

The Current Discussion on the so-called Deuteronomistic History: Literary Criticism and Theological Consequences¹⁾

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The key position of the book of Deuteronomy

The book of Deuteronomy holds a particular position in the Hebrew Bible in that the report of the death of Moses in Deut 34 brings the Pentateuch to an important conclusion. The last verses in Deut 34:10-12 mark a major break by stating that never again a prophet like Moses arose in Israel, a prophet whom Yhwh knew face to face. To a certain extent the Pentateuch, the Torah appears to be a *vita Mosis*, since Exodus 2 opens the narration with his birth and Deuteronomy 34 ends the narration with his death, whereas the stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs in Genesis function as an introduction.

Nevertheless, Deuteronomy points forward, as much as it marks an end, towards the following books.

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- 1) This article is based on a paper given at the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary on May 9th 2014 during a stay for teaching at the International Christian University, Tokyo. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Johannes Unsok Ro for his kind invitation and hospitality and to the assistants for their invitation to publish this paper in the journal *Humanities: Christianity and Culture*. The following is a summary of my former research on the Deuteronomistic History, especially "The Form-Critical Problem of the So-Called Deuteronomistic History" in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids, Michigan - Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2003), 240-252; *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London - New York: T & T Clark - Continuum, 2005; Japanese translation: Thomas Römer, *Shinmeiki-shisho: Kyuyaku-seisho Ni Okeru Rekishisyo No Seiritsu* [Tokyo: The Board of Publications. The United Church of Christ in Japan, 2008]); "Deuteronomistic History," *EBR* 6 (2013): cols 648-653. For detailed bibliography please consult these works.

In the speech of Moses the crossing of the Jordan is repeatedly announced as the first step of the conquest of the land, which will then in detail be reported in Josh 3-4. The conquest itself, told in Josh 2-12, is also already alluded to in Deut (in the same warrior perspective). Finally Deut 31 describes, after Numb 27, the institution of Joshua as the successor of Moses, and this succession is confirmed in Josh 1 by a divine speech. There is therefore a relation between the books of Deut and Josh in terms of announcement and fulfillment.

But the previews of Deut are not limited to the book of Joshua; also the breaking away of the people from Yhwh, which is described at the beginning of the time of Judges is already foreseen in Deut (cf. Deut 6:12-15 and Judg 2:12-14). The so-called law of the king in Deut 17 is essentially a summary of the history of the Israelite and Judean kings from the very beginning to the rule of Josiah. The desire to appoint a king, just like other nations (17:14) already points towards 1 Sam 8; the warning that the king should not have too many women, who would confuse his mind and heart, hints at the narration of Solomon, and the commandment to read a copy of the Torah can be understood as preparing the reader for the story of the devout Josiah and his discovery of the book in 2 Kgs 22-23. Also the exile described towards the end of Kings (2 Kgs 24-25) is already perceivable in the curses of Deut 28.

The discovery of Deuteronomism

These close relations between Deut and the Former Prophets had already led Spinoza to the theory, that all these books (together with Genesis-Numbers) were the work of one single editor, who lived after the events of 587 BCE, and who wanted to produce with his history an explanation for the final collapse of Judah²⁾.

Wilhelm M.L. de Wette was one of the first authors to explain the

2) In B. de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise and A Political Treatise. Translated From the Latin With an Introduction by R.H.M. Elwes*, New York: Dover Publications, 1951.

interrelation between the Former Prophets and Deut with the concept of “deuteronomistic” (dtr) texts or editors. By identifying, as had been suggested before him, the book discovered in 2 Kings 22 with the book of Deuteronomy³⁾, he enforced the idea of dtr redactions and revisions in the so-called historical books of the Hebrew Bible. This idea was then developed, following Heinrich Ewald and others, by Julius Wellhausen, who identified dtr texts in the Former Prophets (Josh-Kings), but he frequently insists on the fact that it is not clear, whether those texts stem from one or more redactors. Furthermore he seems to presume a first dtr revision in the time of Josiah, which is followed by exilic editions⁴⁾. The consensus about the presence of dtr texts in Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings was the starting point of Martin Noth, as he wrote his *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Studies on the history of transmission of historical traditions) in 1943, in the middle of World War II.

