, merely a few seals bearing the name Yehud (i.e. not emanating from Judah itself but from the Persian Empire). Regarding scribal activity, Finkelstein's conclusion is based not only on a complete lack of epigraphic evidence but on the assumption that, for scribal activity to have been present, attendant state apparatus would have to be as well. Where there was no such state apparatus at Jerusalem for this period, the argument that scribal activity was taking place to the extent that entire theological

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<sup>292</sup> Kloppenborg and Callon note some of the historical ambivalence of the imagery – “The figure of the shepherd is especially interesting, since ancient representations range from emphasizing the social marginality and criminality of shepherds, to the idealizations of rustic life in pastoral poetry, and to the images of the king, emperor, or God as a shepherd.” (Kloppenborg and Callon 2010, 219)

treatises were produced there, like those supposed to have been during the Persian period, is hard to support.

The question then which Finkelstein raises is: if texts such as the Minor Prophets are traditionally dated to this period, and were indeed produced in this period, where could they have been produced? In Finkelstein's view, there are only two possible answers: one which he finds unlikely and another which he says is not entirely impossible. The first possibility is that a small group of scribes were concentrated in what is today the site of the temple mount (which for religious and cultural reasons is yet to be excavated). He finds this unlikely because if this were the case, this small coterie of scribes would have left a material trace of some kind in the surrounding area of which there is none (again we cite the need for some form of larger state apparatus to be attendant to scribal activity). The second possibility is that the books traditionally ascribed to this period were written exclusively in exile. While theoretically not impossible, it seems unlikely given what must have been a lack of the necessary resources and parameter allowed by foreign captors to do this. Additionally, many of the books from a literary perspective, situate themselves in or around Jerusalem at the time of writing.

Finkelstein's conclusion then, at least regarding the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles (but we can infer the same for the Minor Prophets) which are traditionally dated to the post-exilic period, is that these are products of the Hasmonean period, i.e. written between 200-180 BCE onwards. It is only during this period that the city of Jerusalem reestablishes itself on a scale comparable to that of pre-exilic Jerusalem, and it is only from this point that Jerusalem, or the larger province of Judah, possesses once more the necessary means, capabilities and resources to produce the kind of literary texts in question.

As noted in considering Finkelstein's historiography (see Appendix B) Finkelstein sees two, but if we are more specific, three productive literary periods in ancient Israel. The first is what he refers to as the late monarchic period, from the time of the Omride dynasty, in the northern kingdom of Israel, to the end of the reign of Josiah, in the southern kingdom of Judah, i.e. roughly from the first quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> century to just before the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Finkelstein's position, based on the prominence and prestige we may ascribe to the Omride dynasty, which is clear from archaeological evidence, is that the first literary texts of the bible began here. This literary technology was then transplanted or transferred to the southern kingdom of Judah after the fall of the northern kingdom at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BCE.

In this sense, this late monarchic period of literary production can be divided into two subperiods by this very event, where the centre of literary production shifted from the north to the south and where possibly the constituency of those responsible for literary production in the second subperiod changed to include Judahites. As a result, the ideological orientation also shifted dramatically in terms of the production of literary texts for this subperiod, which began to propose the notion of a previously united monarchy and to establish Judaism as an exclusively monotheistic religion whose temple cult was now centred at Jerusalem. This first (or second sub-)

period ended with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. As mentioned, according to Finkelstein, there is a long hiatus of activity of any kind in Jerusalem during the ensuing period. The third period of literary production, which really concerns the study of Zechariah 11, only begins again in the Hellenistic/Hasmonean period, from 200-180 BCE onwards, where according to Finkelstein, the prominence of Jerusalem rose once more to levels at which a scribal class could be supported.

Regarding Zechariah 11, further to this possible revised chronology or dating, there is growing recognition that the books Hosea through Malachi may ultimately represent a single literary work, i.e. the final product of a redactor, or school of redactors, which scholars commonly refer to as the Book of the Twelve. Not necessarily regarding our understanding of literary production, but of the phenomena of pseudepigraphy and pseudonymity, which were common in antiquity, this position is appealing if not persuasive. To understand each of the minor prophets as individual figures personally responsible for the writing of each book is archaic. Such notions have for many years already been unsettled in the study of other biblical books like Isaiah, where consensus holds that the book in its final form is the product of at least three different hands, probably three different schools.

If we entertain the theory of the Book of the Twelve in conjunction with Finkelstein's periodisation of literary production for the Hebrew bible, it is reasonable that such a literary work, which would have required immense resource, skill, creativity etc. could only have been a product of the Hasmonean period. In other words, where consensus says that the Minor Prophets are all post-exilic and there is no evidence for scribal activity in Judah from 586 BCE to roughly 200 BCE, a so-called Book of the Twelve could only have been produced from the Hasmonean period onward.

### 8.2.2 The Sheep Merchants of Zechariah 11:4-17

Zechariah 11:4-17 is a notoriously difficult passage to exegete and Meyers and Meyers, whose exegetical commentary is possibly the most extensive on this passage, say that particularly verses 4-16 of chapter 11 are "fraught with interpretive difficulties" (Meyers and Meyers 1993, 253). In reference to v.8 of chapter 11, and citing Baldwin, they say this verse "is the most enigmatic of the whole Old Testament" (Baldwin in Meyers and Meyers 1993, 264). Finley says that "Zechariah 11 is one of the more difficult passages of a sometimes enigmatic book...[where t]he chapter has been challenging to many because of its high demands on the interpreter's abilities in hermeneutics, language skills, and command of other prophetic passages." (Finley 1982, 51) In light of this, I do not undertake a consideration of Zechariah 11 lightly, nor am I attempting a fully-fledged exegesis of the passage. My own contention is that, though the prophet of Zechariah 11 arguably assumes the role of a hired shepherd in a symbolic way, this nevertheless reflects historical realities attendant to the means

of caprine production for the Hasmonean period, and importantly links these to the temple.<sup>293</sup>

We may, by way of introduction, provide the following synopsis of the passage. Zechariah, or the prophet in question, is commissioned by God to “be a shepherd to the flock doomed to slaughter” (Zech.11:4; cf. Petersen 1995, 91). This role is later qualified to some extent but in v.5 we learn three additional things. Firstly, the people who (ordinarily) purchase such sheep do so to kill them, i.e. to sacrifice them (in the temple). We read also that those who sell the sheep are thereby made wealthy. Finally, we are told that “their own shepherds [those of the flock doomed to slaughter] have no pity on them” (v.5). A reason as to the third observation will become apparent later. Initially, in terms of Zechariah’s prophecy, the comparison enlisted is between the “flock doomed to slaughter” (v.4) and “the inhabitants of the earth,” (v.6) where that which is common to both is that their carers (i.e. the shepherd and God respectively) have no pity on them but allow them to be destroyed.

In v.11 we read that the prophet, as he had been previously commanded by God, became a shepherd “on behalf of the sheep merchants,”<sup>294</sup> or, in other words, in the employ of the sheep merchants. There are further metaphors invoked in the form of the staffs which are figuratively “favour” and “unity” (v.7). We then read in v.8 that Zechariah “disposes of the three shepherds” within the space of a month because he had grown impatient with them. Presumably, these shepherds are those who had been shepherding the flock previously. We also read that these shepherds harboured animosity toward Zechariah, animosity which seems to have been present prior to his disposal of them, though we are not told why (cf. Petersen 1995, 94).

There is a turn of events in v.9, where Zechariah himself refuses to shepherd the flock he has been assigned, leaving them seemingly as the previous shepherds had done, to be destroyed. Thence follows the breaking of the first staff “favour” (v.10). In between the breaking of the two staffs, Zechariah requests his payment and receives wages of thirty shekels of silver (v.12). At this point, we must infer that even if symbolically in his capacity as one-time shepherd, Zechariah is nevertheless a *hired* shepherd. Who is he hired by? Who are his employers? Clearly the temple administrators are. How do we know this? In v.13 there is apparent sarcasm in the prophet’s retort where “lordly” in the NRSV is understood really to mean *paltry* (Petersen 1995, 97).<sup>295</sup> In

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<sup>293</sup> Although Meyers and Meyers concede there should be a “refinement of...chronology” for a “period [which] has long been considered one of the most obscure eras in ancient Palestinian history during biblical times” (Meyers and Meyers 1993, 23) and they do lean toward Finkelstein’s position of a radically reduced Jerusalem in size and demography for the Persian period – they cite, for example, a population of between 475-500! (1993, 25) – they nevertheless remain faithful to the internal chronology of the bible. They also, for example, hold to the rededication of the temple in 516/515 BCE (1993, 16) contrary to all archaeological evidence, or lack thereof. Meyers and Meyers in fact actively dispute the possibility of authorship or emanation from the Hellenistic/Hasmonean period (1993, 26-27) and yet they later acknowledge that Zechariah 9-14 was appended to Zechariah 1-8 (that these were circulated together with Haggai) but that these three works, forming the closing of the so-called Book of the Twelve in this redacted state, could represent a much later date coinciding with the Qumran community (1993, 28).

<sup>294</sup> The Hebrew which is rendered in the NRSV “sheep merchants” is notoriously difficult to translate, a discussion of which follows under the text-critical section of our consideration of Zechariah 11.

<sup>295</sup> Petersen translates “lordly” as *precious* where he says the “thirty pieces were [in fact] not a precious amount, and as a result, the prophet-shepherd has not been honored but rather insulted by the sheep dealers.” (Petersen 1995, 97)

protest therefore Zechariah must throw the payment back in the faces of his employers, i.e. back into the temple treasury, from whence the money came.<sup>296</sup> The import of the prophecy, the comparison enlisted between the worthless shepherds, the hired shepherd (i.e. the prophet), the fate of the sheep, Yahweh and the people of the land, is that Yahweh will relinquish responsibility for the people, thus assigning them a fate among the nations similar to that assigned to the sheep by the hired shepherds (but ultimately by the sheep merchants), where destruction of the sheep however is in the form of cultic sacrifice.<sup>297</sup>

#### 8.2.2.1 Text-critical comments

There are a number of textual difficulties in the passage, as already mentioned. In v.4 of chapter 11, Meyers and Meyers point out that “flock of the slaughter” is a “rare expression” and occurs elsewhere in a slightly amended form only in Jeremiah 12:3b – “Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter,” as well as in Isaiah 22:13, though with reference to the slaughter of oxen (1993, 252). Meyers and Meyers therefore express doubt as to whether the Hebrew root “*hrg*” should be understood to mean “slaughtered” or “butchered” in a wholesale manner since this word is not commonly used in the context of the killing of animals but more often in the killing or destruction of humans.<sup>298</sup> The point the authors make is that because of the unusualness of the term, the verse may not indicate that the flock was slaughtered or destroyed in its entirety.

Though the same Hebrew root is not used, a similar phrase rendered in English does occur elsewhere, perhaps most famously in Psalm 44:22 – “Because of you we are being killed all day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter,” which Paul cites in Roman 8:36. Seemingly, there may have been a negative connotation conveyed by the idiomatic phrase “flock/sheep off/for slaughter” whether *טבח* (*tabach*), as in the case of Psalm 44, or *הרג* (*hereg*) was used. If this is so, we could ask why there was such a connotation. My own suggestion, based on the context and orientation of the current study, is that such flocks are to be contrasted with flocks *not destined or doomed for slaughter* which would have been the case for all flocks farmed by means of subsistence-survival. In contrast, the only flocks not farmed by this means would have been those attached to and sequestered by temple complexes and which, either in conjunction or separately, fed the elite of Jerusalem. In other words, the only time an entire flock might be thought of being “doomed to slaughter” was for the purpose of cultic sacrifice since, in the context of subsistence survival, such wholesale slaughter was unheard of. If such idiomatic expressions conveyed negative connotations of these flocks it may suggest negative

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<sup>296</sup> In reality, this was likely payment for a season’s work, i.e. possibly a year or season’s worth of labour on the part of the hired shepherd.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. Petersen who writes that “[t]he prophet proclaims that God will not function as divine king and announces a world in which Yahweh cedes power to malevolent human rulers.” (Petersen 1995, 90).

<sup>298</sup> The commonly used Hebrew term for the cultic slaughter of animals is *שחט* (*shachat*), where *טבח* (*tabach*) may designate the slaughter of animals for mundane purposes.

perceptions about the practice more generally.

Meyers and Meyers point out that the phrase translated in v.4 in the NRSV, as “flock doomed to slaughter,” reads literally in Hebrew “flock of the slaughter,” but the root of the key Hebrew term means “to slaughter, destroy or ruin” (1993, 251). The authors therefore intimate that the phrase has at foremost of mind that of the “doomed” fate of the sheep (1993, 252) which is reflected in the English used in some modern translations of this verse (e.g. NRSV, RSV, ESV). But such a translation transfers meaning, perhaps even providing an eschatological overtone. Whereas in the first instance we are dealing with a flock of sheep which will be slaughtered, in the second we are dealing with a flock of sheep consigned to suffer a grizzly fate which, to my mind, seems one degree removed from the original material reality pertinent to the flock.

A textual difficulty also arises around variant readings in v.7 for the term which the NRSV renders “sheep merchants,” although there is seeming consensus about which variant is preferable. The term is especially significant for our purposes. For a detailed grammatical argument as to why the LXX version should be preferred, and based on this “sheep merchants,” see Finley’s article (1982). Citing the NASB and RSV, Finley highlights the two translations in contention, where the NASB reads “the afflicted of the flock” (vv.7, 11) while the RSV reads “those who trafficked in sheep” (v.7) and “traffickers of sheep” (v.11), i.e. sheep traders or “sheep merchants” (NRSV). All witnesses of the MT affirm the former reading where the only variant comes from the LXX. The position of most scholars however is to prefer the LXX variant. Based on the syntactic difficulty of the LXX, i.e. that MT explains the LXX, as well as the larger context of the passage<sup>299</sup> in which the LXX reading makes most sense, the LXX reading is to be preferred as reflecting the original meaning of phrase.

Finley, for example, refers to the “grammatical uniqueness” of the structure of consonants of the Hebrew phrases, where the initial consonants are understood as conjunctions (Finley 1982, 65). This he regards as an anomaly and as such sees it as highly unlikely to occur twice within the space of five verses. It is therefore much easier to explain the development of the MT reading on the basis of the LXX than the other way around.

Although Petersen renders the Hebrew “sheep dealers,” he later uses various terms – “sheep dealers,” “owners-merchants,” “merchant-flock-owners” and “sheep-dealer-merchants” (1995, 96). Boda says that “[t]he terms “buyers” and “those who sell” suggest the marketplace, where ownership is transferred” (Boda 2004, 462). He also acknowledges that the shepherds referred to are “hired and paid by these buyers and sellers” (2004, 462). Regarding v.7 and the use of “sheep merchants” in versions such as the NRSV, Meyers and

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<sup>299</sup> The preference for the LXX’s Canaanite in v.7 as “merchant” is justified by the context of the passage. V.5 paints a scene where there are those buying sheep, those selling them, where the latter are enriched as a result. In other words, the action represents a form of seemingly commercial activity. There is a change in the means of production from subsistence level to one designed for a form of commercial gain.

Meyers also support the LXX variant (1993, 261-262)<sup>300</sup> but their note as to the identity of the sheep merchants is unhelpful in the context of understanding the means of production, for they say mistakenly that “merchants” represents the “buyers” and “sellers,” who are probably any Israelite leaders in positions of power or control over others” (1993, 262).

Another textual difficulty arises in v.13 of chapter 11 in that it is unclear whether the Hebrew אל היוצר should be interpreted as “potter” or “treasury,” since the Hebrew words for both are similar (Meyers and Meyers 1993, 277). Meyers and Meyers prefer to render the phrase in v.11 “into the treasury” (1993, 276), though they spend some time discussing the various scholarly positions in the debate. In summary, there are three possible associations with the phrase. While the larger context of the passage suggests that “into the treasury” is the most reasonable translation – the authors ascribe the appearance in Hebrew of “potter” to a scribal error (1993, 277) – at least two other theories see the word or phrase being associated with the function of a smelter or metal worker which is indeed how the LXX renders the phrase (1993, 277).

Meyers and Meyers present an old theory by Torrey (1936) which shows that the Hebrew יצר can in fact refer to metalwork, as is the case in Isaiah 44:9-11, Habakkuk 2:18, and Exodus 32:2-4 (1993, 277). To understand this overlap of pottery and metalwork, Torrey referred to the Persian-period practice of using earthen vessels to store or mould molten metals (1993, 277). Meyers and Meyers conclude that if this practice underlies the use of the Hebrew term in Zechariah 11 “it would refer to a Persian-period artisan or official, attached to the Temple, who had charge of collected metal melted down and then later reshaped for other purposes.” (1993, 277)

The theory is not at all far-fetched as it is in line with ancient minting practices attendant to the treasury in the province of Judah. Here chalk stone moulds would be filled with molten precious metal, either silver or bronze, to mint coins (Hendin 2021, 18-20). Thus, it is entirely feasible that there was historically a close relation between the function of a potter and that of a metallurgist, since in some cases both were required to mint coins. As mentioned, both functions would be attached to the treasury such that whether one reads “treasury” or “potter” in v.13, it is likely that we are still dealing with the temple treasury.<sup>301</sup>

#### 8.2.2.2 Form- and redaction-critical comments

Petersen addresses a question often raised in relation to Zechariah 11:4-17 which is whether it is formally connected to chapter 13 which also contains the image of the shepherd. His conclusion in citing Fohrer (1968)

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<sup>300</sup> “Although it is difficult to understand why the Hebrew divided the word, the versional reading gets rid of an awkward text and also fits precisely the prophetic actions of this narrative.” (1993, 262).

<sup>301</sup> Interestingly since Meyers and Meyers see Matthew 27:5 as the appropriate prophetic fulfilment of Zechariah 11:12-13 (1993, 278) they note that Matthew too retains a close association between the potter and the treasury (1993, 278). According to Matthew, the thirty shekels cannot be retained by the treasury since it is blood money and so with it the chief priests procure the potter’s field (Matt. 27: 6-7).

is that these two passages represent distinct genres where the former, Zechariah 11:4-17, is that of a “symbolic-action report” (Petersen 1995, 90). Boda refers to Zechariah 11:4-17 as a “prophetic sign-act” where this sign-act is designed to point out “economic oppression within the community” (Boda 2004, 46, 462).<sup>302</sup> Furthermore this oppression is both “vertical and horizontal,” i.e. those oppressed are oppressed by their neighbours as well as those in charge of them (rulers) (2004, 462). The sign-act is therefore an indictment of the people and the leaders (2004, 462). Boda says, based on v.8, that “the flock detests the shepherding of God’s appointed leader.” (2004, 462) This reflects the NIV translation where most other translations read that the three shepherds who are disposed of detest the prophet. In the context of the sign-act, the resignation of the prophet from his shepherding duties represents the Lord’s abandoning of the people, an abandonment which will result in the flock’s wholesale destruction (2004, 462, 464). Perhaps importantly, Boda indicates a progression which takes place in the course of the content of Zechariah 11:4-17. Whereas initially the indicted shepherds were guilty of neglect, by v.16 the shepherd actively turns on the flock and is himself responsible for its consumption/destruction (2004, 466). Boda too links Zechariah 11 with Ezekiel 34 (2004, 466). Among the potential literary forms Meyers and Meyers consider applying to Zechariah 11:4-16 they list allegory and parable (1993, 297) though they themselves prefer to apply, but not in an overly ridged way, the categories of narrative, symbolic or prophetic action (1993, 298), and irony (1993, 299).<sup>303</sup>

Redditt holds that Zechariah 9-14 forms part of “the Book of the Twelve [which] was intentionally edited over years to form a single work with deliberate internal dialogue and plot” (Redditt 2012, 11). He discusses debate between the continuity, or lack thereof, between Zechariah 1-8 and 9-14, and whether the latter represents the work of a later author/authors. While various scholars still support single authorship, Redditt’s conclusion, in line with Rudolph and Saebø, is that Zechariah 9-14 represents a later addition (2012, 14-15).<sup>304</sup> Meyers and Meyers cite the almost universal tendency of identifying Zechariah 1-8 and 9-14 as two distinct literary works (1993, 15), while they concede that the “historical setting” or “social context” of the latter has proved notoriously elusive (1993, 15).

Reddit posits that the shepherds in Zechariah 11 are likely priests in Jerusalem while the merchants are likely

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<sup>302</sup> Boda further explains that the “form typically consists of three sections: exhortation (God commands an action), execution (the prophet describes his compliance), explanation (God interprets its significance).” (Boda 2004, 461)

<sup>303</sup> “If irony implies double-edged meaning—that things are not what they seem to be, or that conventional words are made to have an opposite effect—then the prophet exploits such rhetoric in manifold ways in verses 4-16.” (1993, 299)

<sup>304</sup> The reasons Redditt cites in support of this are as follows: “First, there is a difference in genre. Zechariah 1-8 contains eight visions in the first six chapters; Zechariah 9-14 contains none. Second, Zechariah 1-8 is carefully dated in the second and fourth years of the reign of Darius, while Zechariah 9-14 contains no dates at all. It mentions neither Babylon nor Persia by name, while Zechariah 1-8 speaks openly of the Exile and dates the messages of Zechariah in the second and fourth years of Darius, King of Persia. Finally, the superscriptions in Zech 1:1, 1:7, and 7:1 follow the same pattern as those in Hag 1:1; 1:1Sb-2:1, 2:10, and 2:20. Not only are these superscriptions alike, but also there are no others that follow this pattern elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, the superscriptions in Zech 9:1 and 12:1 resemble Mal 1:1 and actually point more toward continuity with Malachi than with Haggai and Zechariah 1-8.” (Redditt 2012, 14-15)

“Persian officials and others protecting Persian interests in post-exilic Yehud, including some Jews.” (2012, 17) Though Israel is referred to in Zechariah 12:1, Redditt says the oracle is addressed to Judah (2012, 17). Redditt therefore sees Zechariah 11:4-16 as the “pivotal passage standing between chapters of hope for a reunited Israel and Judah (and even a new king in 9:9-10) and depictions of future wars against Jerusalem and Judah (in 12:1-9 and 14:1-21)” (2012, 19)

### 8.2.2.3 Literary considerations

The passage indicates that the prophecy which is issued concerns not just the kingdoms or households of Judah and Israel, although part of the prophecy is directed at them, but all peoples, i.e. all nations or all inhabitants of the earth (Petersen 1995, 95).<sup>305</sup> Petersen however notes that while the fact of slaughter should not surprise us as this was inevitably the fate of some of the flock, that the whole flock should be destined for slaughter is puzzling.<sup>306</sup> This seemingly renders the role of the shepherd futile since after the slaughter there will be no flock to shepherd (1995, 91).<sup>307</sup> Petersen understands the initial instruction to Zechariah to shepherd the flock (v.4) and to assume the position of a worthless shepherd (v.15) as representing or enacting the role of a shepherd but in “diverse ways” (1995, 92).

Petersen concedes that there is a separation of ownership between the shepherd, the role of which is now assumed by the prophet, and those who own the sheep, i.e. the sheep dealers or merchants (1995, 92). He concedes too that “those who own the flock are those who will slaughter” (1995, 92).<sup>308</sup> Petersen is however mistaken in his assessment when he says “they will not be judged negatively for their actions...[i]ndeed, these owners, in a position to sell the flock, will be able to attribute their prosperity to Yahweh.” (1995, 92) In spite of their uniformly negative association in the biblical record the Canaanites (when meaning ‘merchants’) are not viewed negatively by Petersen. Petersen furthermore confuses the identities of the shepherds who are dismissed in v.8 “as of the sort who will undertake the task of total slaughter.” (1995, 92) He says that the passage is not an indictment “either of the sheep or of those who own the sheep” instead, “it anticipates total slaughter of the flock.” (1995, 92-93)

While Meyers and Meyers state that verses 4-16 of chapter 11 are “fraught with interpretive difficulties” (1993, 253) the remarks as to the identity of “those who buy and kill the sheep” (v.5) are not ultimately instructive. They

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<sup>305</sup> “The word *'ammîm*, “peoples,” frequently refers to human groupings of the sort we might call a state or a nation. Therefore, it is appropriate to think that Yahweh is turning over sovereignty to those beneath him, to those in charge of various nations.” (Petersen 1995, 96)

<sup>306</sup> Petersen writes that, “normally only part of a flock was harvested for food; some animals were kept for breeding, some for milk, others for wool.” (Petersen 1995, 91)

<sup>307</sup> Petersen in turn cites Jeremiah 12:3 and Psalm 44:11, 22 which seem to reference the wholesale slaughter of flocks for sacrifice but for some reason seems doubtful of their help in understanding Zechariah 11:4-17 (Petersen 1995, 91).

<sup>308</sup> Later he says, in reference to the prophet requesting payment, “Those whom the prophet-shepherd addresses are the ones who owned, sold, and slaughtered sheep, those who garnered wealth from this form of economic activity. The prophet-shepherd initiates this interchange with the merchants.” (Petersen 1995, 96)

refer to them as “the people” (1993, 253) and later suggest that while literally referring to “sheep dealers” (1993, 254) these likely refer to leaders of some kind, e.g. “king, priest, elder, sage, or prophet” (1993, 254). Having said this, the authors identify prophetic leadership, and particularly that of false prophets, as being central to the prophet’s critique. The authors state, for example, that “the way false prophets have perpetrated the dissolution of the people must surely be part of, if not dominate, the notion of corrupt leadership that underlies the imagery of “those who buy . . . and sell.”” (Meyers and Meyers 1993, 254).<sup>309</sup>

In spite of their detail exegetical and historical contribution, because they have removed the text from any association with what might have been an original context of the means of caprine production attendant to the temple complex, like so many biblical commentators, and to use Ukpong’s phrasing, they have prematurely invested the text with theological meaning. As already intimated, and as we will go on to see based on the framework provided and based on an understanding of the particular means of caprine production attendant to temple complexes, “those who buy” sheep are temple administrators, while “those who sell” them are those referred to in Zechariah 11 as sheep merchants. Again, the authors seem not to designate “those who buy” and “those who sell” as distinct entities (1993, 255), however they do come the closest to making any sort of economic assessment of the situation in commenting on the activity of buying and selling represented in v.11, although they have made the common anachronism of a reference to ‘market’ economy:

*“The use of imagery rooted in the language of economic transactions is noteworthy. One wonders whether there is some subconscious critique of a market economy at work here. If buying and selling goods is a merismic construction representing the totality of economic dealings, then on a literal level the message is that such activity cannot have a positive outcome; whatever happens, the flock comes to ruin.”* (1993, 255)

Regarding v.8 of chapter 11, the authors quote Baldwin in saying that it is “the most enigmatic in the whole Old Testament” (Baldwin in Meyers and Meyers 1993, 264). The enigma seemingly centres around the identification of the shepherds where they say, in reference to Mitchell, at least forty proposals have been made – “Prophets, kings, high priests, nations, peoples, and sundry leaders from the eighth to the second century B.C.E. have been proposed” and where too an allegorical meaning, not a literal identification, has also been proposed (1993, 264). In accordance with one stream of scholarship on the passage, the authors refrain from equating the shepherds with specific historical figures and instead, in line with their greater reading of the passage, wish

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<sup>309</sup> The authors also write later, for example, that the “issue here [i.e. at hand] is not only that people in leadership positions are abusing their authority but also that they are not held accountable for the damage they do.” (Meyers and Meyers 1993, 254) And again they write, “the vagueness of the metaphoric intention of “those who buy,” which we have pointed out in the NOTE to that phrase, Zechariah 11 indeed seems to be related to the fact that those in the upper echelons of the political, social, religious, and economic hierarchies that characterized society in the monarchic state were all to be held guilty for corrupt behavior. That behavior, as explained below, is in fundamental violation of the covenant and must be considered the cause for the prophetic act representing the dissolution of the covenant” (Meyers and Meyers 1993, 254-255).

to identify the shepherds as the false prophets who are the subject of the prophet's critique through much of Zechariah 9-14 (1993, 265).

#### 8.2.2.4 Socio-economic considerations

We begin this section with a discussion of the relative value of the sum paid to the prophet. Petersen refers to Exodus 21:32 which stipulates that the amount of thirty shekels is that paid to redeem the life of a slave. Petersen's position is that the expression "thirty pieces of silver," or thirty shekels, was idiomatic in the Ancient Near East to represent an "insultingly low wage" (1995, 96-97).<sup>310</sup> Boda describes the payment received by the prophet as "low," also referencing Exodus 21, "[w]hether one makes the argument based on the value of a slave in Ex. 21:32 or based on general ancient Near Eastern evidence." (2004, 465). The insultingly low payment occasions the sarcastic remark by the prophet and his hurling the money (back) into the temple treasury. Seemingly, most English translations are faithful to the original meaning of הַיִּצֵּר. The NRSV is among the few which interpret the verse to mean that the prophet threw the silver pieces (back) into the temple treasury, i.e. from whence they came.<sup>311</sup>

Meyers and Meyers point out that the text unambiguously indicates that the prophet is paid the wage (1993, 273, 275) but since they have not in mind any conception of the means of production, and of the phenomenon of hired shepherds, it has not occurred to them that the wage is that of *hired shepherd* and not for a prophecy or oracle as they wish to assert (1993, 273).<sup>312</sup> The position of Meyers and Meyers regarding Zechariah 9-14 is that it is centred around a fundamental tension between "true" prophets and "false" ones (1993, 273) whereas, as has been mentioned, the nub of the prophet's critique is directed at such false prophets (1993, 265).

While we cannot dispute that this may well have been part of the historical context of Zechariah 9-14 from an historical point of view, the authors date the material to the Persian period for which, in light of Finkelstein's position, there must be some doubt. While the historical context Meyers and Meyers have proposed should be revised it is not inconceivable that concerns around false prophecy (even stemming from the post-exilic period) feature retrospectively in the material. The main issue with their approach, as with most other commentaries, is that little or no attention is paid to the material means of production attendant to the period. In other words,

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<sup>310</sup> See also Finley (1982), "Modern commentators have even found a knowledge of Sumerian literature helpful for a new insight on the familiar "thirty shekels of silver." (Finley 1982, 51) Then in a footnote to this statement, "The phrase occurs in the Sumerian "The Curse of Agade" as a sign of contempt."

<sup>311</sup> Most translations are consistent in understanding the action of the prophet as "throwing" though interestingly the Good News version uses the English "put," such that the action of the prophet is understood as a donation to the temple not an act of protest.

<sup>312</sup> Even regarding the position they adopt, i.e. that prophets were paid in post-exilic Israel and that the passage indicates clearly that the protagonist of Zechariah 9-14 himself is paid, they have some difficulties since it is supposedly the charlatans, soothsayers, or false prophets who seek financial reward for their oracles. The authors justify the prophet accepting the wage in reflecting on his subsequent action – casting the silver (back) into the temple treasury, thereby declining payment (1993, 274).

because Meyers and Meyers interpret the material in Zechariah 9-14 primarily through a framework of post-exilic prophecy, and almost completely ignore a more immediate context of caprine production, viz. the contracting of sheep merchants to produce specific quotas of sheep for cultic sacrifice, who in turn engage the services of menial labour to tend the sheep, they have missed what might have been a more immediately historical application of the passage.

Regarding the amount of thirty pieces of silver then, contra some scholars as well as the demeaning tone of the prophet when referring to the amount, Meyers and Meyers do not regard it as a trivial sum (1993, 275, 279). Once more because they have not interpreted the passage in light of the means of production attendant to the period this conclusion is misguided. As stated previously, the wage is that of menial shepherd and would have likely been for an entire season of work. Furthermore, the specific dating of Meyers and Meyers regarding the amount paid and thereby deducing its value is misguided as apparently they see this having occurred sometime before 500BCE when silver was supposed to be far more valuable (even than gold) (1993, 275-276).

Though I am not aware of research on this subject, I wonder to what extent the sum of thirty pieces of silver does not represent some form of standard transactional amount. I am basing this not only on Exodus 21:32, which stipulates the price to replace a slave, but on what might be the typological amount which Judas is paid to betray Jesus in the Gospels. Meyers and Meyers see Matthew 27:5 as the appropriate prophetic fulfilment of Zechariah 11:12-13 (1993, 278). There are indeed strong resonances between this account and Zechariah 11:12-13 where not only the amount of money is the same but the action performed by the prophet and Judas is the same (Matthew 27:5). In light of Finkelstein's chronology, we should maintain that the provenance of Zechariah 9-14 is much closer to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, in which case it is likely that the value of the thirty shekels of silver paid to the prophet in Zechariah 11 would be closer to that paid to Judas. Whether or not the amounts and the action of the writer of Zechariah 9-14 and Judas may be legitimately connected, the effect of their action is similar – a denouncement of the temple and its treasury.

### 8.2.3 The Parable of the Lost Sheep – Matthew 18:12-14/Luke 15:4-7

*“The logic in risk avoidance is that the distress of losing £100 spent on luxury is far less than the distress of losing the last £100 necessary for physical survival. Therefore, the pain of losing £100 (or caprine heads in our case) is larger than the satisfaction of gaining them.” (Sasson 2014, 31)<sup>313</sup>*

The parable of the lost sheep is one of the most endearing of the Synoptic parables. In the history of its interpretation, it has communicated the unconditional love and grace of God in seeking out wayward sinners, or in caring for the most vulnerable of a spiritual community. In what follows, we consider Matthean and Lukan

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<sup>313</sup> Incidentally Sasson has in mind here actual features of caprine husbandry in ancient Southern Levant and not the New Testament parable of the lost sheep.

versions, as well as those of Q and Gos.Thom. The methodology of this section is not primarily that of the historical-critical method, i.e. text, source, redaction and form criticism, though to maintain some form of convention, consideration is given to these. As mentioned at the outset of this study, my principal heuristic category is *class*. Thus, having considered some of the conventional forms of historical criticism I include a section titled 'socio-economic markers,' with the intention of highlighting aspects of the passages which inform the socio-economic background of the text, as well as the means of production which might be attendant to the context of the parable, as far as these can be ascertained. Although I do not share all the orientations and emphases of the historical-critical method it remains important in gaining something like an original form of the parable since, it is reasonable to assume, that this would be closer to the original said means of production. If this is not done, and the exercise is harder with John given its greater proximity from the original context of the Jesus movement, we may end up exegeting a parable with layers of later redaction or interpretation which reflects the class interests of the later redactors or Evangelists, not that of the historical Jesus.<sup>314</sup>

#### 8.2.4 Preliminary comments

The principle in the above quote by Aharon Sasson is that the vast majority of the ancient Southern Levant operated by a survival subsistence strategy motivated by survival at minimum subsistence levels which importantly included risk mitigation. Such a society operates on a basis of scarcity rather than abundance and, because of this, any surplus attained is used for mitigation of future risk, for example, in the case of crop failure. Because such a society subsists close to a baseline which seeks to guarantee a minimum caloric intake (a universal feature of peasant societies, cf. Wolf 1966, 4) the acquisition of a surplus when one is at that baseline is far less significant than the depletion of one's produce below that baseline, for this potentially means death. In light of this, and of the features of the theoretical framework compiled for this study, what should we make of the seeming protagonist of the parable leaving 99 sheep unattended? Bear in mind that we are not primarily concerned with a theological or confessional interpretation or exegesis but, in the first instance, with what the data in the passage tells us about the means of production for that time.

Below are the two versions in Luke and Matthew, in parallel (NRSV), followed by their Greek (Textus Receptus) versions in parallel.

Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his

What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it,

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<sup>314</sup> I say that the study does not share all of the orientations of the historical-critical method, yet I hope the reader will appreciate there is nevertheless a deeply historical aspect to the study. As stated, one of the contentions of the study is that a very fruitful, if not the most accurate, way of analysing the historical context of the text is to do so by means of socio-economic analysis. Indeed, one cannot fully understand the historical context of the text apart from this.

shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

(Luke 15:4-7)

Τίς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ὑμῶν ἔχων ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ ἀπολέσας ἐξ αὐτῶν ἓν οὐ καταλείπει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ πορεύεται ἐπὶ τὸ ἀπολωλὸς ἕως εὗρη αὐτό; καὶ εὗρὼν ἐπιτίθησιν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὄμους αὐτοῦ χαίρων, καὶ ἔλθων εἰς τὸν οἶκον συγκαλεῖ τοὺς φίλους καὶ τοὺς γείτονας λέγων αὐτοῖς, Συγχαρήτε μοι, ὅτι εὔρον τὸ πρόβατόν μου τὸ ἀπολωλὸς. λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὕτως χαρὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἔσται ἐπὶ ἐνὶ ἁμαρτωλῷ μετανοοῦντι ἢ ἐπὶ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα δικαίοις οἵτινες οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχουσιν μετανοίας.