The discovery of a “Deuteronomistic History” (DtrH) by Martin Noth

In his work published for the first time in 1943⁵⁾, Noth, differently from his predecessors, sets out to determine the function of the dtr texts in Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets and detects in most of these texts a unity in terms of content and composition. The major part of dtr texts are the work of an individual whom Noth calls the “Deuteronomist” (Dtr),

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- 3) This dissertation from 1805 has been recently republished and commented by Hans-Peter Mathys, “Wilhelm Martin Leberechts de Wettes *Dissertatio critico-exegetica* von 1805” in *Biblische Theologie und historisches Denken. Wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Studien. Aus Anlass der 50. Wiederkehr der Basler Promotion von Rudolf Smend* (ed. Martin Kessler and Martin Walraff; Studien zur Geschichte der Wissenschaften in Basel. Neue Folge 5; Basel: Schwabe 2008), 171-211.
 - 4) Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (1899) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1963).
 - 5) Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (1943) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967, 3rd ed.). English translation: Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991, 2nd ed.).

acting on his own initiative. This Dtr, writing during the Babylonian exile, shortly after 560 BCE, probably in Mizpa, elaborates an etiology of the fall of Jerusalem and the Exile and revises the books of Deuteronomy to Kings with a “unified historical theology,” introducing explanation speeches and comments into the course of the narration, producing a stylistic, chronological and essential coherence. Consequently Dtr is not just an editor, who would slightly correct and edit an already complete work, but rather the author of a complex work, who for the first time conceives a coherent Israelite and Judean history based on the different traditions of Josh to Kgs. In Noth’s evaluation, the DtrH remains until today a precious source of history: “Dtr.’s work tells us virtually all we know of the history of the Israelite people in Palestine”⁶⁾. The “closest parallels are those Hellenistic and Roman historians, who use older accounts, mostly unacknowledged, to write a history not of their own time but of the more or less distant past”⁷⁾. Dtr writes his historical work, that ends with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile in order to point out that these events are Yhwh’s punishment for the ongoing disobedience of his people and their kings. In doing so he obviously saw the events of 597 and 587 BCE as something irreversible and final.

The hypothesis of the books Deut-Kgs as a continuous and coherent history remains until today one of the most important theories in Old Testament research; however, the term “DtrH” covers today different concepts, because Noth’s theory underwent quite soon two major modifications.

The modification of the hypothesis

A Josianic DtrH revised in the exilic period: the so called block-model

This position is still the dominant model in Anglo-Saxon research. It goes back to Frank Moore Cross, who basically picks up an idea of Wellhausen and Kuenen. In fact Wellhausen inspired by Kuenen, had already

6) Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 121.

7) Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 26

underlined the dtr character of the historical books; he distinguished between Josianic and exilic redactional layers. Cross⁸⁾ and his various followers⁹⁾ see the first edition of the DtrH in the Josianic period, originally ending in 2 Kgs 23:25 which was completed after 587 BCE by the addition of 2 Kgs 24-25 and by the insertion of those texts which point towards the exile. Cross bases his theory on the observation that two main themes characterize the DtrH and especially the books of Sam-Kgs: first: the “sin of Jeroboam” (1 Kgs 12), representing Yhwh as a bull and building Yhwh sanctuaries outside Jerusalem in Bethel and Dan; second: the promise of an eternal Davidic dynasty in 2 Sam 7, a text, which Noth did not really know how to classify. These two lines come to a conclusion in the narration of the reform of king Josiah, because in 2 Kgs 23:15 Josiah destroys the sanctuary of Bethel, and by this puts an end to the sins of Jeroboam. Furthermore Dtr¹ presents Josiah as a new David, the best of all kings.

This positive evaluation of Josiah is fostered in the parallel between 2 Kgs 23:25 and the commandment *Shema' Yisrael* in Deut 6,4-5: 2 Kgs 23:25: “Before him there was no king like him, who turned to Yhwh with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might (*me'od*)”; Deut 6:5 “You shall love Yhwh your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might (*me'od*).” In the whole Hebrew Bible, it is only in these two passages that the adverb *me'od* is used as a substantive.

It is true that some texts of the DtrH can be more easily read and understood in the context of the 7th century BCE than in the Babylonian or Persian period. Particularly those texts, which are evaluations of the kings of Israel and Judah and clearly point to the time of Josiah, further the

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- 8) F.M. Cross, “The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History” in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic. Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274-289.
- 9) Cf. For instance Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981); Richard Elliot Friedman, “From Egypt to Egypt: Dtr¹ and Dtr²” in *Traditions in Transformation. Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 167-192.

formulation “unto this day,” which seems to presuppose the existence of the monarchy¹⁰). A first edition of the DtrH that originated under the rule of Josiah would be imprinted by a completely different ideological perspective as the etiology of the exile, which Noth pointed out. Whereas Noth and his followers draw the attention to the hints to the exile, those who place the first edition of the DtrH under Josiah pay less attention to those texts, which display an exilic perspective.