(Luke 15:4-7)

### 8.2.3.1 Text-critical comments

Perhaps one textual note worth mentioning is that most English translations omit Matthew 18:11, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost," where the Byzantine and Western witness is not regarded as original (Luz 2001, 437; Turner 2008, 439 [Epub]). Carson says that the "verse is omitted by the earliest witnesses of the Alexandrian, pre-Caesarean, Egyptian, and Antiochene text types" (Carson 1984, 401). The most reasonable suggestion is to see this as a later addition speaking to the particular pastoral context of Matthew.

It should be noted too that in the Lukan and Matthean versions (15:4 and 18:12 respectively) different verbs are used for the possessive, usually rendered in English as "having" – *εχω* in Luke and *γίνομαι* in Matthew.<sup>315</sup> Kloppenborg's reconstructed Q version uses the *εχω* verb (2010, 222). It is also true that the word used in both versions for the 'protagonist' is *ανθρωπος* so that many commentators take what strictly speaking is a liberty in referring to a shepherd in both versions though this is implied (cf. Carter 2000, 489 [Epub], Schnackenburg

truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

(Matthew 18:12-14)

Τί ὑμῖν δοκεῖ; ἐὰν γένηται τινὶ ἀνθρώπῳ ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ πλανηθῇ ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν, οὐχὶ ἀφήσει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη καὶ πορευθεὶς ζητεῖ τὸ πλανώμενον; καὶ ἐὰν γένηται εὗρεῖν αὐτό, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι χαίρει ἐπ' αὐτῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα τοῖς μὴ πεπλανημένοις. οὕτως οὐκ ἔστιν θέλημα ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἵνα ἀπόληται ἓν τῶν μικρῶν τούτων.

(Matthew 18:12-14)

<sup>315</sup> Kloppenborg and Callon frame the question in terms of ownership or stewardship: "Does Q's *εχειν* imply ownership or stewardship of the flock?" (2010, 222)

2002, 229 [Epub]).

### 8.2.3.2 Source-critical comments

In terms of which version is more original (Kloppenborg and Callon, for example, consider both Matthew and Luke, as well that of Gos.Thom. and Q) there has been considerable debate. Johnson's position, since it is found in both Matthew and Luke, is that it emanates from Q (Johnson 1991, 239). But the situation is more nuanced. As Carson says, "[a]lmost all scholars hold that one parable stands behind both Gospels, and then they debate over which form and setting are most primitive" (1984, 400), indicating some disagreement as to whether both Matthew and Luke in fact used Q, since their versions differ substantially.<sup>316</sup> Bock regards the Lukan and Matthean versions as distinct, i.e. emanating from different sources, however he says it is futile to try to determine which one was more original (Bock 1996, 662 [Epub]).<sup>317</sup> Fitzmyer's position is that the parable of the lost sheep was originally in Q and that, while that of the lost coin paired with the lost sheep in Luke may represent original Lukan material,<sup>318</sup> Matthew's version is the more original.<sup>319</sup> Jeremias on the other hand had maintained that Luke's version was the more original of the two (Fitzmyer 1985, 1074).

France sees vv.11, 14 as "framing" verses unique to Matthew but maintains his version is a "reduced" one of Luke's, though he also cites Carson in an endnote who maintains the two parables, though similar, were distinct on the lips of Jesus (France 2007, 622, 1472 [Epub]). Carson indeed maintains that the two versions represent "two similar parables, both taught by Jesus, but with very different aims" (1984, 400). Schnackenburg prefers Luke's version as earlier or more "primitive" and Schweizer too says the Lukan version is earlier (2002, 230 [Epub]; Schweizer 1987, 366). Luz includes a fairly detailed discussion over the primacy of the Lukan or Matthean versions (2001, 438-439), and concludes that Luke and Matthew obtain the "parabolic material from the oral tradition independently of each other." (2001, 439)

There is seeming unanimity that Matthew 18:10, 14 are Matthean appellations (1987, 366; 2001, 440), v.14b reflecting Matthew's angelology, while most scholars dispute the authenticity of the Byzantine witness of v.11, as already mentioned. In so far as we can arrive at an 'original' version of the parable, Matthew 18:12-13 might

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<sup>316</sup> Carson, for example, says that "[a]lmost every relevant term is not the same as in the parallel, and the few that are the same are well within the bounds of repetition expected in an itinerant ministry". (Carson 1984, 400)

<sup>317</sup> Bock too notes the dispute over originality, citing in endnotes Bultmann (1964) and Linneman (1966), who opt for Matthean, and Jeremias (1963) and Ellis (1974) who opt for Lukan, originality (Bock 1996, 2730 [Epub]). Bock however says the debate is "unnecessary" since Jesus may have made "distinct applications of a basic image in two settings" (Bock 1996, 671 [Epub]).

<sup>318</sup> Fitzmyer offers additional theories as to the parable's provenance. Citing Manson, that both versions were original to Jesus, and perhaps reflect the telling of the parable in different contexts or on different occasions; then Schneider and Lambrecht, who see Luke's pair of the parable of the lost sheep and that of the lost coin as having originally been present in Q, and that Matthew both omitted the parable of the lost coin and heavily redacted that of the lost sheep to suit his own paraenetic purposes (Fitzmyer 1985, 1073).

<sup>319</sup> "Luke has clearly redacted his form of it (and of the second parable) to make the theme common in all three parables used in chap.15." (Fitzmyer 1985, 1074)

be the closest, even against Luke's version. In the case of the latter scholarship highlights that Luke magnifies the joy of the man seeking the sheep and, in so doing, creates for himself a longer parable. To my mind, it seems feasible that Luke in 15:5 employs the pastoral motif widely spread throughout ancient Mesopotamia, therefore itself perhaps not being original.<sup>320</sup> In this sense, a criterion of 'similarity,' as opposed to one of dissimilarity, might be applied to establish that the material is not original, since there are numerous occurrences throughout the ancient world of the shepherd shouldering a lamb. At the same time, the *lectio brevior* rule should lead us to prefer Matthew. In Kloppenborg and Callon's treatment (2010) of the parable, they prefer Q's version as most original. I have therefore included below Kloppenborg's translation:<sup>321</sup>

*Which person «is there» among you «who» has a hundred sheep, [[on losing]] one of them, [[will]] not leave the ninety-nine [[in the mountains]] and go [[hunt for]] the [[lost one]]? And if it should happen that he finds it, I say to you that he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. (Kloppenborg 2008, 142)<sup>322</sup>*

### 8.2.3.3 Redaction- and form-critical comments

Aside from which version may be more original, scholars agree that both Matthew and Luke use or adapt the parable to suit their own narrative and didactic ends. Matthew is concerned with the pastoral oversight of church leadership, while Luke adopts a polemical tone against potentially self-righteous Jewish leadership (whether he does so with the original context of Jesus in mind or his own is less clear). As we will see from the respective treatment of the Matthean and Lukan versions, their adaptations render different meanings for the parable. This leads us to the redactional choices of the authors.

Luke's version is used to justify Jesus' table fellowship with sinners (Caird 1963, 180). Indeed, the two versions serve distinct narrative and ideological purposes. In Luke's case, the parable is grouped with other material themed around "retrieving the lost" (1963, 179; 1994, 289 [Epub]; 1991, 239; 1985, 1071) i.e. those regarded by the religious authorities as non-observant Jews – the outcast, poor, diseased, disabled, tax collectors, and prostitutes.<sup>323</sup> Matthew's focus is the recurring "little ones" who represent, most likely, the weaker more vulnerable members of the Matthean community as opposed to its leaders.

France cites Matthew's use of the term "little ones," which he says refers to disciples, to unite the material throughout chapter 18, e.g. the child at start of the chapter, "little ones" in vv.6-7 etc. (2007, 621 [Epub]). France

<sup>320</sup> Johnson in referring to the motif cites, for example, the "Hellenistic pastoral tradition" (Johnson 1991, 240) though it should be noted that this is not necessarily the scholarly consensus.

<sup>321</sup> The authors treat "four versions of the parable – Q's representation of the shepherd as an agricultural labourer living at the margins of inhabited space; the idealized portrait of shepherd as the perfect ruler in Matthew; the equally idealized concept of the shepherd as the embodiment of rustic, carefree existence in Luke; and Thomas' fusion of the image of the shepherd with the ascetic seeker of wisdom" (2010, 219-220)

<sup>322</sup> In terms of a reconstruction of Q material, « » are used where either the text is present only in Matthew or Luke, or where the two differ too widely; [ ] are used to indicate a 'C' level of certainty as to the phrase, on a range from A-D.

<sup>323</sup> Bock states the "theme of Jesus' association with sinners is key" (Bock 1994, 289 [Epub]).

highlights the different Greek words used to describe the sheep's status. In Luke, the sheep is lost (ἀπολλύμι) and in Matthew it is straying (πλανᾶω), a term which, as France points out, is used three times in Matthew's version. He makes the legitimate point, in reference also to the different addressees of each version, that "Luke's parable is evangelistic, and Matthew's pastoral" i.e. Luke is concerned to address the afflictions of those outside a spiritual community, possibly Jewish authorities, while Matthew is concerned for the internal well-being of his community (2007, 622 [Epub]). Carson also points to the fact that, narratively, the two versions have distinctly different addressees – the Pharisees and scribes in Luke, and disciples in Matthew (1984, 400).

Additionally, Matthew's version appears in the fourth of Matthew's so-called five discourses (Hood 209, 527; 2008, 9 [Epub]),<sup>324</sup> the theme of which is sometimes regarded as church order and discipline.<sup>325</sup> Carter says the discourses centre around "being a community of sustaining relationships and practices" (2000, 483 [Epub]). Schnackenburg refers to the fourth discourse, in which Matthew's version appears, as "the great community discourse" (2002, 224). Carson sees it dealing with "life under kingdom authority" (1984, 395). Turner is more specific, saying the discourse refers to "church discipline," though he says even this assessment is overly simplistic (2008, 431 [Epub]).

What we see, in any event, in Matthew is that in response to debate amongst the disciples about status, Jesus uses the unique model of a child to illustrate the ethos to be embodied within the (Matthean) community. Hence collectively, the "discourse concerns genuine spiritual greatness and its basis in kingdom community values." (2008, 431 [Epub]). Like France, for Turner, further unity in Matthew 18 is provided by recurring terms like "children" and "little ones" (Turner 2008, 432).<sup>326</sup> Schnackenburg points to these recurring motifs as providing unity for this section as well (2002, 225). France refers frequently to "the disciple community" (2007, 621, 623 [Epub]) and interprets Matthew's version in relation to its application to such a community.

The three parables of Luke 15 on the other hand, the parable of the lost sheep (Lk.15:4-7), the parable of the lost coin (Lk.15:8-10), and the parable of the (lost) prodigal son (Lk.15:11-32) are themed around "joy over the finding of what has been lost" (1985, 1071). Fitzmyer maintains that the three parables are part of a larger narrative unit which extends up until 18:14 and possibly even 19:27. He cites Manson's appellation of the

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<sup>324</sup> A few models have been proposed for understanding the structure of Matthew. A common one favoured by some exegetes is the Five Discourse model. Hood says, for example, that "Matthew's most prominent and best-known structural feature is the series of five discourses." (Hood 2009, 527) Turner likewise favours this approach (2008, 9 [Epub]). Cf. Evans though who says no consensus has been achieved and that it may be better to see Matthew as an "adaptation of Mark's relatively simple outline...prefacing Mark's Gospel with an infancy narrative, concluding it with an evangelistic commission, and enriching the interior with additional materials, not least five impressive discourses." Evans 2012, 9)

<sup>325</sup> Modern exegetes adopt less severe headings. Turner labels the section "Values and relationships in the kingdom community" (2008, 10 [Epub]); Luz and Viviano refer simply to the "Community discourse" (2001, 421; Viviano 2005, 633);

<sup>326</sup> Turner says the "use of family and household imagery for the community of disciples is the most prominent motif of the discourse." (2008, 432 [Epub])

“Gospel of Outcasts” to refer to this material and says that its narrational function is to prepare Luke’s audience for Jesus’ own rejection in Jerusalem (1985, 1072). Fitzmyer says that vv.1-3 are Luke’s own and therefore not part of a more original telling of the parable. But he too points out that, in Luke’s version, Jesus addresses the parable to the scribes and Pharisees (1985, 1072).

Fitzmyer goes on to say that “[t]he setting for the parable proper depicts outcasts of first-century Palestinian society coming to Jesus en route to Jerusalem and Scribes and Pharisees in the same society grumbling at his consorting with toll-collectors and sinners” (1985, 1075). At this point, Fitzmyer addresses a possible historical setting for the parable where the subtext is the larger dispute around Torah observance. But in making this assessment, Fitzmyer has already taken an interpretative step once removed from an original context which makes no mention of Torah observance or ritual purity. The parable is an agrarian one, therefore its most immediate meaning and context must be agrarian in nature.<sup>327</sup>

Bock too says that the parables in Luke 15 serve to explain to the scribes and Pharisees Jesus’ position toward sinners (Bock 1996, 661 [Epub]) and also sees Luke 15:4-6 as directed at the scribes and Pharisees (1996, 669 [Epub]). Bock notes the different application in Matthew, where the “issue is the pastoral care of the believers” (1996, 671 [Epub]). He highlights Luke’s focus on joy in his version (1996, 672 [Epub]).

Green sees Luke 15, and the three parables in particular, being united to address the question or accusation of the Scribes and Pharisees around Jesus consorting with those of questionable moral standing (Green 1997, 568). Though, according to Green, Luke 15-16:1 (1997, 568) forms a self-contained pericope, the themes it covers resonate throughout the Gospel and in some ways are central to it. A key focus for Luke is the juridical status (Green uses the phrase “socio-religious status” – 1997, 570) of toll collectors, and sinners in general, vis-à-vis the religious leaders, i.e. scribes and Pharisees. The function therefore of the three parables in Luke 15, as well as the episode of Jesus dining at Levi’s house (Luke 5:29-32), the story of Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10), the parable of the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14), in the wider Gospel, is to demonstrate God’s acceptance of the likes of toll collectors and sinners over against the religious leaders (1997, 570). The addressees of the Lukan version is undisputed. Greene, for example, says “these opening verses [Luke 15:1-2] serve, first, to establish the charge that Jesus will seek to answer in the parabolic material that follows and, second, to demarcate the legal experts and Pharisees as Jesus’ primary audience for the ensuing discourse.” (1997, 572)

#### 8.2.3.4 Socio-economic markers

Kloppenborg and Callon’s treatment (2010) of the parable delineates four versions and treats them as distinct at

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<sup>327</sup> Finally, the relative promise in Fitzmyer’s assessment evaporates as he says in closing that the point of the parable “is not a description of the change in situation of a first-century Palestinian, but rather of the joy (of God) at the finding of a “lost” sinner.” (Fitzmyer 1985, 1075)

least in so far as they represent four distinctive socio-economic ideations.<sup>328</sup> While they therefore come closest to treating the socio-economic aspects of the parable, and perhaps those pertaining to the means of production, they do so only with Q's version, which they find to be the most original. While the questions the authors put to the parable<sup>329</sup> do not explicitly pertain to the means of production, the authors nevertheless attempt to answer them in consultation with data of a socio-economic nature from ancient papyri.<sup>330</sup>

While neither ποιμην or νομεως (the two words most commonly used to designate either a shepherd or herdsman) is used in Q's version of the parable, or any of the other three versions, Kloppenborg and Callon say the ανθρωπος of the parable is a "herdsman" (2010, 222). As we saw in Mein's treatment of Ezekiel, even the English *herdsman* can be ambiguous in this context, nevertheless they regard him as a hired shepherd, i.e. a non-owner of the flock, hired or contracted to tend the flock. They cite both later Mishnaic tractates as well as Egyptian papyri contemporary to the period in support of this (2010, 223).

They cite in particular *P.Princ.* II 24, an Egyptian papyrus dating from 21 CE. Of significance is a differentiation in this document between owner and shepherd (Kloppenborg and Callon use the term 'herdsman' since νομεως not μισθωτος is used in the papyrus); the flock in question comprises 109 sheep and 3 goats; the shepherd is "transient" residing some 60kms away, while the shepherd's village is mentioned for tax purposes (2019, 224).

Kloppenborg and Callon say it was common practice for owners of flocks not to oversee their flocks directly and thus enlist the service of lowlier shepherds for two reasons: "because other duties required the owners to be present on their farmsteads or in the towns, and because identification with the role of a herdsman would amount to a status degradation." (2019, 224-225) Such was the practice even of owners of relatively small flocks (2019, 225). Regarding the flock size in the parable of the lost sheep, the authors say that the number of 100 sheep, to be placed in the charge of herdsman, was "unexceptional" (2019, 225) where they cite the typical size for a single herdsman as being from 25-150 caprine (2019, 226). On this basis, in terms of the flock size, "Q's one hundred sheep and one shepherd display verisimilitude with ancient practices" (2019, 226).

Next they consider the figure of the "herdsman," whom they say was both "marginal and dangerous" (2010,

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<sup>328</sup> Kloppenborg and Callon treat the four versions as follows: "Q's representation of the shepherd as an agricultural labourer living at the margins of inhabited space; the idealized portrait of shepherd as the perfect ruler in Matthew; the equally idealized concept of the shepherd as the embodiment of rustic, carefree existence in Luke; and Thomas' fusion of the image of the shepherd with the ascetic seeker of wisdom" (2010, 219-220).