A DtrH in several exilic and post-exilic layers

This hypothesis goes back to Rudolf Smend¹¹) who drew attention to the different layers of the dtr texts inside the DtrH, already noticed by Martin Noth, and in doing so elaborates a more complex view of the DtrH. Smend observes in studying Josh 1:1-9, a dtr speech of Yhwh confirming Joshua as Moses’ successor that verse 6 looks like a conclusion. However starting with v. 7 three verses are added also written in dtr language, which transform the military speech in 1:1-6 into an admonition to observe to the law. This brings Smend to the assumption of the existence of a “DtrN,” a dtr nomist. The theory has been furthermore elaborated by W. Dietrich, who detected in the books of Sam-Kgs a “DtrP,” a prophetic Dtr, responsible for the insertion of the main prophetic histories and for the intention of a scheme of prophetic announcement and fulfilment¹²). The so-

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- 10) Jeffrey Geoghegan, “‘Until This Day’ and the Preexilic Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 201-227.
- 11) Rudolf Smend, „Das Gesetz und die Völker. Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte“ in *Probleme biblischer Theologie. Festschrift für Gerhard von Rad* (ed. H. W. Wolff; München: Kaiser, 1971), 494-509; English translation: Rudolf Smend, “The Law and the Nations. A Contribution to Deuteronomistic Tradition History” in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah. Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (ed. Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville; Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 8; Winona lake, In: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 95-110.
- 12) Walter Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte* (FRLANT 108; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972); cf. also Walter Dietrich, “Martin Noth and the Future of the Deuteronomistic History” in *The History of Israel’s Traditions. The Heritage of Martin Noth* (ed. Steven L. McKenzie and M. Patrick Graham; JSOTSup 182;

called "Göttinger Modell" is therefore characterized by the distinction of 3 main layers: *DtrH* (the *dtr* "historian," responsible for the first edition of the Deuteronomistic History, who writes during the exile), *DtrP* (a prophetic Deuteronomist, only found in Sam-Kgs) and a *DtrN* (a nomist who, at the beginning of the postexilic period, insists on the importance of the law)¹³.

This theory remains close to Noth's ideas, because it places the beginnings of the *DtrH* in the time of the Babylonian exile. Recently *DtrP* is somewhat dismissed by most scholars working with the Göttingen model; in exchange new *dtr* layers have been added as for example *DtrS* (late *dtr* texts¹⁴) or *DtrB* (*Dtr* redactions emphasizing the covenant between Yhwh and Israel)¹⁵. Reading some of the authors who approve this theory it is not exactly clear, whether they still presume a coherent composition of a *DtrH*, or if they rather agree with the opponents of Noth's idea, qualifying the *dtr* passages of the Former Prophets in such a various and different way, that no coherent edition can be detected.

The rejection of the hypothesis of a *DtrH*

Since the pamphlet of Claus Westermann¹⁶, who recalled older objections against a historical work encompassing with Deut-Kgs, the theory of Martin Noth has been criticized as a cul-de-sac of Old Testament research, and this seems to become (at least in German speaking exegesis) an important position of contemporary research on the *dtr* texts in

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 153-175.

13) According to Smend "DtrN" should be understood as a collective term which summarizes different late *dtr* revisions (*DtrN*₁, *DtrN*₂, etc.).

14) S meaning "spät" (late) in German.

15) B meaning "Bund" (covenant) in German; cf. Timo Veijola, „Bundestheologische Redaktion im Deuteronomium“ in *Das Deuteronomium und seine Querbeziehungen* (ed. Timo Veijola; SESJ 62; Helsinki - Göttingen: Finnische Exegetische Gesellschaft - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 242-276.

16) Claus Westermann, *Die Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments. Gab es ein deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk ?* (ThB AT 87; Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 1994).

Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets. The main argument of this position is that the dtr texts in the different books of the so-called DtrH are extremely different from one to another, so that they cannot be assigned to a unifying dtr edition. The existence of dtr texts and editions in Deut and the Former Prophets as such is not the problem; rather the possibility of assigning these passages to one or several comprehensive and planned dtr editions¹⁷⁾.

E. Würthwein's idea published in an article in 1994¹⁸⁾ has been taken up somewhat differently by E. Axel Knauf, Reinhard Kratz, Erik Aurelius and others¹⁹⁾. Following this idea the very heart of the so called DtrH, lies in the books Samuel and Kgs²⁰⁾ and is then extended in uncountable dtr revisions and insertions enlarging the text towards the beginning in the books of Joshua and Deuteronomy. According to this theory the term "DtrH" should be limited to the books of Kings or Samuel-Kings. This goes along to a certain extent with the revival of a Hexateuical perspective, bringing the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua again in closer relation to

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- 17) Instead of a DtrH Ehud Ben Zvi speaks of a "mental shelf"; cf. Ehud Ben Zvi, "On the Term *Deuteronomistic* in relation to Joshua-Kings in the Persian Period" in *Raising Up a Faithful Exegete. Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson* (ed. Kurt L. Noll and Brooks Schramm; Winona Lake, In: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 61-71.
- 18) Ernst Würthwein, „Erwägungen zum sog. deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk. Eine Skizze“ in *Studien zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (BZAW 227; Berlin - New York: de Gruyter, 1994), 1-11.
- 19) Ernst Axel Knauf, "Does 'Deuteronomistic Historiography' (DtrH) Exist?" in *Israel Constructs its History. Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (ed. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer and Jean-Daniel Macchi; JSOT.S 306; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 388-398; Reinhard G. Kratz, *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments. Grundwissen der Bibelkritik* (UTB 2157; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); English translation: Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* (London - New York: T&T Clark - Continuum, 2005); Erik Aurelius, *Zukunft jenseits des Gerichts. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zum Enneateuch* (BZAW 319; Berlin - New York: de Gruyter, 2003); Kurt L. Noll, "Deuteronomistic History or Deuteronomistic Debate? (A Thought Experiment)," *JSOT* 31 (2007): 311-345.
- 20) For Jürg Hutzli only in the books of Kings, cf. Jürg Hutzli, "The Literary Relationship between I-II Samuel and I-II Kings. Considerations Concerning the Formation of the Two Books," *ZAW* 122 (2010): 505-519.

the “Tetrateuch,” than to the books of Judges, Samuel and Kings. The opponents of a DtrH comprising the traditions from Deuteronomy to Kings argue, that main dtr themes are limited only to Sam-Kgs, as for example the high places (*bamot*) or that they are not mentioned in all parts of DtrH, as for example the centralisation-ideology (only in Deut and Kings)²¹.

Discussion of the different positions

After this admittedly schematic presentation of the different models and positions toward Noth’s theory of a DtrH, the question arises, what should be the agenda of Deuteronomistic research for the coming years. One could, of course, arbitrarily choose one of the explanations, remaining loyal to one of the “schools” rather than the others. But if research on the Hebrew Bible contents itself with the dogmatic confrontation of different positions (which are at times even due to confessional or institutional bounds), it will not be surprising that in regards to other specialists in Ancient Near Eastern studies or even members of other theological disciplines Old Testament scholarship will cause nothing but misunderstanding and irritation.

For that reason I propose to take into account the arguments of each of the positions presented above. In humanities there are hardly ever completely wrong or exact theories. In elaborating a theory about the formation of the books of Deuteronomy to Kings, one should try to integrate as much of the above observations as possible.

First, we have to agree with the opponents of Noth’s theory, that the dtr passages in the books of Deuteronomy to Kings present themselves in terms of frequency, use of language and theological themes often in different manners. The arguments of the supporters of the different-layer-model (the so-called “Göttingen model”) take this observation into account

21) Konrad Schmid, „Das Deuteronomium innerhalb der ‚deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke‘ in Gen - 2 Kön“ in *Das Deuteronomium zwischen Pentateuch und Deuteronomistischem Geschichtswerk* (ed. Eckart Otto and Reinhard Achenbach; FRLANT 206; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 193-211.

by insisting on the necessity of literary and ideological differentiation inside the DtrH.

The advocates of a Josianic DtrH have to be approved as far as certain texts and ideas are better understood in the 7th century BCE than in the exilic period. I would like to recall Otto Eissfeldt's argument (one of the first to object to Martin Noth's theory of the DtrH)²²⁾, who pointed out, that the so-called exilic period would not present a fitting material context for the edition of a historical work, given the difficult economic and political contexts. For M. Noth, the DtrH is the "independent project of a man" and "there is no evidence that Dtr. was commissioned by an individual or by a particular group"²³⁾. This assumption is anachronistic because almost all writings of the Hebrew Bible are to be considered as literature of tradition and have passed through the hands of many copyists and editors, who stored the writings in temple or sanctuary "libraries." In this perspective the DtrH has been edited and elaborated during at least a century. There is no such thing as an Old Testament equivalent to Herodotus or Thucydides²⁴⁾. The DtrH and also the Chronicles are not *historia* in the sense of investigation, which would base itself on a critical evaluation and discussion of sources. Different from Herodotus, who uses and comments different sources, the authors of the DtrH proceeded without discussing their own sources. The DtrH actually mentions some documents, but commenting on them (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18: "the book of Jashar," 1 Kings 11:41 "the book of the reign of Solomon"; 1 Kings 14:19 and other passages "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel"). It is to be considered, that the authors of the DtrH used textual sources, specifically annals of kings, whose existence is presumable for Israel and Judah. But the possible use of sources is not made with the aim of a true report of events as claims,

22) Otto Eissfeldt, *Geschichtsschreibung im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1948).

23) Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 145.

24) Against John Van Seters, *In Search of History. History in the Ancient World and the Origin of Biblical History* (New Haven - London: Yale University Press, 1983).

for example, Thucydides nor is the aim to document objectively and from a neutral distance the history of Israel and Judah. But in the same line of Herodotus the DtrH aims to point out the reasons that led to a precise situation (2 Kgs 17:7 “This occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against Yhwh their God”; 2 Kgs 24:3 “This came upon Judah at the command of Yhwh, to remove them out of his sight”).

In the context of this contribution I cannot explore the complex contemporary discussion about the definition and essence of historiography. Of course the idea of the Deuteronomists was not to tell “how things really happened” (Leopold von Ranke²⁵). If one embraces with Van Seters Huizinga’s definition, according to which “History is the intellectual form in which a civilisation renders account to itself of its past”²⁶, the DtrH can plausibly be understood in these terms. In fact it creates a chronological succession of different time periods, which aims to show the sense of Israel’s and Judah’s history from the beginnings under Moses to the fall of both kingdoms. In delimiting and organizing the different sections by “reflection-chapters,” already pointed out by Noth, a coherent image of history emerges, in spite of the variety of expressions and themes included and integrated²⁷. So the fact remains, following Noth and his supporters, that the books Deut-Kgs remain, a coherent compositional project regardless of all their diversity.

A plea for a mediation-model

The attempt to combine the model of Cross and his followers with the model of Göttingen has been undertaken for the first time by Mark

25) According to Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta Books, 1997), 17, the German “wie es eigentlich gewesen,” should better be translated “how it essentially was.”

26) Quoted in Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 1.

27) Those speeches or evaluations of history (Josh 1; Josh 23; Judg 2; 1 Sam 12; 1 Kgs 8, 2 Kgs 17), having a model in the great farewell speech of Moses (Deut 1-30), are clearly correlated and structure the books Deut-2 Kgs in distinct time periods. An occasional development of these texts, as if they had no compositional function, is a less plausible explanation.

O'Brien, who dates the first edition of dtr work in the 7th century BCE, assuming at least two exilic redactions²⁸⁾. In a different manner the North-American and German theories were combined by Norbert Lohfink and Georg Braulik, in the proposal of a conquest-narration from the Josianic period including Deut and Josh (*DtrL*²⁹⁾). Furthermore Lohfink supposes a late dtr reviser (*DtrÜ*³⁰⁾), an idea, which is quite similar to the concept of "DtrS" in other theories³¹⁾.

It seems plausible that the redaction and transmission of the dtr texts inside the books of Deuteronomy to Kings is due to a group or a "school" of scribes, which would partly explain the difference in the use of language and syntax. Possibly the DtrH was never fixed on one single scroll but existed as a small "library," to which were added, apart from Deut-Kgs, other scrolls such as the dtr edition of Jeremiah and maybe also the dtr account of Moses and the Exodus which is now combined with the Priestly version of this story³²⁾. That the DtrH is indeed multilayered can easily be shown through an analysis of Deut 12, which deals with one of the major concerns of the DtrH, the centralization of the sacrificial cult.

Deut 12 and the three stages of the formation of the DtrH

In the centralisation law of Deut 12 one can indeed distinguish three

28) M.A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (OBO 92; Freiburg (CH) - Göttingen: Universitätsverlag - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).

29) The "L" stands for "Landeroberung" (conquest).

30) In German: "Deuteronomistischer Überarbeiter."

31) Norbert Lohfink, „Kerygmata des Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks (1981)“ in *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur II* (SBA.AT 12; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 125-142; Georg Braulik, „Die Theorien über das Deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk“ in *Studien zum Deuteronomium und seiner Nachgeschichte* (SBA.AT 37; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2001), 153-169.