<sup>329</sup> "The questions that are typically raised apropos of the parable of the Shepherd are whether a flock of one hundred sheep represents a small, medium or large one (and consequently, whether the shepherd is well off or poor), whether the loss of one sheep would be worth the shepherd's effort to find it, and whether, in any case, a shepherd would abandon the remainder of the flock merely on the hope of recovering a single sheep." (2019, 220)

<sup>330</sup> "What is routinely neglected in discussions of the sayings of Jesus, or given only fleeting consideration, is the wealth of social and economic documentation available from documentary papyri and other sources from the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods." (2019, 221)

227). They cite three main factors as to why this was so: the fact that he, unlike agricultural labourers, was unsupervised (often in remote areas); his transience, or tendency to be in a single area only briefly; and that he was necessarily armed to fend off predators that might attack the flock (2010, 228). They then cite a number of ancient records, in consultation with the work of Grünewald incidentally, indicating that shepherds were stereotypically associated with banditry or otherwise nefarious activity. Their presentation suggests that this was a common and wide-held perception, at least among those responsible for written records (2010, 228-230). The authors say too, based on historical sources, that those engaged as hired shepherds were amongst the lowest paid form of wage labourer and that, due to this, and the previous factors which predisposed them to banditry, “[t]hat shepherds should have engaged in theft is hardly surprising.” (2010, 231)

Kloppenborg and Callon do reference “middle men” in a footnote (2010, 232 n.37) but are somewhat vague or unclear as to what such a role entailed. In addition to the Neo-Babylonian cuneiform data, which they cite from Mein’s study, they also cite papyri which support the notion that “a shepherd was held accountable for livestock losses due to mortality and theft.” (2010, 232) The authors therefore explore what might have been the real motivation for a hired shepherd to retrieve a lost sheep. Instead of characterising this in terms of steep penalties, they do so on the basis of replacement costs for lost sheep (2010, 232-233).<sup>331</sup>

Thus, the authors conclude their treatment of Q’s version of the parable saying:

*“At this lower socio-economic level of Q’s audience, the figure of the socially marginal shepherd pursuing one lost sheep that was the rough equivalent of a month’s wages, while an extreme example, was still a figure with whose motivations the audience could readily identify. There was no need to attempt to transform the figure into something else beyond its surface meaning. The shepherd has not been romanticized or transformed into a messianic king or saviour. Q’s shepherd is a perfectly ordinary agrarian figure and the appeal to verisimilitude is precisely the point for Q.”* (2010, 237)<sup>332</sup>

Kloppenborg and Callon’s conclusion regarding Q’s functioning of the parable is closely connected to the role they assign to the parable of the lost coin (2010, 234-237). But they never consider for a moment that something may be amiss with this parable itself. Yes, it may be self-evident, that a single woman, having ten drachma and losing one should search the house until she finds, but what was she doing with ten drachmae in the first place? The author’s own notes indicate that ten drachmae represent between 10-20 day’s wages

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<sup>331</sup> “Thus, the motivation to recover one lost sheep becomes exceedingly clear: the replacement cost of a male would be about one month’s wages, the loss of a female would likely amount to more than a month’s wages” (2010, 232-233).

<sup>332</sup> The authors write “both parables [that of the lost sheep and lost coin] are presented as similitudes and each features a question expecting the answer, ‘everyone, of course’” (2010, 234). At this point, the authors do not consider the possibility, even likelihood, that Q’s audience is not of the same demographic as that of a lowly shepherd. In light of this, the answer to the question, “Which of you...” could feasibly be, “None of us, since none of us are shepherds. It is possible that we own sheep but [as Kloppenborg and Callon’s own analysis attests] we never tend them ourselves, hence none of us would ever be in a position to leave the ninety-nine and go in search of the one.”

(2010, 236 n.54). While not an inconceivable amount to have saved, given the possible proximity of the average member of first-century Palestine to subsistence level, the amount is at least enough to raise an eyebrow.

Ultimately, Kloppenborg and Callon's thorough treatment of the parable, in all four of its iterations, is deeply insightful in being able to show, or at least to argue, how the parable was adapted to meet the distinct needs of its various audiences. These adaptations may seem only subtly different however they change the import of the parable in quite specific ways. Kloppenborg and Callon's treatment is helpful for the purpose of this study in making us aware of the redactional concerns and tendencies of Matthew and Luke. For the authors, Q's version is most original and therefore closest to the original material concerns of Jesus and his hearers. Matthew exploits the image of the shepherd to exemplify virtuous leadership; Luke, perhaps unconsciously, is taken over by pastoral romanticism and; Gos.Thom. reflects a desire for the pursuit of secret/hidden knowledge.

In this section, as stated previously, we will consider those terms and features of the parable which may inform our understanding of the socio-economic context in which an original version of the parable might have been told. In so doing, we must consider comments which highlight features of the socio-economic context. We should bear in mind though that few scholars are concerned with such details and, where they are mentioned, they are usually glossed over. Knight (1998), Gadenz's (2018) and Thompson (2015) are inconsequential in this regard. Something highlighted by Kloppenborg and Callon's treatment is the way the different redactional layers, represented in versions in Q, Matthew, Luke and Gosp.Thom., show clear but subtle differences which change the import of the parable, where Q is the closest to the original agrarian context, while the other three are somewhat removed from this. In other words, it is not true to say that scholars like Knight, Gadenz and Thompson are approaching the parable incorrectly – they are following the cue of the Evangelist or redactor.

While Kloppenborg and Callon are concerned to show how the image of the *αἰθροπός* and his sheep are subtly manipulated by employing the tools of the historical-critical method, an approach which uses class as a heuristic category is only concerned with such tools to the extent that they are able to better elucidate socio-economic features of the original context of the parable. To put it another way, understanding how Matthew exploits the image of the noble shepherd/king/leader and Luke that of the rustic and ruddy sheep rearer of yesteryear is helpful only in shedding light on the redactional tendencies of later Evangelists which, as mentioned, are at least one degree removed from the original material realities of the parable. In this sense, such information can be unhelpful and even misleading, since the object of a class heuristic is to get as close to the original material realities of the parable as possible so as to determine the means of production.

In considering such aspects of the parable, we will be helped by posing some guiding questions. Firstly, is there a substantial difference in meaning between Luke's use of *εἶχον* (Luke 15:4) and Matthew's use of *γίνομαι* (Matt.18:12) and is there a difference in connotation between either term in *having* versus *owning*? Related to

this question is precisely that of whether the *ανθρωπος*, the seeming protagonist in both versions, is in fact the owner of the sheep or a 'shepherd' in charge of the sheep. To some extent, from an interpretational perspective, this question is important. Thirdly, may we assign or infer any socio-economic significance from the figure of 100 sheep? And, finally based on possible answers to these questions, how are we to interpret or understand the action of the so-called shepherd leaving the ninety-nine to go in search of the one?

To the extent that commentators speak to these questions, discussion over whether *γέννηται*, from *γίνομαι*, (Matt.18:12) carries different connotations of *having* or *owning* may be something of a moot point in that Matthew's use of it could be a stylistic device. For example, Turner states that "[t]he words *ἐὰν γέννηται* introduce the parallel protases of conditional clauses in 18:12 and 18:13." (2008, 440 [Epub]) France points out that for the English "find" in v.13 "*γέννηται* *εὔρε*...rather than simply *εὔρη*" is used emphasising the "successful outcome" of the 'shepherds' efforts (2007, 1471 [Epub]).

Regarding ownership, France maintains that the protagonist is the owner of the sheep (2007, 623 [Epub]) but cites Bailey in an endnote saying "anyone wealthy enough to own a hundred sheep would not do his own shepherding" (2007, 1473 [Epub]).<sup>333</sup> Again citing Bailey, and in terms of how the 'shepherd' secured the ninety-nine, France says there may have been multiple shepherds for a flock of that size (2007, 1473 [Epub]). Turner has also said that one "assume[s] that the shepherd would not jeopardize the entire flock in order to seek the single lost sheep." (2008, 440 [Epub]). Turner, citing Wallace, says ownership of the sheep by the 'shepherd' in Matthew's version is indicated by use of the dative of possession (2008, 440 [Epub]). Turner also says that "[a]lthough it is not stated, one tends to assume that the shepherd would not jeopardize the entire flock in order to seek the single lost sheep" (2008, 440 [Epub]).

The Greek *ποιμην* (shepherd) is not used in the parable. All three versions (including that in the Gospel of Thomas) use *ανθρωπος*. Matthew's version deals with 'a man in general' (Matt.18:12) whereas Luke has Jesus ask, "Which man of *you*...". (Lk.15: 4). This is perhaps significant given that, in Luke, Jesus' addressees are Pharisees and Scribes and, as some commentators point out, would imply that the Pharisees and Scribes are referred to as shepherds. Neither *ποιμην* (shepherd) is used and nor is *μισθωτος* (what would have been, in this instance, a hired shepherd)<sup>334</sup> meaning that, in terms of the information given in the parable, no indication is offered as to the exact role of the *ανθρωπος*. While the implication may at first seem puzzling in Luke, that scribes and Pharisees would be referred to as shepherds, we can assume that *ανθρωπος* is original since it

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<sup>333</sup> "K. E. Bailey, *Poet*, 148, argues, however, that anyone wealthy enough to own a hundred sheep would not do his own shepherding, so that "has" must mean "has in his charge" rather than "owns." But Bailey concludes that the shepherd in such a case would be a member of the extended family rather than a hired stranger, so that the point that the sheep matter to the shepherd remains." (France 2007, 1473 [Epub]).

<sup>334</sup> *Μισθωτος* literally means wage labourer. In Matthew's Parable of the Day Labourers, *μισθωσασθαι εργατας* is used which means the same as *μισθωτος*. We also see the *μισθωτος* as the hired labour used by the father of James and John (Mark 1:20).

appears in all three versions and we know that Luke has adapted his audience according to polemical needs, i.e. made them scribes and Pharisees.

The issue of ownership should not be underestimated. It is relevant on at least two levels. Firstly, as mentioned, in the final instance it is necessary to ascertain the precise nature of the relationship between the *ανθρωπος* and the sheep. It is also relevant at a more general level. As we saw earlier in briefly considering the so-called parable of the wicked tenants, not only is determining who owns the means of production in the parable important, but invariably at an interpretational or exegetical level, those who stand in equivalent positions in their own context will usually have their interpretations coloured by this fact. What this results in, and this was evident when citing the Talmudic literature and the narrative of Genesis 3, is that those who own the means of production in contemporary contexts, or even contexts somewhat removed from that of the original context of the literature in question, will not only readily identify with the owners of the means of production in the literature's original context, but also identify that position with God or the divine. This should come as no surprise since the class interests of the two are closely aligned.

Let us consider some examples in regard to the parable of the lost sheep. Regarding the imagery of sheep and shepherds, Turner makes the following statement:

*"The metaphor of believers as sheep is common in Matthew (9:36; 10:6, 16; 12:11–12; 15:24; 18:12; 25:32–33; 26:31) and is thoroughly biblical (e.g., Ps. 23; Ezek. 34; Jer. 23; Mic. 2; John 10; cf. Keener 1999: 450–52). In the Scriptures, God is the shepherd who pastures his people Israel through theocratic leaders such as kings and priests."* (2008, 440 [Epub])

Or consider Caird's imaginative commentary:

*"The sheep is a gregarious animal which does not wilfully separate itself from the flock, but in a mountainous district it can easily nibble its way to a place from which there is no return, and where, if it is not rescued, it will die of starvation. But the shepherd does not let that happen; for him the arduous search and the risks involved in bringing the exhausted but struggling animal to safety are all in a day's work."* (Caird 1963, 180)

While somewhat dated, one may be struck by the ease with which scholars imagine and reconstruct historical scenarios as if, in the latter case, they are distant relatives of first-century Palestinian shepherds. Like the parables more generally, the tendency of interpreters of this parable is to immediately spiritualise it by assigning spiritual or theological significance without first considering fully what it might have meant at a literal level.

Various scholars, as we saw, view the theme of "the little ones" as recurring through Matthew and therefore Matthew's version of the parable of the lost sheep as a continuation of this theme, where 'sheep' seem a natural comparison for the "little ones". Luz, for example, says there are redactional verses (v.10a, 14) which help

achieve this connection about which he says there is also consensus (2001, 437-438). He contends the action of the *ανθρωπος* is self-evident. In his footnotes, he cites the position by other scholars (Perrin and Hare) that the action of the man was foolish given the risk posed to the now unprotected sheep, if one reads the parable literally. But, he says, a “parable is an abbreviated story that omits unnecessary details” (2001, 440). Luz therefore overlooks precisely that which is being problematised. Why would the man leave the ninety-nine sheep alone and vulnerable in the wilderness and potentially prone to predation?

Carter (2000, 489 [Epub]) describes the action of the *ανθρωπος* as putting the rest of the flock at risk and also describes the action of the *ανθρωπος* as “surprising” (2000, 489 [Epub]).<sup>335</sup> If we adopt such an orientation, as some commentators have done, the meaning producing effect of the parable falls flat. Part of the efficacy of parables is that what is true of the internal (narrative) structure of the parable is true to the situation to which it is being applied. If the action of the man to inexplicably risk the welfare of ninety-sheep is surprising, then equally inexplicable is the supposed joy that he feels on discovering the lost or wondering sheep. If he would not in the first instance be expected to pursue the sheep, why should Jesus’ hearers identify with the joy he feels on finding the one lost sheep?

Additionally, some of the commentators’ class designations are misguided. Fitzmyer had referred to the ‘shepherd’ in Luke 15 as “a moderately rich one, [who] is thus contrasted with the poor woman in the next parable [parable of the lost coin].” (1985, 1076) Likewise, Green describes the ‘shepherd’ of Luke 15, and the searching woman who follows, respectively as a “relatively wealthy shepherd...[and] an impoverished widow.” (1997, 573) Bock cites Jeremias in reference to the size of the flock, saying that 100 sheep would indicate that the shepherd is “modestly wealthy, since the average flock ranged from twenty to two hundred head” (1994, 290 [Epub]).

In relation to the addressees of the parable and the question in the form of the parable which is posed to them, as well as the implication that the scribes and Pharisees must imagine themselves as shepherds, Green cites Donahue and Bailey’s point that there is an irony present. The scribes and Pharisees represent the elite or upper rungs of first-century Judean society, and so in some sense (though in making this reference Green does not go this far) the question is sarcastic or even moot. The scribes and Pharisees would never leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness to go in search of the one, for they would never conceivably occupy the position of a shepherd. In this vein, Green too misses the point or barb of the parable. For him the purpose of Jesus’ telling the parable is to convince its hearers, i.e. scribes and Pharisees; to get them to agree to what Green sees as

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<sup>335</sup> Cf. Other scholars who are pains to find an explanation for the desertion of the sheep – ““It seems to be a shocking lack of pastoral prudence to risk all for the one. In real life the dog, other shepherds, or the native timidity of the sheep might keep them together, but that is not the point here. The risk is the point.” (Viviano 2005, 661)

the obvious answer to the rhetorical question being posed.<sup>336</sup> Having said this, of all commentators, Green is amongst the closest to posing economic questions:

*“The parable itself leaves some questions unasked and, therefore, unanswered - for example, Where and in whose care are the ninety-nine left? Some details are easy enough to understand... [T]he shepherd Jesus portrays is not a hired worker but the owner of the sheep, or, at least, a member of the family that owns them. If an average family has between five and fifteen animals, this one is cast as relatively wealthy, though the absence of any mention of a wage-earning shepherd to care for the sheep speaks against our pushing the question of his wealth too far. Because sheep are gregarious creatures, a sheep lost from its flock becomes quickly agitated and disoriented and must be carried back to the other sheep; for lengthy journeys this is most easily accomplished by placing the sheep on one's shoulders.”* (1997, 574)

Likewise, Kloppenborg and Callon had posed similar questions:

*“Does Q's εχειν imply ownership or stewardship of the flock? What, if anything, does flock size imply about the shepherd's economic standing? What social valences does Q's shepherd have? And how does the shepherd's action cohere with a general view of the economics of pastoralism?”* (2010, 222)

Green points out that Luke's application of the parable does not exactly match the implication in the parable itself. Luke's application is in the context of accepting and welcoming penitent sinners where, one assumes, penitence would be an essential feature in a moral story. Yet there is no indication of this in the parable, i.e. on the part of the sheep (1997, 575). In as far as the parable's application is in a context of ritual purity, Bock's comment that “Jesus did not share in the sinners' activity, but he did befriend them, encourage them to come to know God, and challenge them to repent,” (1996, 678 [Epub]) betrays his evangelicalism and is anachronistic. What is evident if one considers the historical context of such a scenario is that, in the minds of the religious authorities, there would be little distinction between Jesus and those he associated with because, by virtue of his association his own ritual purity is compromised.<sup>337</sup>

Snodgrass sometimes refers to the “barb” at the end of the parable (Snodgrass 2018, 31). Luke's telling of the parable has its own unique barb in the refrain – “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” (Luke 15:7) The barb lies in the fact that the ninety-nine righteous are not righteous at all but merely have the appearance of being

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<sup>336</sup> “Jesus' listeners are expected to assent. They are expected to agree not only that the shepherd would leave the ninety-nine in order to find the one, not only that he will rejoice as he carries it home on his shoulders, but also and especially that his homecoming with the lost-but-found sheep will provide the occasion for celebration with friends and neighbors.” (Green 1997, 574)

<sup>337</sup> In other words, this statement “This man eats with sinners,” is not far from “This man is a sinner,” thus representing part of the scandal of Jesus' ministry.

righteous and therefore are more likely to be condemned (Luke 20:47). This is in line with positions Luke adopts elsewhere such as the woes to the Pharisees (Luke 11:39-44) and the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). All scholars who mention the narrative context of the Lukan and Matthean versions note that they are told to different audiences. Luke makes Jesus address the Pharisees and scribes, possibly with some publicans present. In terms of his narrative, Matthew is addressing the disciples, but possibly more immediately, the leaders of the Matthean community (Fitzmeyer 1987, 1073). In any event, this distinction and the phrasing of the opening question in each is central to the meaning of the parable in each.

If Matthew is addressing the Matthean community or its leaders, or narratively the disciples, the opening phrasing of the question, “What do you think? If a shepherd (Gk. *man*)...” means the protagonist of the parable is not necessarily identified as one of Jesus’ hearers. In Luke’s version, if we accept that Jesus’ hearers are scribes and Pharisees, and perhaps some tax collectors, and then in light of this read in the opening of the parable, “Which one of you (τις ανθρωπος εξ υμων)...” then we must accept that Jesus is directing a question to the scribes and Pharisees themselves.

Matthew’s version poses a hypothetical scenario for (perhaps) the leaders of the community to contemplate. Luke poses a direct question, and therefore challenge, to the scribes and Pharisees. Obviously, depending on where Jesus ‘originally’<sup>338</sup> told the parable and to whom, its meaning would change somewhat. Matthew’s *τις ανθρωπω* (Matthew 18:12) shows only the relative pronoun whereas Luke adds *εξ υμων* (Luke 15:4-7), seemingly limiting the application of the parable to Jesus’ hearers in Luke, i.e. scribes and Pharisees.