32) Thomas Römer, "The Construction of the Figure of Moses According to Biblical and Extrabiblical Sources," *AJBI* 30/31 (2004/2005 [2007]): 99-116.

parallel structured units, which correspond to three layers of redaction³³). If we restrict ourselves to the main core in 12:1-18 we can observe that the text insists several times on the exhortation that one shall only sacrifice at the place (*maqôm*) that Yhwh has chosen (v. 4-7, 11-12, 13-14). This commandment is always preceded by a negative statement: v. 2-4: not to imitate the way of the nations; v. 8-10: not to act as “today”; v.13: not to offer holocausts in other sanctuaries. Furthermore, each sequence ends with a call to rejoice (v. 7, 12 and 18). These observations allow to distinguish three units: v. 2-7; 8-12; 13-18. The oldest text can be found in 12:13-18³⁴), later enlarged first by v. 8-12 (with v. 28) and later by v. 2-7 (with 29-31). The chronological succession of the three sections 12:13-18; 12:8-12; 12:2-7 is equally reflected in the development of the formula of centralisation: v. 14: “the place (*maqôm*) which Yhwh will choose (*baḥar*) in one of your tribes”; v. 11: “the place (*maqôm*) which Yhwh your God will choose (*baḥar*), to make his name dwell there (*lešakken šemô šam*)”; v. 5: “the place (*maqôm*) which Yhwh your God will choose (*baḥar*) out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there (*lašum 'et šemo šam lešiknô*³⁵)”.

It is manifest that the original meaning of v. 14 was gradually developed and reinterpreted by the dtr scribes. The author of v. 11 introduces the motif of the divine name dwelling inside the sanctuary (instead of the deity itself), which may reflect a reinterpretation after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. The three sequences 12:13-18; 8-12 and 2-7 reflect then the three major stages of the development of the DtrH: a first collection of dtr scrolls in the 7th century, a reworking in the

33) Rudolf Smend, *Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments* (Theologische Wissenschaft; Stuttgart et al.: W. Kohlhammer, 1978), 73-73.

34) This section is mainly formulated in the 2nd person of the singular, contrary to the two other sections.

35) The massoretic vocalization of this from is problematic. The original form was probably an infinitive Piel (intensive/factitive form); cf. Martin Keller, *Untersuchungen zur deuteronomisch-deuteronomistischen Namenstheologie* (BBB 105; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1996).

Babylonian period and a new edition of the DtrH in the first decades of the Persian period³⁶⁾.

Deut 12:13-18 and the origins of a deuteronomistic library

The original centralisation law in Deut 12:13-18³⁷⁾ presumes the existence of the temple of Jerusalem. Those verses were part of the first edition of Deut and followed perhaps immediately the introduction 6:4-5. The Assyrian influences on Deut are so obvious, that the traditional placing the Ur-Deut towards the end of the 7th century BCE, probably during the reign of Josiah, is still the best option³⁸⁾. 12:13-18 presumes a situation among the addressees in the land. The *maqôm* points to the temple of Jerusalem and the “unique” tribe, which Yhwh will choose, refers to Judah. This theology of election is perfectly conceivable in the context of the so-called Josianic reform. Closely related to the original centralization law is the oldest part of Solomon’s prayer in consecrating the Temple reported in

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- 36) The idea that the origin of cult centralization in Deut 12 originated in the 7th century BCE is more and more challenged in European scholarship; cf. for instance Juha Pakkala, “The Date of the Oldest Edition of Deuteronomy,” *ZAW* 121 (2009): 388-401, who claims, with others, that the oldest édition of Deuteronomy was made at the time of the Babylonian exile, as already argued by Gustav Hölscher, „Komposition und Ursprung des Deuteronomiums,“ *ZAW* 40 (1922): 161-255. This theory fails however to explain why the original edition of Deuteronomy is so closely related to Assyrian Loyalty oaths, especially the treaty of Esarhaddon of 672 BCE (VTE). Why would scribes of the Babylonian or even Persian period take up this treaty? The large diffusion of this text, which served as a model for the first edition of Deuteronomy has recently be confirmed by a copy of this oath found in the sanctuary of Tell Tayinat, cf. Hans Ulrich Steymans, “Deuteronomy 28 and Tell Tayinat,” *Verbum et Ecclesia (online)* 34 (2013): 13 p.
- 37) On the possibility of later elaboration of the original centralization law see Norbert Lohfink, „Fortschreibung? Zur Technik von Rechtsrevisionen im deuteronomischen Bereich,“ erörtert an Deuteronomium 12, Ex 21,2-11 und Dtn 15,12-18“ in *Das Deuteronomium und seine Deutungen* (ed. Tima Veijola; Schriften der Finnischen Exegetischen Gesellschaft 62; Helsinki - Göttingen: Finnische Exegetische Gesellschaft - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 127-171.
- 38) See also Yoshihide Suzuki, “A New Aspect on Occupation Policy by King Josiah. Assimilation and Codification in view of Yahwism,“ *AJBI* 18 (1992): 31-61.