Let us return then to the question of how Jesus’ hearers might have interpreted the two different introductions, assuming that his hearers were scribes and Pharisees in Luke and leaders of the Matthean community in Matthew. In considering Luke’s version, “which one of you” (15:4, NRSV), the introductory question can result in two interpretive trajectories. The feasibility of one of these depends on whether ownership is implied by *εχω*.<sup>339</sup> Let us deal with this possibility last. If no “ownership” is implied by *εχω* but, for example, “charge” is implied, i.e., “which one of you having charge of a hundred sheep...” then the meaning of the parable becomes clearer.

Since we are about to consider implications of flock size, we should note the fact that the flock is said to consist of 100 *sheep* (i.e. apparently no goats). However, the Hebrew word normally rendered “flock” in English is commonly used to include both caprine species, i.e. where the word appears in Hebrew it can and often does mean a mixture of sheep and goats (Cansdale 1970, 47, 54). Likewise, in ancient Greek literature, the word

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<sup>338</sup> The notion of an original version is somewhat problematic as there is sufficient basis to see Jesus’ parables as having been told by him perhaps on repeated occasions being, in addition, from an oral culture. Snodgrass makes this point.

<sup>339</sup> Kloppenborg and Callon maintain that “The indications of possession... whether Q’s verb *εχειν* or Matthew’s *γινεσθαι* + dative, should not be interpreted to imply strict ownership, as most commentators have wrongly assumed.” (2019, 222)

πρόβατον was originally used to refer to any small quadruped. In other words, when referring to flocks or herds of πρόβατα, this could include both sheep and goats. In ancient caprine husbandry, as we saw earlier, it was expedient to keep mixed flocks, given that goats provided resilience while the meat and fleece of sheep was more prized. It seems possible then, if not likely, that the 100 sheep referred to in the parable could have been interspersed with goats.

Having said this, Sasson's research showed at least one population for the period of his review of 100% sheep as well as three above 80% (2014, 76). In light of this, and of the tendency of sheep assuming primary signification by terms which previously included both sheep and goat in ancient literature, this may illustrate a trend in antiquity toward herds with higher sheep concentrations. If we are to understand the parable literally, i.e. if the herd consisted of 100 sheep in the absence of goats, this would suggest such forms of specialisation and a move away from historically practiced subsistence pastoralism.

But now we come to the relationship of the man (ἄνθρωπος; NRSV - *shepherd*) to the sheep. With few exceptions, notably Green (1997) and Kloppenborg and Callon (2010), questions are seldom raised as to the precise nature of this relationship – whether the ἄνθρωπος is the owner of the sheep, owner and shepherd of the sheep, or merely one hired to tend the sheep. Based on what we have established thus far, in terms of the socioeconomic conditions attendant to first-century caprine husbandry in Judea and Galilee, it is at least possible if not likely that a herd numbering one hundred sheep, not counting goats (if goats were indeed present), was being managed by a hired shepherd.

We saw earlier that such a class of shepherd was a standard feature of caprine husbandry attendant to the Eana and Uruk temple-complexes and were also commonly known to rabbinic literature of the Talmud. If we assume the parable is speaking from the context of this particular means of caprine production, then the notion of risk mitigation does not pertain as it would in a form of subsistence caprine production, and the ratio of sheep to goat is something of a moot point. The mean averages for goat populations attendant to the Eanna temple are just above 4% and just below 12% where it is conceded that, for whatever reason, Eanna placed more emphasis on sheep production.<sup>340</sup> Such sheep populations, i.e. at about 95% and 88% are closer to the percentages in the three assemblages reflected in Sasson's work (2008, 2014) though we do not know, in these examples, why the sheep populations were so high. As we will see in the respective treatments of Luke and Matthew, in the first instance, the most likely reading is that of a hired shepherd. For reasons we shall see shortly, it was imperative that the hired shepherd retrieve a lost animal, not to save the animal's life but to avoid liability for the animal by proving it had been a victim of predation.

As we saw in our treatment of the archival material from Eanna and Uruk, penalties were payable in the case

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<sup>340</sup> A common argument as discussed earlier is that Eanna commoditised wool, though Kozuh (2014) disputes this.

of the loss of livestock by the shepherds hired to tend flocks. Such penalties likely exceeded the value of the animal lost or they would not serve as a deterrent for stock theft. The archival material further indicates that such penalties did not apply if animals died through sickness, predation, or some other accident, so long as the shepherd could produce proof of such an accident. The form of proof relevant was either the dead carcass, the animal's fleece or, if these had been consumed or ruined, a remnant of the animal which may indicate how the animal died. Tendons were often used as proof that the animal was no longer living (Van Driel 1993, 239).

The Bava Metzia (c.190-230 CE), part of one of the three original tractates of the Talmud dealing with "damages" or liabilities, sheds light on the liability of hired shepherds for this period. In essence, the section deals with the liabilities of voluntary shepherds versus paid shepherds in instances where both are tending the flock of an absent owner. It stands to reason that there is far greater liability for the latter where a voluntary shepherd is ordinarily exempt from loss of livestock unless gross negligence on his part is plainly evident.<sup>341</sup> By contrast, the most severe position regarding paid bailees (i.e. shepherds hired by wage) make them liable in all cases of loss.<sup>342</sup>

In the case of attack by lion, for example, the hired shepherd is obliged to enlist the services of other shepherds to fend off the attacking animal, shepherds whose wages will then be paid by the owner of the flock even (in theory) up to the value of the flock. The rationale seemingly is that it is preferable to lose, in monetary value, a sum equal to the value of the flock firstly, because of the flock's supposed familiarity with the owner and/or hired shepherd and secondly, because it was apparently not a simple matter to procure new livestock (Bava Metzia 93b, 6-9). Likewise, Bava Metzia 7, 9 treats again of liability in the case of predation or theft by bandit, indicating that if the attack occurs at the usual grazing area, the shepherd is not liable, but if he happened to lead the flock to "a place of groups of beasts or bandits" he is liable for any loss incurred.<sup>343</sup>

We should also consider Old Testament passages which, in cursory way, provide information as to the means of ancient caprine production in the southern Levant. In terms of passages which indicate or deal with penalties or liability, there are two of which I am aware. Exodus 22:13 stipulates, in the case of loss or damage to livestock which has been entrusted to a third party for oversight, "if [the animal] was mangled by beasts, let it be

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<sup>341</sup> "An unpaid bailee takes an oath over every outcome; whether the item was lost, stolen, or broken, or if the animal died, the unpaid bailee must take an oath that it happened as he described, and he is then exempt from payment." (Bava Metzia 93a, 15) And again, "the court estimates with regard to him: If he could have rescued his animal by chasing a beast of this kind [i.e. a lion] away, he is liable, as his departure from the scene was certainly a contributing factor to the damage. If not, he is exempt from liability." (Bava Metzia 93b, 4)

<sup>342</sup> "Rav Hisda and Rabba bar Rav Huna... say that the owner [of the sheep] can tell the bailee: It was for this reason that I gave you a wage, so that you should safeguard for me with an additional level of safeguarding, not for you to go and eat and sleep like other people, [i.e. and therefore you are liable for any loss regardless]" (Bava Metzia 93b, 10) and then again, with reference to Rav Pappa, "Since you [the hired shepherd] are an expert and were hired for this purpose, the responsibility is yours." (Bava Metzia 93b, 11). Rav Pappa is supposed to have had a reputation for being exploitative.

<sup>343</sup> While the dating for this material may be between 200-500 CE Rav Pappa of which Bava Metzia 93b, 10 makes mention operated in the early fourth century.

brought as evidence; restitution shall not be made for the mangled remains.” In other words, where the person overseeing the animal can produce evidence that the livestock was victim of predation there is exemption from liability.

The second Old Testament text which speaks to the issue of liability for the loss of livestock is Amos 3:12, which we have referred to previously, which reads “[a]s the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who live in Samaria be rescued.” Without the framework of class dynamics provided thus far, an automatic way to understand this passage would be as a reflection or demonstration of the utter pastoral devotion of the shepherd, that he might endanger his own life to rescue a remnant of the animal. With the relevant framework we have provided, however, it becomes clear that the shepherd, who is a hired shepherd, goes to such lengths not out of any altruistic motive or inherent care for the sheep, but because if he does not provide proof of the animal’s demise, he will not only be liable for the cost of the sheep, but steep penalties in addition to this which, conceivably, would send him into debt.

The obvious question in light of this verse is: of what use are “two legs, or a piece of an ear,” where the only conceivable answer is as proof to the owner or guarantor of the flock as to the animal’s demise. The verse therefore corroborates the practice witnessed to in Babylonian archival material as well as that in the Talmudic literature and suggests why the hired shepherd would need to track down the lost animal even if there was no prospect of recovering the animal alive. Indeed, it was imperative that he recover something of the animal as proof of its demise to avoid incurring steep penalties. The “rejoicing” then in the context of such scenario would not be rejoicing at the fact of the shepherd having found his own sheep alive but rejoicing at the fact that he had found the sheep, or its remains, and therefore would not have to pay penalties to its owner or his overseer.<sup>344</sup>

In considering a second interpretational trajectory, we must admit the possibility of the protagonist not being the hired shepherd but the owner of the sheep, in which case the scenario painted, and the question posed in light of it, is somewhat ironic. In other words, in terms of our theoretical framework, as well as the principle of risk mitigation, which was universally present in peasant societies, the scenario pictured, in either Luke or Matthew, is unlikely to be that of conventional, subsistence-based animal husbandry. This alternative interpretive trajectory is perhaps more feasible in Luke’s version. This is because the hypothetical protagonist is potentially among Jesus’ addressees, as we have seen, the Pharisees and scribes. The hypothetical protagonist for Luke would likely then not be one of Jesus’ original hearers, i.e. not one among the peasantry, but instead is feasibly either a sheep merchant or, more likely in this case, a heard owner. If this is the case, the whole scenario and the question posed in light of it is an example of sarcasm or irony for the truth is that neither the owner of the

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<sup>344</sup> Alternatively, the “rejoicing” may be because the shepherd and his family/associates now had license to consume the mauled carcass, so long as they kept proof of the animal’s demise, i.e. in Babylonian archival material, skin and tendons.

sheep nor the sheep merchant would follow the action of the protagonist, though they would have both reaped material gain from the sheep and the efforts of the hired shepherd who was paid a meagrely wage to tend the sheep and who incurred high penalties when failing to account for lost sheep.

#### 8.2.4 The Discourse on the Good Shepherd – John 10:1-16

We now come to John 10 which famously recounts the image of the good shepherd. We have already offered some comments as to the difference between John and the Synoptics in relation to historical data or data of a socio-economic nature. To my mind, there are definite socio-economic markers in John 10, whether these reflect either the Johannine context or a remnant of that of the historical Jesus. Where it is reasonable to assume that banditry and stock theft were common over extended geographical and historical expanses these could have applied to either context. The main difference, presumably, would have been that hearers of an original context, closer to Jesus, might have been more sympathetic toward phenomena like wage labour, stock theft, and banditry, while those of John, as perhaps is reflected in the passage, were more disparaging.

*"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.*

(John 10:1-16)

##### 8.2.4.1 Text- and source-critical comments

There are basic and fundamental differences between John and the Synoptics such that, from a methodological or historical point of view, they cannot be approached similarly. My concerns do not completely align however with the historical-critical method. As stated previously, this and the insights it yields are of importance but generally only in so far as they bring us to a closer understanding of the material means of production attendant to the text's context. In the main, there are potentially two historical contexts which we can be concerned with in treating John, that of the Johannine community, which may itself represent more than one context, and that of the historical Jesus. This orientation is not very different from that when dealing with the Synoptics except that John's context seems further removed historically from the context of the historical Jesus. Perkins, for example, places the date of authorship for an original structure of John between 90-100 CE (*NJBC*, 949). Brown agrees with this date, though does not discount a dating as late as 110 CE (1971, lxxxvi, lxxx).

One might also argue, based on John's narrative and theological concerns as well as his stylistic features, that his context is more closely aligned with an elite class.<sup>345</sup> To cite one case in point, while we are not at liberty to speculate how much wine, and of what quality, would typically be consumed at a Galilean wedding, it is clear at least that guests at the wedding in John 2, including Jesus, Mary, and Jesus' disciples, are attended by slaves, where there is also an ἀρχιτρικλινος present.<sup>346</sup> The incident itself may not (likely does not?) date to the historical Jesus but nevertheless reflects John's own contextual concerns and class interests.<sup>347</sup>

Although the historicity of the Synoptic tradition is normally favoured over John,<sup>348</sup> more recent appreciation of the historicity of the fourth Gospel has arisen. As mentioned earlier, Anderson, Just, and Thatcher (Eds. 2009) published work from a seminar conducted for the express purpose of reevaluating John's historicity.<sup>349</sup> Dodd, as early as 1963, in his *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* posited an historically reliable tradition independent of the Synoptics which the author of John might have used.<sup>350</sup> In any event, whether material in

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<sup>345</sup> Boer and Petterson say, for example, "John displays an "aristocratic," or rather a "ruling class ideology," since the text obfuscates the relations of production." (2017, 158)

<sup>346</sup> *BDAG* defines the ἀρχιτρικλινος as "the slave who was responsible for managing a banquet" and also lists "head waiter, butler" (*BDAG*, 122).

<sup>347</sup> On whether the incident may have a parallel in the Dionysian miracle of changing water into wine cf. *NJBC*, 944.

<sup>348</sup> Moloney, for example, writes, "[i]n the 'quest for the historical Jesus' it has become axiomatic that the Fourth Gospel...has little to offer attempts to trace the person and activity of the pre-Easter Jesus." (Moloney 2000, 42).

<sup>349</sup> The seminar undertook a "serious reconsideration of the historical character of the Johannine tradition and the role that the Fourth Gospel might play in future quests for the historical Jesus." (Anderson, Just, Thatcher [Eds] 2009, p.1). See also the paper by Anderson (2021) who says John both "provides an independent corroboration of the Synoptic accounts" as well as making "distinctive contributions" (2021, 7).

<sup>350</sup> Three of the more obvious examples of where John may demonstrate strata of tradition dating back to the historical Jesus are the seeming competition between the Baptist and Jesus (cf. John 3:26); Jesus' questionable racial background and the accusation of being demon-possessed (John 8:48; 10:20-21; cf. the Synoptic tradition which makes the same claim - Mark 3:21-22; although, cf. also Perkins who maintains that the Johannine community had a particular association with Samaria – *NJBC*, 945, 946); as well as additional detail around the arrest of Jesus, e.g. Judas' betrayal of Jesus (John 18:2-3) and, while it may be clearly implied that Barrabas is a bandit in the Synoptic tradition, being both "a notorious prisoner" (Matt.27:16) and "in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection" (Mark 15:7), John specifically labels him a ληστής (John 18:40).

John 10 dates back to the historical Jesus or not, the contention of this study is that what we have termed socio-economic markers, viz. in the case of John 10, the thief, bandit and hired hand, are historical. In other words, though they are used metaphorically, they are historical in the sense that John knew of thieves, bandits and hired shepherds as socio-historical phenomena attendant either to his context, or as memory from that of the historical Jesus. Indeed, as with any comparison of such nature, without a basis in history, it loses its import. From a text-critical viewpoint, the passage is relatively uncomplicated with few and fairly insignificant variants. The first listed in Aland's critical text appears in v.8 with only five minor variants for the rest of the passage (UBS4, 358-360). The phrase *πρὸ ἐμοῦ* was seemingly added in v.8, i.e. to read "All who came *before me*..." making the statement more exclusive, with the result that it alienates also the former patriarchs and prophets, as Klink points out (Klink 2016, 726 [Epub]). On the surface, it may seem to change the import of the *κλέπτης* and *ληστής*, since these stand in relation to the "*πρὸ ἐμοῦ*," i.e. the fact that those "who came before" Jesus were supposedly thieves and bandits, but the overall meaning of vv.8-9 are not in fact changed by the addition.

#### 8.2.4.2 Form and Redaction-critical comments

Kim groups John 1:1-18 with part of a larger section of John, chapters 4-10, and refers to it as the "Festival Cycle of Jesus" (Kim 2014, 25). The section comprises six chapters grouped in pairs where each "contain an event (or sign) and its related discourse" (2014, 25). According to Kim, the image of the "life-giver" is pertinent to chapters 9-10 (2014, 26). The precise form of the content of John 10 has long been debated. *Paroimia* in v.6 suggests that vv.1-5 should be understood in terms of a "figure of speech," as it is rendered in the NRSV or, as it has at times been translated since the KJV, as "parable". That Jesus' hearers fail to understand him, and the use of *paroimia* in John 16:25, suggests that the tradition of Jesus discoursing publicly in parables (cf. Mark 4:33-34) may have been carried over from the Synoptics.

Yet unlike Synoptic parables, the parabolic material of John 10:1-18 lacks a developed plot, and its meaning is derived by way of general comparisons. The conclusion of an *SNTS* seminar is that John 10:1-18 in its entirety constitutes an "image field," which allows analogy between Jesus and a number of different images (Beutler and Fortna [eds.] 1991, 11). However, cf. Jeremias who said early on that "[t]he parable of the Good Shepherd has exactly the same pattern as...[at least] three synoptic parables" (Jeremias 1972, 86). Jeremias translates the *paroimia* of John 10:6 as both "dark saying" and "parable" (1972, 16, 20).

In reference to Dodd, Schnackenburg also provides a helpful breakdown of "allegorical" material in John and of that which can be called, or likened to, parable (Schnackenburg, vol.2 1968, 40-41). According to Brown and Perkins, *paroimia* is also used to translate *mashal* in the LXX, the Hebrew word which we most frequently render *parable*. Brown views *paroimia* as being synonymous with *parable* (Brown 1971, 385). Perkins seems to as well and cites the obscurity referenced in John 10:6 as a feature of "parabolic discourse" (Perkins 1990,

968). Ridderbos (1997, 254) and Neyrey (2001, 283) both refer to the content as parable.<sup>351</sup> Brown considers the material of John 10 in terms allegory and parable (1971, 390-391), where he says that, while John 10:1-5 “consists of several parables,” John 10:7ff. “consists of allegorical explanations.” (1971, 390)

From a redactional point of view, and in the midst of uncertainty around the form, there are various scenarios and theories posited as to how John 10, in its entirety, should be understood. This is due partly to the contention that John 10:1-18 is a later insertion and that John 10:19 should follow immediately from John 9:41 (Porter 2021, 159) since 9:41 and 10:19 both deal with tensions between Jesus and the Pharisees stemming from the healing of the man born blind. For a discussion on this, see Busse (1991, 6-9 in Beutler and Fortna [eds.] 1991). While it may be true that John 10:1-18 is an interpolation Porter, for example, maintains that narratively this still coheres well as the parabolic material and its interpretation function as a critique of the religious authorities in light of their rejection of the man born blind of John 9 (2021, 159). Cf. also Brown (1971, 388) who maintains John 10:1-5 is a critique aimed at the Jewish authorities, i.e. who were present from chap.9.