1 Kgs 8:14-20*³⁹⁾. In v. 16, the election (*baḥar*) is again mentioned, as well as the election of a city from a tribe of Israel, which is parallel to the election of David. In 1 Kgs 8:16 the election of David and Jerusalem is presented as a fulfillment of the centralization law of Deut 12:13-18.

A relation to the centralization law is also found in the evaluation of the kings, who are judged according to their loyalty to Yhwh and to the temple of Jerusalem. The decline of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, is explained in 2 Kgs 17:1-6*, 18, 21-23aab, as the consequence of the failure of the kings of Israel to conform to the dtr idea of centralization and because of their worship of other gods. The affirmation of 2 Kgs 17:18, that now only the tribe of Judah is left fits well to the time of Josiah who was glorified by the Deuteronomists for acting according to the prescriptions of Deuteronomy (2 Kgs 22-23*). The pre-exilic edition of the books of Kings ended with the praise of Josiah in 2 Kgs 23:25*, which as we pointed out already, takes up the beginning of the first edition of Deuteronomy, Deut 6:4-5.

These correlations between the pre-exilic edition of Kgs and Deut make it unlikely that the first edition of Deut would have been conceived completely without any relation to the dtr edition of Sam-Kgs. This does not necessarily mean, that a complete historiography from Deut to Kings already existed in the 7th century BCE. One can rather assume, that a first edition of Deuteronomy perhaps together with a first edition of Joshua on one hand and Sam-Kgs* on the other hand were fixed on different scrolls. They were probably not edited by the same individuals; however the authors of both scrolls were part of the same group of scribes and other high officials, which we can call, lacking a better designation, "deuteronomistic school." This theory could at least partly explain variations in the dtr style in the different books or passages of the DtrH.

39) For more details cf. Thomas Römer, "Redaction Criticism: 1 Kings 8 and the Deuteronomists" in *Method Matters, Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen* (ed. Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards; SBL Resources for Biblical Study 56; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 63-76.

In conclusion the first phase of Deuteronomism is best dated under Josiah. But we should not imagine a DtrH on one scroll, rather a “deuteronomistic library.”

The large use of the Assyrian vassal and war rhetoric in these dtr scrolls could be explained by using the socio-cultural term of “counter-history”⁴⁰: the Deuteronomists took over Assyrian ideology in order to use it in an anti-Assyrian sense. The dating of the first edition of Deut in the 7th century is also founded on the close parallel of the loyalty-oath of Esarhaddon from 672 (VTE), which calls just like Deut 6:4-5 and other texts to absolute devotion, and loyalty. The same rhetoric which is used in the Assyrian texts, is used in Deut to describe the relationship between Israel and Yhwh. Also the curses, which in VTE sanction any behavior transgression of the treaty, are to be found in a comparable structure in Deut 28 (with the only difference, that instead of the different Assyrian deities Yhwh alone is mentioned.)⁴¹. In transposing Assyrian rhetoric of contract to the Deut, Deut replaces the Assyrian King and his protection deities with Yhwh. Interestingly, the dtr scribes do not replace the Assyrian by the Judean king, but by Yhwh, which could be a sign, that Josiah’s reform did not depend so much on the king but on his officials, which took over the religious, economical and religious power⁴².

Deut 12:8-12 and the first exilic edition of the DtrH

In contrast to Deut 12:13-18, 12:8-12 presume the historical fiction of Deut

40) Amos Funkenstein, “History, Counter-History and Memory” in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution”* (ed. Saul Friedlander; Cambridge, Mass. - London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 66-81.

41) Hans Ulrich Steymans, *Deuteronomium 28 und die adê zur Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons. Segen und Fluch im Alten Orient und in Israel* (OBO 145; Freiburg (CH) - Göttingen: Universitätsverlag - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995).