#### 8.2.4.3 Socio-economic Markers

Having considered some suggestions as to the form of John 10:1-18, as we did for the parable of the lost sheep, we must now consider commentary on socio-economic markers, principally those of the bandit (ληστής), thief (κλέπτης), and day labourer or hired shepherd (μισθωτός). Perkins describes only those who do not come through the gate, i.e. the ληστής and κλέπτης, as “malevolent” as does Brown (Perkins 1990, 968; Brown 1971, 391). Perkins does not comment further on the ληστής or μισθωτός but of the κλέπτης says it is likely a reference to the Jewish religious leaders who are rejected by Jesus (1990, 968). Brown says of the ληστής that it “has the sense of “robber”...but is also used...to refer to guerilla warriors and revolutionary banditti” (1971, 385). He does not comment specifically on the μισθωτός but sees all antagonists of the parable as representing “the authorities” (1971, 388). Brown draws a comparison again between the Jewish authorities (which may include the Pharisees and the Sadducees) with the high priests of the Maccabean era who “truly were thieves and bandits” (1971, 392). Brown here also makes the connection between the thieves and bandits of John 10 and the “den of bandits” in Jesus’ indictment of the Scribes and Pharisees in Mark 11:17-18, thus perhaps linking them with the temple. Köstenberger (2004) draws attention to the θυρωρός (NRSV, “gatekeeper”) which he refers to as an “undershepherd” and “watchman” and, citing Dalman, says was a hired

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<sup>351</sup> Carson (1991, 294-295) offers a helpful commentary on the issue of form and, with Schnackenburg, maintains that though parts of John 10 certainly can be described as parable, they are unlike those of the Synoptics. Morris likewise says the material in John 10 “does not fit neatly into any of our usual categories” (Morris 1995, 512). Evangelical scholar Klink (2016) divides the pericope in two, “parabolic “illustration”” (vv.1-5) and “an applied interpretation” (vv.6-18) (Klink 2016, 719 [Epub]).

position (Köstenberger 2004 [Epub], 291).<sup>352</sup> This may further delineate division of labour regarding caprine husbandry for the context.

Carson offers “insurrectionist” as a translation for ληστής but says it is unclear in John whether there is a difference between ληστής and κλέπτης (1991, 295). He says that “thieves and robbers are obviously wicked” (1991, 299). He does however intimate that the religious leaders, in being identified with the ληστής and κλέπτης, were “more interested in fleecing the sheep,” (i.e. exploiting people?) (1991, 296). Schnackenburg cites the lack of definite article and the presence of ἐκεῖνος before κλέπτης and ληστής as reason for seeing both as “a single character” and therefore making doubtful the translation of ληστής as “guerilla” (Schnackenburg, Vol.2, 1968, 281-282). He says of the μισθωτός or “hireling” that the Mishnah deemed them “liable for compensation” in cases of negligence and that they probably represent the religious and political leaders of the day (1968, 296). Barret says of κλέπτης and ληστής that the two “are not synonymous” but constitute a “class” of people which John is referring to and which, perhaps more abstractly, may refer to “messianic pretenders” or Hellenistic religious figures (Barrett 1978, 369). Barret does not comment on the μισθωτός. Ridderbos says that “thief and robber” are probably synonymous in John 10 but in a footnote elaborates the potential political connotations of ληστής. He however disagrees with a study by Somonis who identifies the κλέπτης and ληστής with the Zealots who stormed the temple treasury in 68 AD (Ridderbos 1997, 354). Ridderbos also cites the possibility of “hirelings” incurring penalties on losing sheep (1997, 361).

It is perhaps important to note that Horsley, though not having published a commentary on John and who has, of all New Testament scholars, made most use of banditry as a heuristic category, makes no reference to the ληστής of John 10.<sup>353</sup> Keener is misguided when he says that while texts “often portray” shepherds “as rogues” this is not consistent enough “to link them with the “thieves”” of John 10 (Keener 2003, 800). As we have seen thus far, nothing could be further from the truth. Shepherds, by default, were frequently equated with thieves. The rest of Keener’s remarks affirm however the marginal social status of shepherds. He includes an interesting quote from MacMullen in that, if taken at face value, it is suggestive of his characterisation of first-century Palestine more generally. He says that, “[t]hroughout the rural empire, peasants were impoverished, and among the peasants there was but one class distinction [and then quoting MacMullen]: “Only the goatherds and shepherds constitute a separate and lower class.” (2003, 800). Indeed, Keener’s assessment at first displays an appreciation of class dynamics for the period where he says that while it was particularly members of the ruling elite who stigmatised shepherds, this same demographic would have comprised Jesus’ opponents in John 10 (2003, 800).

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<sup>352</sup> Thompson (2015) citing Carson and Lincoln uses the same terminology (2015, 222).

<sup>353</sup> I reviewed three of Horsley’s studies (1979, 1981, 1985) for a reference to the ληστής of John 10. There is a fourth article of Horsley’s (1988), also specifically on banditry, which I did not have access to at the time of writing.

When considering the imagery of the sheepfold however such constructive remarks are seemingly undone by including quotes by the likes of Robinson, “that Israel was intended by the sheep-fold needed no more explanation than the similar language of the ‘house’ or the ‘vineyard.’” (Robbinson in Keener 2003, 801). Again, in the course of the study we have noted the highly problematic image of the vineyard, especially in its uncritical application to “God’s people,” and therefore its need to be problematised. Inadvertently, Keener raises the same question about the sheepfold. Who is the owner against whom the bandit, the thief, and the hired shepherd, are seemingly opposed? Later on, Keener maintains the danger bandits (he uses the term “robbers” – 2003, 804) posed to shepherds, seemingly without realising that frequently, bandits and shepherds were synonymous.

From this review, it should be clear that the potential socio-political/socio-economic aspects of John 10 are considered minimally by commentators.<sup>354</sup> This tendency may relate to the “narrow religious reading” cited by the likes of Ukpong, which has predominated in New Testament scholarship on parables, as well as the tendency to prematurely invest the parable with theological or spiritual meaning (again, to use Ukpong’s phrasing). This process was made all the more deeply embedded by the fact that it originated with the Evangelists. The process is particularly evident in John, which typically is more theological than the Synoptics and that much further removed from them historically. In John 10, it seems, for example, that the Johannine Jesus envisages an adversarial relationship between himself, and the threefold disparaged categorisation of the ληστής, κλέπτης and μισθωτός, even though, as we saw earlier in the study, Jesus quite likely occupied the first category in the course of his ministry or, at the very least, was perceived to have by the authorities. This indicates a degree of separation between John 10 and the historical Jesus. Nevertheless, the socio-economic categories of ληστής, κλέπτης and μισθωτός are still preserved in John 10, whether as memories dating to the historical Jesus or as features of John’s own context, i.e. of the ancient Mediterranean more generally.

Verse 11 and 12 of John 10 are particularly interesting which contain arguably the climactic reference point in the chapter. Jesus states he is the “good shepherd” who “lays down his life for the sheep” (v.11), while the “hired hand...sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away” (v.12). There are only two possibly ways of understanding Jesus self-reference as the “good shepherd” in light of the historical context. Either John is harking back to a time, and mode/means of production, which was more subsistence orientated and in which the shepherd held genuine concern for his sheep, however, such concern realistically may only have been present amongst pastoral nomads who enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with their animals. Alternatively, the shepherd who “lays down his life for the sheep,” as we saw in reference to Amos 3:12, does not do so

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<sup>354</sup> It is worth mentioning two quite old studies which stand as partial exceptions. The first considers the working conditions of first-century Palestine in relation to the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, while the second, by well-known archaeologist G. E. Wright, considers some of the material realities of antiquitous sheep husbandry, with the purpose of conducting an etymology of the image of the Good Shepherd. (See Gryglewicz, F. “The Gospel of the Overworked Workers.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 2, April 1957, pp. 190-198 and Wright, G. E. “The Good Shepherd” in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 2, No. 4. December 1939, pp. 44-48).

necessarily out of love for the animal or altruistic motives, but because financially (i.e. to avoid penalties which may lead to debt) he is compelled to, which is why the following information in v.12 is strange. Unless the hired hand wished to abscond his duties entirely, not inconceivable in light of the phenomenon of *anachoresis*, it would be in his interests to ward off the wolf, again, to avoid incurring the aforementioned penalties. It is likely therefore, perhaps even probable, that John has a confused or romanticised conception of what might have been the original means of production attendant to the context of the historical Jesus.

At this point in our treatment of John 10, we may do well to condense our thinking around the subject of banditry. The Hobsbawmian position, popularised by Horsley in the field of New Testament studies, understands banditry as an indicator or manifestation of class antagonism and as a precursor, sometimes, to wider-scale revolt and rebellion. This position however, as we saw, has been challenged or qualified through the work of McGing, Shaw and Grünewald. In spite of this disagreement, a central insight in the consideration of all scholars was the overlap and identification of forms of pastoralism with banditry. In other words, based on the scholarly assessments, pastoralists, for various reasons, were known to engage periodically in banditry. At a general level, we can recognise that an itinerant lifestyle and a proclivity toward life-stock rearing, predisposed pastoralists to banditry. Additionally, within the context of first-century Judea and Galilee, we note the possibility that stock theft had an aspect of class antagonism about it, in light of the fact that sabotage, for example, was frequently practised in the vegetal agricultural sector. A parallel manifestation of such antagonisms within the animal husbandry sector could well have been stock theft.

By way of illustration, let us compare John 10 with another example or reference to banditry in the NT. Whether historical in its detail or not, the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35) undoubtedly reflects the socio-economic reality of banditry for the period of the New Testament. In this instance, a group of bandits is said to attack a man journeying south from Jericho to Jerusalem. More information than this is not provided, except that the ailing man is avoided by both a priest and a Levite, and finally rescued by a Samaritan who tends to his needs.

Though it may be tentative, we can surmise some of the features and identities of both the bandits and their victim. Grünewald points out that Rengstorf mistakenly had identified the bandits in this story as Zealots. According to Josephus, the Zealots emerged historically only in the context of the first Jewish revolt, at least thirty years after Jesus' death (2004, 199 – something which Horsely also too attests to). Even if, now considering banditry in its "pure form" i.e. as a form of violent robbery, we take away from the bandits of Luke 10 all political orientation, as Grünewald had suggested we do, we are presented with the practical difficulty cited in the chapter on banditry, that a.) if robbery was motivation for the crime then presumably bandits would

target the wealthy and, b.) members of the elite class are more disposed to long-distance travel between urban centres and therefore were the likely users of highways targeted by bandits.

Luke 10 does not say exactly that the bandits robbed the man, though it seems natural to assume this.<sup>355</sup> If the bandits in Luke 10 represent a form of politically-motivated banditry then robbery need not necessarily be inferred. The Sicarii, for example, who are referred to as *latrones* by Josephus, were not robbers, but ideologically and politically motivated assassins or terrorists seeking Roman expulsion. Indeed, in this sense, modern terrorists might be thought of as somehow being modern parallels to ancient bandits, in the sense that they are understood fundamentally as enemies of the state. If the bandits did not commit robbery, and the act was politically motivated, we could make further assumptions as to the identities of bandit and victim based on the historical context, viz. that it is not implausible that the bandits were somehow Jewish nationalists and the victim a Roman or Roman sympathiser. There is further reason below to support such a view. Having said that, it seems likely that the bandits of Luke 10 did also commit robbery.

Let us move to then to the question of why the priest and Levite avoid the man who is attacked. The answer may seem obvious. He had sustained severe injuries and was bleeding. Contact with a blood would have rendered both the priest and Levite ritually unclean. But could it be possible that, in relation to their desire to avoid contamination, the man was not just bleeding but also a Gentile? Presumably, this would have been evident if, as we are told in the passage, the man was naked. If indeed the man was a Gentile, this would be all the more reason for the priest and Levite to avoid him. Additionally, if the man was a Gentile, it throws open the possibility, even likelihood, that he was Roman and, if he was a Roman, the attack on him, seems all the more likely to have been done out of political motivation and perhaps only secondarily for material gain.

I would suggest at this point that more research be done on the parable in light of these observations. For example, is there a case to be made for Galilee being more politically agitated, more ideologically conscientized, than Judea and Samaria, as seems to be implied in some of Josephus' observations? Were Samaritans perceived to any extent as Roman sympathisers? If so, then, as with many of Jesus' parables when a more accurate historical assessment is achieved, the meaning of the parable is subverted or reversed. Rather than being lauded as an example of Godly neighbourliness, the Samaritan is being shown up for his sympathetic stance towards a Roman Gentile. It is interesting, as is the case with other parables, that the valuation we assign some of the actants, which often appear in translation headings, do not appear in the original text. The Samaritan is nowhere in the text referred to as "good".

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<sup>355</sup> A form of *ἐκδύω* is used which can mean the taking off of clothes in a normal sense but it seems it may also have a connotation of violence, i.e. to strip (<https://logeion.uchicago.edu/ἐκδύω>). See also its entry in *BDAG*, p.267 where the additional definition of "to remove by force, plunder" is given. Thus while the word seems to convey that the victim in Luke 10 was stripped of his clothing, it may convey that he was stripped of any other possessions, i.e. robbed.

In the case of John 10 we have a somewhat different scenario. Again, whether hypothetical or historical, it preserves a knowledge or memory of actual instances of banditry and, this time, in the context of pastoralism. Whereas in the incident recounted in Luke 10 there is a violent molestation of the victim, human interaction is not implied in John 10, though the intent to steal is implied, this is in the form of stock theft. Especially in light of Grünewald's study, as well as insights gained from other authors, we are now aware of the historical association between pastoralism and brigandage and that, in certain contexts, these were regarded as synonymous.<sup>356</sup> As mentioned previously, there may well be a polemical aspect to this identification, based on the fact that pastoralists, and especially nomadic pastoralists, were stigmatised by the ruling elite.<sup>357</sup> Nevertheless, this identification is a constant and recurring one in both modern and ancient forms of banditry.

Secondly, we know that in Roman usage *latro* (bandit) could and often did mean usurper and/or pretender to the throne. In other words, in many instances, the *latro* vied for real political power in his attempt to overthrow, in some instances, someone as high up as the emperor himself. Thirdly, we know of the tradition, attested throughout the Hebrew bible, and indeed, seemingly invoked here in John 10, of leaders of Israel, whether political or religious, being referred to as shepherds, all of which means that the bandit of John 10 can be thought of in at least two ways.

At a literal level, the Johannine Jesus may be referring to either a real or hypothetical instance of *social* banditry, along the lines of Hobsbawm's model, where however this particular instance does not involve violent assault. If we follow this train of thought, we should interpret his activity in the broader theoretical framework explained by Boer (2015) and Boer and Petterson (2017), while at the same time remembering Scott's notion of resistance. In this vein, we firstly understand that across time there are changes a.) at the level of mode of production and b.) at the level of 'ownership' of the means of production, e.g. in the case of the vegetal agrarian sector, the process of latifundialisation, by which members of the elite amass tracts of land appropriated from the peasantry or, alternately, directly appropriate labour through high debt and indentured servitude.

Such processes resulted not only in economic hardship but in the disenfranchisement of land and the advent of casual labourers, where this in turn facilitated higher levels of itinerancy, one of the prerequisites for banditry. While such processes were attendant to the vegetal agrarian sector, we have seen additionally that a non-

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<sup>356</sup> Kloppenborg and Callon cite another relevant factor which contributed to this association, the fact the shepherds, by virtue of their profession, had to be armed. The authors state that "the nature of shepherding required the shepherd to be armed with a sling and club to fend off predators" (2019, 227) and later "[t]hese structural features of pastoralism – the lack of supervision, transience, and the possession of weapons – help to account for the fact that shepherds in antiquity were stigmatized figures, often associated with bandits and agitators." (2019, 228).

<sup>357</sup> To my mind this reflects an almost universal tendency wherever there are class divisions and class antagonism. The colonial overlord lives in perpetual suspicion that any one of his subjects would steel from him if given the opportunity.

subsistence (i.e. much larger than subsistence-level) animal husbandry means of production had arisen by the time of the first century CE and was attendant to the Jerusalem temple complex.

Pasturable land, as we saw in the scholarship consulted previously, was scarce in the immediate surrounds of Jerusalem and in wider Judea. While this study has not gone to the lengths of ascertaining realistic figures of caprine populations for subsistence forms of production in first-century Judea and Galilee, it is at least possible, if not likely, that non-subsistence and subsistence-based caprine husbandry were in competition for the scarce and precious pasturable land located in northern Galilee and perhaps on the coastal plains. As a result of this, whether attributable as a form of resistance, in line with Scott's theory, or whether due more from a need for subsistence (but probably a combination of these) we see increasingly high prevalence of stock theft.

We are helped additionally in our exegesis of John 10 by Jesus' reference to the hired hand or hired shepherd. This is an economic indicator which tells us that whoever owned the sheep referred to in John 10, even though John's scenario might be hypothetical, did not see directly to their care but did so by use of hired labour. The practice of hiring labour to service intensified forms of agriculture increased in both pastoral and vegetal sectors in the first century, as we have seen through the course of this study. And as we saw from the theory of Boer and Petterson, this was to some extent the *modus operandi* of extractive modes of production, viz. to sever the relationship between the subsistence producer and his means of subsistence (land or livestock) so that his labour might more easily be appropriated.

Whether therefore the bandit referred to in John 10 was previously engaged in subsistence horticulture or a form of pastoralism, or both, the hired hand, would likely have had some experience or background in animal husbandry in order to be suitable for the hired work of shepherding. In this sense too then, just as the day labourer represents expropriated labour, i.e. labour that has been alienated from its original means of subsistence, so the hired shepherd represents labour expropriated from its original means of subsistence, that of subsistence pastoralism. In this sense, the hired hand, the thief and the bandit, as they do even from John's own polemical viewpoint, are viewed collectively, as occupying a single or similar social category or class. It then becomes easy to understand the motive of this three-fold designation in their performing acts of stock theft, and explains why historical sources are at pains to stipulate steep penalties for hired shepherds, viz. that there was frequently collusion between shepherds and bandits who, in their association, were also thieves. In light of this, we may posit the plausible scenario that the bandit, the thief, and the hired hand referred to in John 10 were socio-economic symptoms of a more extensive and potentially exploitative economic means of caprine production, relative to the pastoral subsistence methods which had been practiced historically. The would-be thief of John 10 is motivated both by the need to subsist but also from a place of class antagonism.

The second interpretation of the material of John 10 is borne out at a metaphorical level, i.e. the bandit may be thought of, along Grünewald's lines, as a usurper/pretender, in which case the Johannine Jesus is casting himself in the light of a potential leader of Israel. The question could be posed: why historically was there a close link or association between shepherds and the religious leaders of the Hebrews? Or even more generally: why was there a close link or association between shepherds and rulers in ancient Mesopotamia. The answer, apart from romantic ideations harking back to pastoral roots, may lie in the temple cult and the presence of royal flocks, or sizeable flocks, attendant to the temple complex. In this sense, those administering the temple, which in certain contexts would have been the king's attendants, would be regarded in some loose sense as shepherds. Yet their aim was not subsistence and their concern was not primarily the welfare of the sheep, but rather simply that large volumes of sheep be reared for sacrifice. The widespread image of the ruler as shepherd may then be due to a distorted combination of romantic idealism and the practical function of a priestly class in cultic sacrifice.

Most scholars, as we saw from commentary on John 10, understand this discourse to constitute polemic against leaders associated with the Johannine community but possibly dates back to the community's rejection by the wider Judaism (Cf. Perkins, *NJBC*, 946). Whether or not John intended, such polemic likely corresponds to the administrative authorities of Jesus own day, as may be the case in the Synoptic parable of the lost sheep. That Jesus so clearly and vehemently denounced the First Temple as an institution means we should not be surprised by his denouncing of the sacrificial cult contained therein, even if John's context is removed from this.

### 8.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, a case was made to understand the action reflected in certain parables, typically the early parables in the Synoptic corpus, in terms of acts of sabotage. Based on the work of Scott, but also Boer, we saw that sabotage was one of the frequent means of resistance available to a peasantry whose labour had been appropriated. By using class as a heuristic category, the actants and referents, as well as the role of the parables' protagonists and antagonists, in some of the most well-known parables, are reversed. The so-called parable of the wicked tenants should be understood not as an act of insubordination by lazy or 'wicked' tenants, but either as an opportunistic, even desperate, attempt to seize or regain the means of production of which they had been disposed or, if this was never a realistic possibility, simply as a form of resistance and protest. And so since we see such forms of resistance and protest in sedentary agriculture, such as theft of produce and sabotage of fields, we must expect similar forms of resistance and protest in the pastoral sector.

In the case of the sedentary horticulturalist, his existence is tied to a specified piece of land. To sever this relationship, one has either to expropriate his labour or his land, both of which are done normally through a form of indebtedness. Once achieved, the subsistence horticulturalist, in order to continue to subsist, has little choice

but to remain engaged in the means of production with which he is familiar, as miserable as this may be. If he is entirely dispossessed of his land, i.e. without opportunity to work it even as a tenant or indentured labourer, and he is forced to sell his labour at the *agora*, then his subsistence no longer bears a relation to the land he formerly worked, and we should not be surprised at his inclination to sabotage the land he was dispossessed of. Additionally, in this latter case, complete severance from land meant itinerancy and closer proclivity to banditry.

Those engaged in pastoral nomadism, because their subsistence and identity is not tied to any one piece of land, cannot be dispossessed of land, though conceivably one can imagine them being dispossessed of their livestock, possibly through forms of indebtedness correspondent to that of the vegetal agricultural sector. From our analysis thus far, we can imagine a scenario in which temple complexes were having to procure ever-larger herds of livestock for the purpose of the temple cult. As we have seen, it is feasible that such procurement was achieved primarily through the use of livestock merchants, or stockbrokers, whose flocks likely rivalled, if not greatly exceeded, in size the numbers of those belonging to subsistence pastoralists. But herein enters the category of class. For there are now present two distinct modes, or means, of production, one motivated by subsistence, another by an odd mixture of quasi-profit and religious 'capital'. When matters come to a head, over grazing rights for example, as they often do within pastoral and agricultural communities, the added tension of class is at play. Flocks of pastoral nomads are competing with those of sheep merchants and, one may imagine, might be forced to remoter areas to find pasturage. If such encroachment or infringement reached levels similar to those within the sedentary horticultural sector, i.e. at the level of impeding a community's livelihood, one would expect its members to assume forms of resistance available to them, the most obvious being livestock theft. Additionally, evidence of indebtedness within this newer, more intensified means of caprine production is attested in the historical sources and, as we have seen, this changing mode of production resulted in a form of wage labour concomitant to that of the vegetal agricultural sector. A similar dispossession of subsistence to that of vegetal agricultural sector was likely present in the pastoral sector, through systems of indebtedness. It seems only rational that those employed as hired shepherds were predisposed to pastoralism but, if they were employed by means of wage labour, this suggests that they had indeed been disposed of their own livelihood and, of so, would have harboured the class resentments outlined above. It is unsurprising then that the hired shepherd of John 10 and the bandit should collude to steal livestock, and less surprising that, at least at a polemical level in John's narrative, that they be painted with the same brush.

## CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 9.1 Positive Contributions to the Field of Study

The present study proposed at the outset to address a research gap in first-century Palestinian economy, that of the means of caprine production especially attendant to the second Jewish temple. For an accurate assessment of this, theory and data had to be sourced from a variety of scholarship on the understanding that a more comprehensive theoretical framework would allow for more responsible inferences from the available data. In undertaking such an assessment there are a number of key factors to be aware of.

Much economic theorising around first-century Palestine has been unhelpfully biased towards neo-liberal or neo-classical economic concerns, resulting in some anachronisms, where the application of concepts of modern market economies to ancient societies is misleading and unhelpful. On this subject alone we must remember, in the first instance, that the aspect of scale is crucial. Ancient societies were almost inconceivably smaller and less resourced than modern ones. Additionally, the vast majority of such societies existed and operated within a subsistence paradigm. Concepts like surplus, wealth, profit or commercial gain, and motivations towards these, were completely foreign to them.

Where archaeological data is concerned, as with the literary record, the archaeological record, by virtue of its spatial dispersion, is biased toward centres of power and concentrations of material culture. In antiquity, such nuclei of material culture invariably represent significant religio-ideological legitimation afforded by the presence of a temple which housed or represented a deity. By contrast, both sedentary-subsistence and pastoral-nomadic ways of life leave little to no archaeological trace. Attendant to temple complexes, and what partly constituted their religious and ideological legitimation, is the temple cult itself based, at its heart, on ritual sacrifice. Given that temples represent high concentrations of material culture generally, and in light of the high volume of animal required by temple cults, and the Second Temple cult in particular, it should not be surprising therefore that we see high concentrations of faunal remains at or around such sites.

Multiple sources from different societies in ancient Southwest Asia support a view of a changed means of caprine production to support such volumes, from archival material at Neo-Babylonian temples, to Hasmonean-period biblical references, to Talmudic material in the early centuries CE, where the theoretical framework compiled for the study, and attendant context of exploitation within the vegetal agricultural sector, likewise corroborate this. The changes evinced by these sources took the form of a priestly class which oversaw, at perhaps the most general level, the provision of animals for cultic sacrifice at temple sites. In order to cater for the high volume of animal required, and because they themselves were not pastoralists, the priestly administrators engaged the services of 'stock brokers' or, to use the phrase from the NRSV's Zechariah 11, "sheep merchants".

Contracts would be entered into between these brokers and the temple administration, stipulating the provision of quotas of livestock per agricultural season, as well as other legal obligations and what dividends the brokers themselves were entitled to. The brokers therefore functioned as middlemen who were considered neither members of the ruling elite but of a somewhat higher status than the peasantry. Such a class of “merchants” as attested to in the biblical record, was likely a feature more universally of ancient Southwest Asia, existing to provide services to the ruling elite and, in this capacity, were regarded as subordinate.

These brokers, in the case of caprine husbandry attendant to temple complexes, in turn engaged the services of more menial hired shepherds who occupied positions of socio-economic vulnerability for a number of reasons. To begin with, they emanated from the peasantry and so were used to existing close to a subsistence level of survival ordinarily. The fact that they sought such menial labour in turn likely meant that they had been disenfranchised from their normal means of subsistence, either in the form of land or livestock or both. They were additionally vulnerable by being contractually or legally bound to pay penalties for losses in the stock under their charge. It is not unfeasible that such obligations periodically forced shepherds into situations of debt, thus resulting in a form of debt-bondage.

All of this however does not preclude the so-called menial or hired shepherd from recourse to some form of resistance and therefore agency, even if this meant being placed in a more precarious situation vis-à-vis the state. In this vein, it is probable that when faced with particularly desperate situations, and given a possible proclivity toward nomadism, hired shepherds conspired to steal livestock and possibly even colluded with bandits in doing so. Once such a course of action was taken, the hired shepherd himself became a fugitive and would likely be deemed a *latro*, forms of which he might have previously entered in anyway.

In the case of Jerusalem and its temple, relatively little of its immediate periphery was suitable either for crop agriculture or pasturage. The first century CE saw significant changes in the means and mode of production, both regarding the vegetal agricultural sector as well that of pastoralism. In the former case, this represented a fairly standard and universalised tendency among ruling elite in the ancient Mediterranean. Boer and Petterson had described this in terms of Hellenization where, not as commonly understood as cultural process but rather fundamentally an economic one, to Hellenize meant to citify, i.e. to birth baby poleis which had fundamentally extractive relationships with their rural peripheries. A parallel process existed in the Roman Empire in terms of colonisation, represented most concretely in the institutional form of the colonate. Central to both processes, however, was the presence and proliferation of latifundia. This changing means of production in the vegetal agricultural sector placed excessive pressures on the rural population which featured debt, debt-slavery and dispossession of land. This was, in fact, the primary means by which such extractive modes of production guaranteed a constant labour supply.

Based on a model presented by Lapin, we also tried to gauge the volume of animal required for sacrifice in the first century and concluded that this, and the commensurate area required for pasturage, would have likewise placed pressures on those operating by means of subsistence pastoralism. Tensions arising from competition for pasturage, as well as a form of wage labour which placed hired shepherds in particularly vulnerable and precarious positions, resulted in forms of resistance and opportunism, such as the stock theft and banditry evinced in John 10.

Both the farming of latifundia, to feed the elite of Jerusalem and to support its need for luxury produce, and the herding of sheep and goat, had to be done away from Jerusalem itself and, in the case of the latter, as far afield as Galilee. The scarce resources and the programme of appropriation which latifundialism necessitated, as well as the changed means of caprine husbandry to cater for high volumes of animal sacrifice, meant that the so-called needs of the ruling elite likely impinged upon the rural peasantry. While we cannot gauge them accurately, such situations resulted in the peasantry engaging various forms of resistance across all areas of agriculture, where such forms of resistance are frequently witnessed in the parables of Jesus.

Members of the peasantry used their intimate knowledge of agriculture to their advantage and against members of the elite. Seeds of the darnel and mustard plants were weaponised to sabotage agricultural space and thus render fields inarable. Perhaps the clearest illustration of class antagonism is witnessed in the parable of the tenants, where such tension culminates in a complete breach of what Scott had referred to as the public transcript and a possible attempt at re-appropriation of land.

In this vein, the so-called parable of the lost sheep is not a tale of the altruistic attempts of a shepherd to find his beloved sheep. Instead, if this parable reflects the changed or changing means of caprine husbandry outlined in the study, the shepherd is likely a hired shepherd and therefore cannot afford to lose any sheep lest he incur steep penalties and risk falling into debt. He must retrieve even a remnant of the carcass as proof that he had no hand in the animal's demise. Likewise, the parabolic discourse of John 10 almost certainly reflects the changed means of caprine production attendant to first century Judea and Galilee. Here we see hired shepherds, stock thieves, and bandits, three categories which occupy a similar class, colluding against a changed means of caprine production and its owners.

## 9.2 Possible Areas for Further Research

There are a number of areas which are of particular interest to me and which would bear fruit in terms of further research. The first relates to a more precise understanding of the mechanisms of the temple cult of the second Jewish temple. The present study has provided something of a template or pattern, which I believe was applicable to the Second Temple but had not the time or scope to flesh out. Greater attention to some of the more detailed aspects of the functioning of the temple cult, especially as these related to a changed means of

caprine husbandry, can only better inform our understanding of the world of the New Testament and the functioning of ancient temples.

The second area is perhaps a more abstract one and pertains to temple complexes in general as well as its attendant cult of sacrifice. The question worth exploring, to my mind, from a perspective of an anthropology of religion is: to what extent can we legitimately refer to 'objective' aspects of religion in antiquity and to what extent do its religio-ideological aspects override these? In other words, the temple cult supposedly existed in the service of a particular deity. Yet as we have seen, it also formed the ideological legitimation for the ruling elite's power base. There is also an aspect of this question which may be approached from a Marxist theoretical standpoint, whereby the production of animals for sacrifice may be regarded as an embryonic form of commoditisation or fetishisation, or at least a precursor to these, in so far as the animals were produced for non-subsistence purposes.

A third suggested area of study, which I believe can be fruitfully pursued, is around James Scott's discourse theory, where benefit can be gained from considering the gendered aspects of the so-called hidden transcript. This may have been undertaken already but, if the premise of Scott's theory is correct, namely that the hidden transcript materialises and is more pronounced where power dynamics likewise are more excessive, then presumably this principle holds true for male-female relations even in a single culture or society and within the same class. Though we did not consider this possibility explicitly in this study, in our brief consideration of semitic magic, we also saw how rumour and gossip feature as part of the hidden transcript, i.e. as a form of resistance, and that rumour and gossip are precursors to magic, or the efficacious spoken word, where magic itself is sometimes a component of the hidden transcript and thus a form of resistance.

Though it is entirely anecdotal, in the context in which I currently work, a colleague who is also a psychologist, while addressing a room full of people, remarked that tensions arise among men, they have recourse to physical confrontation, while when they arise among women, they are less predisposed toward physical confrontation and so resort to gossip, i.e. gossip represents for them an articulation of the hidden transcript and form of resistance. Again, this may seem like a gross stereotype and at this point is not backed by academic research, but throughout history it seems women have been disproportionately associated with forms of magic, witchcraft and other unsanctioned expressions of religion.

### 9.3 Conclusion

This study was concerned in the final analysis with the parables of Jesus. In this vein, it sought to be a corrective study, to correct the overly spiritual and spiritualised, overly theological and ethereal, interpretations of Jesus' parables which have dominated both the halls of academia and the pews of churches for centuries. Such interpretations disregard entirely the material concerns of the actants of the parables, and what might

have been the material concerns of the historical Jesus and his hearers. The most effective way of achieving such a corrective reading is to explicitly employ class as a heuristic category, thereby highlighting issues around ownership of means of production, labour, land and livestock appropriation, and the antagonisms and forms of resistance which arise out of these. It is the contention of this study that much of what can be regarded as the subject of Jesus' parables constitutes such class antagonisms and resistance.

In light of the theoretical framework compiled for the study, the data we have for the functioning of temples in ancient Southwest Asia, and that for the Jerusalem temple, one can by no means understand the extractive mechanisms (extractive in terms of labour and surplus) of first-century Judea and Galilee, without appreciating the economic and ideological centrality of the second Jewish temple. Greater focus was afforded in this study to the effect of the function of the temple on what necessarily was a changing or changed means of caprine production, i.e. compared to the means of subsistence pastoralism with which it undoubtedly competed. This changed means of caprine production represented a 'commercialised' form, not in the sense that it was done for profit, a notion largely foreign to the greater mode of production attendant to the period, but in the sense that it was done on a much larger scale for non-subsistence purposes, viz. for the purpose of the temple cult.<sup>358</sup>

A contention of this study is that what we have referred to as the pastoral parables, the parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7) and the discourse around the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-16), cannot be adequately understood from an historical and socio-economic perspective apart from the aforementioned appraisal of the influence of the first-century temple cult on caprine production. In this vein, the parable of the lost sheep represents an historical example of a hired shepherd who is not concerned so much about the actual well-being of the lost sheep but about retrieving it, or a remnant of it, so as not to incur penalties imposed by the stockbroker in whose employ he is working. In the case of the parabolic discourse of John 10, we are presented with hired shepherds, bandits and stock thieves, three terms or phenomena which, in light of the theory offered in this study, are closely related and, as well as reflecting changing modes in caprine husbandry, represent forms of resistance in response to these and the resultant pressures exerted on subsistence pastoralists.

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<sup>358</sup> It may be helpful to think of this process, and even of the temple itself, in terms of "congealment," i.e. as a congealment of labour and material culture. Marx uses this word to refer to labour, as in the congealment of labour in a commodity (*Capital*, 20), and in terms of money, as the congealment of value (*Capital*, 88).

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## Appendix A: Boer's textual hermeneutic

In addition to providing theory to undertake a socio-economic analysis of the world of the bible, focusing on the notion of metaphorization and drawing on the critical theory of the Frankfurt school, Boer also presents a textual hermeneutic (2015, 45). He describes what he sees as the two dominant positions within biblical studies. The first is the uncritical assumption that texts reflect their contexts in a straightforward manner. Boer refers to the "proof-texting" which is done based on this in which the biblical text, as it stands, is used to validate this or that scholarly position (2015, 46).<sup>359</sup> The second approach adopts a critical outlook which views the text as being almost exclusively a product of the elite and therefore aligned with their interests and political ideology. Because the text is seen as a construct in this sense, seldom relating directly or accurately to historical events, as an historical record the biblical text is viewed as unreliable (2015, 46).

Boer adopts a more nuanced position. While reading the text critically, he says one can make inferences of an historical sort. He applies the concept of metaphorization explaining that, from within an economic or Marxist framework, this process regards aspects of everyday life in terms of metaphors relating to the dominant economic system (or mode of production) (2015, 47-48). One can easily sense the ideological nature of this process and how it may be employed at a subconscious level to provide legitimacy for this dominant system. Yet because of the process' subtlety and the pervasiveness of metaphors determined by a given socio-economic system, the process itself sometimes occurs unconsciously. In other words, authors of biblical texts, which may often represent elite interests, incorporate legitimising metaphors sometimes without realising (2015, 47).<sup>360</sup> This is evident, for example, in Boer's treatment of Genesis 3 which can be seen as propaganda to justify or legitimate the Palatine system.

There is a final point which Boer articulates in relation to his textual hermeneutic. While it may be seen to have its roots in critical theory, Boer says it derives from Lévi-Strauss' formulation of Marxist theory which in turn was worked on by Jameson (2015, 48). Here we have the notion that the irresolvable conflicts and contradictions inherent in a given mode of production bubble to the surface through cultural artefacts like art, folklore, literature, festivals etc., as a means of ameliorating such contradictions, even if it is sometimes at unconscious level (2015, 49). Perhaps more concretely, though Boer does not mention it here but later in his book, he adopts the Blochian principle of understanding myth and ideology as sometimes containing or representing their opposite. In other words, a certain practice being condemned or eradicated in the biblical narrative in reality

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<sup>359</sup> Incidentally, this is often done within the field of archaeology.

<sup>360</sup> Boer says that "[h]ere subconscious and unnoticed features play a far larger role, as do structural and linguistic elements in the very way written language is constructed." (2015, 47)

may indicate its proliferation.<sup>361</sup> A good example of this is Josiah's supposed attempts at eradicating the Asherah and "high places" which indicates there actual proliferation (2 Kings 23).

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<sup>361</sup> Boer says he takes his "cue from Ernst Bloch's dialectical interpretation of myth and ideology, in which the practices and beliefs condemned in official, often reactionary literature may signal the presence of traditions of resistance, popular unrest, and expressions of alternative approaches characteristic of common people." (Boer 2015, 55)

## Appendix B: Israel Finkelstein's Historiography<sup>362</sup>

In the course of Israel Finkelstein's career, in a revolutionary and sometimes controversial way, he has challenged conventional Old Testament dating and historiography. In addition, his research around the advent of literacy among the Hebrew people compels us to rethink and revise our dating for the Hebrew Bible.

In my thesis, I have tried to focus on the immediate socio-historical and socio-economic context of Jesus and his ministry. Taking into account the *longue durée* (a concept Finkelstein is fond of using) however we should appreciate that socio-historical and socio-economic features of a given society do not crop up overnight but arise and persist over long periods. There is a stasis within or about ancient societies foreign to the flux of modern ones and, as a result, foreign to the modern mind, which makes it hard to understand ancient societies.

Because Finkelstein's theory is not central to my thesis, we need only outline some pertinent tenets of his historiography. Unlike much archaeological scholarship before him (e.g. Yadin, Dever), Finkelstein's chronology (his dating of archaeological material/data) was not based exclusively, or even primarily, on the biblical record. Finkelstein maintains that the biblical record is first and foremost an ideological or theological document. Whereas it is possible to glean historical data from the biblical record, it is not by nature an historical document. Using extrabiblical sources (e.g. the Amarna letters, stelae etc.) as well as radiocarbon dating, Finkelstein establishes a chronology independent of the biblical narrative which nevertheless works in conversation with it.

In light of this, and perhaps in what is one of Finkelstein's more controversial claims, he sees the 11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE 'kingdoms' of David and Solomon as large chiefdoms. At this point, and up until the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom, the province of Judah was a small and likely vassal state living in the shadow of its more powerful 'sister state' (Israel) to the north. The biblical narratives of the supposed united monarchy do not reflect the *historical* realities of David and Solomon, but rather the later ideological aims of a consolidated Israel in Jerusalem after the destruction of the northern kingdom in 721BCE. It is the Omride dynasty, in Finkelstein's opinion, which is the most prosperous and powerful dynasty of pre-exilic Israel, a dynasty which in turn undertook the extensive building projects *later attributed to Solomon* such as the fortification of the city-gates at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer (1 Kings 9:15).

Based on archaeological evidence, Finkelstein proposes late development for the Hebrew script and thus for literacy in general in ancient Israel – sometime in the 9<sup>th</sup> century for the northern kingdom and only in the 8<sup>th</sup> century for Judah (after the consolidation of what literati came down in the wake of the Assyrian invasion of the north). At this point, the intelligentsia of the northern kingdom who managed to escape the Assyrians fled south

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<sup>362</sup> For a thorough presentation of Finkelstein's main methodological and scholarly positions see Finkelstein, I. and Adams, M. "The Shmunis Family Conversations in the Archaeology and History of Ancient Israel with Israel Finkelstein," uploaded by Albright Live, 2020-2021, [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvm7MPUI\\_WJelpUfZgCw1Tfd\\_cyT4Fh-f](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvm7MPUI_WJelpUfZgCw1Tfd_cyT4Fh-f)

and gathered in Jerusalem where they were consolidated with the small class of elite living in Judah at the time. They brought with them more advanced technology. Finkelstein maintains, based on the material record, that the northern kingdom of Israel was as much as 150 years more advanced technologically than Judah was prior to the Assyrian conquest. The influence now of Judahites (who had been in some ways subordinate to Israel for a long period), as well as the ideological desire to present the picture of a united and consolidated monarchy, fuelled the writings of the Davidic and Solomonic sagas. For this reason, also, there was a very strong move away from polytheism, at least at a narrative level, which explains why the Omride dynasty and the northern kingdom are generally painted in a negative light, since they had supposedly practised polytheism.

If one adopts the principles of Finkelstein's historiography and his revised chronology, we are led to see that the production of much, if not most, Old Testament material in its literary form could only have taken place from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, but probably more likely from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, onwards. Finkelstein's controversial claims do not end there. He maintains that for the entire Persian period, to which books such as Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles, and the Minor Prophets are traditionally ascribed, there was no scribal activity in Judah whatsoever. In terms of the archaeological record, city-wall fortifications end with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and only begin again at the start of the Hasmonean period (200-180 BCE). There is no epigraphic evidence for the Persian period apart from a few seals which emanate from outside the province of Judah, nor is there archaeological evidence to support the presence of a scribal class with the necessary state apparatus for the Persian period.

Finkelstein's historiography is important for at least two reasons. One is the general principle that if literacy and state enjoy such a close relationship, and this is congruent with the development of ancient societies generally,<sup>363</sup> then features and concerns of state should be seen to feature consistently in the biblical narrative. The second more practical reason is that biblical texts such as Zechariah 11, which we consider in this study, stand in much closer proximity to the New Testament and therefore historically are that much more relevant.

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<sup>363</sup> The purpose of literacy in this context, in its inception, is to record the economic dealings of the temple to keep a record of credit and debt.

## Appendix C: Latifundialism in the Old Testament

Premnath (1988) defines latifundialisation as “the process of land accumulation (large estates, hence latifundia) in the hands of a few wealthy landowners to the deprivation of the peasantry” (1988, 49).<sup>364</sup> Building on the work of Moran and Chaney, Premnath maintains that the Hebrew *bayit* referred not simply to “house” but to property and land (1988, 55). In other words, it may have had a conceptual similarity to the Greek *oikos* and the Latin *domus*. Again, based on the work of Moran and Chaney, the tenth commandment is seen in Premnath’s study in a significantly different light, viz. as a prohibition against latifundialism. Our modern, compartmentalised minds typically understand the tenth commandment as a warning against petty and individual jealousy or covetousness. Instead, Premnath sees it as having far deeper, structural and social application. Following this vein, Micah 2:1-2 should also be seen in the context of latifundialisation.

With regard to land, which Premnath classifies as a “factor [i.e. means] of production”, he uses Wolf’s concept of tenure and the three categories which represent changing or qualitatively different types of tenure – *patrimonial*, *prebendal* and *mercantile* (1988, 50). As pointed out when we considered Wolf’s theory in this study, his analysis is concerned with modern peasant economies in which markets feature more prominently and in which, presumably also, notions of private property are more prevalent. These are not attendant to ancient societies, as we have seen, which is perhaps why Wolf’s notions of the *patrimonial* and *prebendal* still remain helpful – they communicate the types of nominal claims overlords held on their constituencies.<sup>365</sup>

Premnath is uncritical in his use of data pertaining to the Davidic ‘monarchy’ and therefore his proposals around timeframes for latifundialism. In light of Finkelstein’s new chronology (see Appendix B), particularly pertaining to the Davidic regime and the united monarchy, which do not reflect the realities of the Davidic dynasty (late 11<sup>th</sup> century according to the internal biblical chronology) but the Omride dynasty (early 9<sup>th</sup> century), the proper dating for extensive territorial expansion, the latifundialism with which Premnath is concerned, as well as other attendant exploitative practices, should be the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In other words, this would be roughly a century before the Assyrian invasion and coincides roughly with the ascendancy of the Omride dynasty. According to Finkelstein, the Omride dynasty represents the height of the northern kingdom’s power prior to the Assyrian invasion. In light of Boer’s theory, greater prosperity for the ruling elite would have meant concomitant levels of appropriation, exploitation, and disenfranchisement of the peasantry.

Having said that, Premnath’s analysis should not be undervalued. His presentation suggests that latifundialism was a perennial concern within Hebrew society and something against which formal attempts at mitigation were

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<sup>364</sup> Premnath, D. 1988. “Latifundialization and Isaiah 5:8-10” in *JSOT*, vol.40 (1988) pp. 49-60

<sup>365</sup> Premnath though is also guilty of anachronism in his uncritical assumption of modern categories, e.g. “market economy”, “commodity”, “capital”, “rent capitalism”, “exchange value,” (1988, 50-51, 54)

made. This is indicated by the so-called reforms or corrective measures of Nehemiah in the face of high levels of indebtedness (Nehemiah 5:1-12),<sup>366</sup> regulations around the Jubilee and Sabbath years (Exodus 23:11; Leviticus 25) and, as we saw, in Premnath's suggestion that the tenth commandment was intended to mitigate latifundialism. In other words, rather than being an anomaly and pertinent only after the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, latifundialism may be regarded as a more prominent and earlier feature of Hebrew society.

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<sup>366</sup> There is a certain level of irony represented by this passage. Boer (2015, 197) maintains essentially that Ezra and Nehemiah presided over the "imposition of an imperial regime of plunder" on the regions on Judah and Galilee. In other words, as opposed to having been a relatively desolate and unproductive region, after the Babylonian conquest, Ezra-Nehemiah were commissioned to return, rebuild Jerusalem, rebuild the temple, precisely so that Jerusalem with its temples could once more become an extractive centre which would then send tribute to Persia.

## Appendix D: Epilogue on Banditry

It may be helpful to note that the political and economic factors of banditry, at least in the ancient Roman context, can scarcely be separated. This can be understood when considering the mode of production for the period as presented by Boer and Petterson. Something of an interface between the slave and colonial regimes presided over the region with the institutional forms of the slave relation, the *polis-chōra*, and tenure forming a dominant constellation. Recall that the *modus operandi* of the colonial regime is to expand perpetually, not merely for the sake of territorial expansion, but to secure a frustratingly finite and resistant labour supply. Hence the imposition of Roman rule on a newly conquered people would have been experienced as both obviously foreign and burdensome. In simple terms, if such burdens in the form of tax, rent, and labour, became unbearable, the desire to be free of them would have both underlying political and economic elements. In the case of first-century Judea and Galilee, given the uniqueness of Judaism in antiquity, there would have been strong religious and/or nationalistic motives as well, which we see present in the literature for the period.

Horsley highlights an interesting dynamic under the administrations of Luceius Albinus and Gessius Florus (procurators of Judea from 62-64 CE and 64-66 CE respectively). Whereas many bandit leaders had been imprisoned under the predecessor of these two procurators, Festus, Albinus accepted ransoms (or bails) for them and granted their release such that Josephus complained that because of this while “the prison was cleared of inmates...the land was infested with brigands.” (Josephus in Horsley 1979, 58) Then under Florus, Horsely refers to a “partnership” between the Roman procurator and leading bandits (1979, 58). Not only does this contradict the supposed consistent feature of the social bandit emanating from, and being aligned with, interests of the peasantry, it reinforces what has been said about the nature of patronage systems, that this potentially resulted in alliances of bandits with peasants and the elite, depending on what was most expedient. Furthermore, a question arises around the ability of bandits, or their families or patrons, to pay bail money. Ordinary peasants, given the endemic and crippling debt which was supposed to be a feature of the landscape Horsley describes, surely could not muster such funds.

In the study we tentatively indicated where Horsley’s position can be tempered. While his concern for the plight of the peasantry, the disenfranchised among them, and belief in the reassertion of a notion of God’s universal justice is necessary, it seems unlikely that bandits, including Hobsbawm’s social bandit, would have such an altruistic and selfless agenda. To my mind, Blumell offers the most concisely convincing rebuttal.

In reference to Samuel Brunk, he uses a set of very basic criteria to define his version of the Roman bandit: they operate in groups; by virtue of direct confrontation; often using violence; to engage in theft of property; and

are more prevalent in rural areas (2008, 37).<sup>367</sup> The reasons for bandits operating in rural as opposed to urban areas are “manifold” but the main reason was to keep out of the purview of authorities, whose power and influence was concentrated in urban areas (2008, 38). In so far as we can speak of a particular social class which typically fed the phenomenon, Blumell says that though they often came from lower social classes, “they could also be men of virtually any social rank or economic status” (2008, 38). He points to a fundamental distinction in sources of banditry, viz. of those who came from the ranks of non-engaged armies and those who came from the disenfranchised mass of peasantry (2008, 38).<sup>368</sup> Whether or not he regards both groups having different ideological orientations he does not say. As I have stated previously, the motives and concerns, not least ideological, of these respective groups can hardly be identified, which stems from the fact that they come from different social classes. Blumell appears not to be as attuned to class relations saying, for example, that banditry “affected both the rich and poor alike” (2008, 37) but then later, in contradiction of this, and in quoting Seneca, that “only the poor man is safe from bandit attacks” (Seneca in Blumell 2008, 39).

Blumell’s contention is not that banditry was not rife in first-century Galilee and even a main factor in the lead-up to the First Revolt. That this was the case is plainly evident if we take Josephus’ accounts at face value. His contention, and his objection with Horsley, is that the banditry so present in first-century Galilee was not *social banditry*. Blumell maintains that Horsley erroneously applies Hobsbawm’s model of the social bandit to first-century Galilee when in fact the banditry there present, or a significant part of, was of a different nature akin to some of the forms we have considered in the work of Grünewald. In this regard, Blumell maintains that Horsley is at fault in admitting the presence of revolutionary and political intent where Hobsbawm’s model is specifically a form of “pre-political protest” (2008, 44).

The following quote from Blumell summarises much of what has been intimated thus far. He states that:

*“The picture of Galilean banditry that emerges, particularly on the eve of the first revolt, reveals a type of banditry where different gangs were struggling for power or territory, and were willing to be used by different individuals who tried to attain control of the Galilee. Bandits like Jesus of Ptolemais or John of Gischala were willing to be used as mercenaries, and appear to have had no ideological platform besides the accumulation of*

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<sup>367</sup> Blumell too had noted the difficulty in an historical assessment of banditry, saying that while it was “thoroughly entrenched in the Roman world,” and reached “epidemic proportions” by the time of the late Empire, and was even regarded as being “normal and indigenous” to some areas, “because ancient authors tended to employ this term loosely to refer to anyone who acted in violent opposition to the established order, or pejoratively to slander or malign an enemy” there is much difficulty in describing exactly what constituted banditry in the Roman Empire (Blumell 2008, 37).

<sup>368</sup> “Besides soldiers, the other types of men usually engaged in banditry were those who were drawn from the ranks of disenfranchised farmers, peasants, tenant labourers or itinerants and who were constantly on the brink of destitution and only needed one crop failure to ensure total poverty. It therefore comes as no surprise that whenever there was a poor agricultural year, this often resulted in, ‘a harvest of banditry’...as Josephus claimed. In such circumstances, banditry may have provided the only means whereby these lower classes could sustain themselves. But famine was not the only circumstance that gave rise to increased banditry, as economic instability, social distress, and general societal breakdown resulting from civil wars or rebellion were also contributing factors.” (2008, 38-39)

*wealth and power. In this vein, Galilean banditry might best be seen within the framework of patron-client relationships, where elites or local strong men guarded their interests in the countryside by hiring and patronizing certain gangs.” (Blumell 2008, 49)*

## Appendix E: The NSIP Method

The papers I have consulted which present data on faunal remains use the NISP (Number of Identified Specimens) method of data capture and analysis. Despite some drawbacks, this method is supposed to be the most widely used and most reliable in archaeozoology. The method involves the extraction of faunal remains, often animal bones, from a particular site or locus where these are taken as representative for the site as a whole, i.e. extrapolative inferences are made for the populations which might have inhabited the site or were consumed at the site. The latter is helpful in ascertaining the extent of animal exploitation.

The studies determine not only the species of animal and their frequency/density in an assemblage/area but the age of the specimen when it terminated. This is done by observing the degree of epiphyseal closure in long bones (e.g. femur and tibia) where the epiphyseal plate is more pronounced in juveniles. Based on this, the age of the specimen at death then indicates its degree of exploitation, where juvenile specimens usually represent primary exploitation, i.e. meat consumption and/or sacrifice while adult specimens represent secondary exploitation, i.e. byproducts such as wool, milk or, in the case of bovines, use for traction.

There are however some cautionary remarks from archaeologists on conclusions based on animal samples. Greene and Moore (2010), cite an example of a study by Guilday (1970) of the site of an eighteenth-century British garrison in North America where levels of animal consumption could not be determined based on the archaeological record because the diet of the soldiers consisted mainly of boneless dried pork (2010, 207). Citing the work of Albarella, they also say that “[d]iscrepancies between bones from medieval sites and accounts of animal farming in documents...give rise to concern about the extent to which excavated samples really do represent ‘real’ ancient populations” (Albarella in Greene and Moore 2010, 208). In O’Connor’s study (2004), dealing specifically with the recovery of faunal remains, he suggests that NISP methods are valid only for the sample and not for the entire death assemblage or biotic community (O’Connor 2004, 55). O’Connor also points out the danger of overrepresentation where multiple bones from a single specimen may appear and be counted as more than one specimen (2004, 55-56).

Sasson, whose work we considered at some length, provides his reasons for preferring the NISP method:

“There is an ongoing debate about the use of minimum number of individuals (MNI) and number of identified specimens (NISP) as measures of the relative frequency of taxa (cf. Grayson 1984; Klein and Cruz-Urbe 1984 Ringrose 1993; Lyman 1994a; Reitz and Wing 1999)...[For Sasson’s work,] NISP was chosen as a comparative measure for two primary reasons: first, the NISP is the most common count and can be retrieved accurately from the raw data in zooarchaeological reports. MNI values, on the other hand, are not available in all reports and are difficult to obtain from raw data. Second, in small bone assemblages, the probability for bias in the MNI count is higher.” (Sasson 2014, 70).