42) According to the biblical account, Josiah was eight years when he acceded to the throne. For the growing importance of high officials in the 7th century cf. also Patricia Dutcher-Walls, “The Social Location of the Deuteronomists: A Sociological Study of Factory Politics in Late Pre-Exilic Judah,” *JSOT* 52 (1991): 77-94.

and the identification of the addressee with the generation of the conquest (12:19), which as such for an exilic public could immediately be transposed to their own situation. After evaluating in v.8 the present as a time of disorder, v. 9 states that the addressees have not yet come to the rest, which Yhwh provides. This verse points clearly forward to 1 Kgs 8:56, the conclusion of the exilic layer of Solomon's prayer: "Blessed be Yhwh, who has given rest (*menuha*) to the people Israel according to all... that he spoke through his servant Moses." But already Josh 21:44 mentions, that Yhwh has given Israel rest (*wayyanaḥ*) from all his enemies. The verb *nwh* Hifil (with the meaning "to give rest") creates a relation between Josh 21:44, 22:4 and Joshua's final speech in Josh 23 (23,1: "A long time afterward, when Yhwh had given rest to Israel from all their enemies all around"). The theme of rest is mentioned again twice in 2 Sam 7 (v.1 and v. 11) and also in the dtr verse 1 Kgs 5:18. The construction of the Temple appears therefore as the final fulfillment of the promise of rest given in Deut 12:10. As a contrast the exile appears as a time of restlessness and disorder, as pointed out in the curse of Deut 28:65 ("And among these nations you shall find no rest"). Thus, the fulfillment on a narrative level of the promise of rest in 1 Kgs 8 is questioned on the level of the communicative situation and has to be newly achieved. In this way the theme of rest gives a compositional and editorial frame running from Deut 12:8-12 to Josh 21:43-45; 23* unto 2 Sam 7* and 1 Kgs 8*. In fact Solomon foresees already during the consecration of the Temple the exile and the loss of the land, attributing to the Temple the role of a *qibla*, indicating the direction toward which the praying person has to direct his prayer (1 Kgs 8:48; cf. also Daniel 6:11).

The comment of the fall of Israel in 2 Kgs 17 was revised during the Babylonian period and new passages were added: 17:1-6*, 18, 21-23*. The themes of 2 Kgs 17 reach now back to the beginning of Deut⁴³) and therefore seem to imply the extension of the DtrH as Noth described it.

43) Erik Aurelius, *Zukunft jenseits des Gerichts. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zum Enneateuch* (BZAW 319; Berlin - New York: de Gruyter, 2003), 71-90.

Finally the exilic dtr redaction has probably conceived 2 Kgs 25:21 as its conclusion (“Judah was exiled away from his land”) parallel to 2 Kgs 17:23.

Starting from Deut 12:8-12 close interrelations in terms of composition, language and content exist to texts such as Josh 23*; Judg 2:11ff*; 2 Sam 7*; 1 Kgs 8*; 2 Kgs 17* and 2 Kgs 25*, which means most of Noth’s “chapters of reflection.” These texts point into two directions: they insist on the one hand on the fact, that Yhwh has fulfilled all his promises and finally brought Israel “to rest”; on the other hand they allude to the menace of the loss of the land and the exile in case of betrayal of the exclusive worship of Yhwh. The explanation of the loss of the land and the deportation is indeed the main interest of the exilic edition of Deut-Kgs and so we can continue to read the work as a “semantic of crisis”⁴⁴.

Deut 12:2-7 and the post-exilic redaction of the DtrH

The last development of Deut 12, in 12:2-7 and 29-31, is marked by a particular aggressive attitude towards the “other nations”; this is also the case in Deut 7:1-6, 22-26 and 9:1-6. The segregationist attitude on which these passages are based suggests ideological and temporal proximity to Ezra and Nehemiah. In Deut 12:2-7, contrary to the Josianic and exilic versions of the centralization law the main interest becomes the strict separation from the nations, which could have as an historical background a conflict between the Babylonian *Golah* and the population who was left in the land. One can assign in 2 Kgs 17, the verses 12-17 and 20 (and maybe v. 8) to the same late dtr revision. 2 Kgs 17:15* (“they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom Yhwh had commanded them that they should not do as they did”) presents itself as a “quotation” from Deut 12:4 and 31. Dating Deut 12:2-7 in the first half of the Persian period confirms the idea of a post-exilic revision of the DtrH, since Deut 12:2-7 is closely related to other dtr key texts. In addition to Deut 7; 9:1-6 and 2 Kgs

44) For the concept see Armin Steil, *Krisensemantik. Wissenssoziologische Untersuchungen zu einem Topos moderner Zeiterfahrung* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1993).

17:12-20, it has parallels in 1 Kgs 8:8,52-53,57-61, which belong to the latest dtr edition of Solomon's dedication of the temple. In these verses, just as in Deut 12:2-7,29-31, the relation to the temple fades and the distinction between Israel and the nations (v. 52, 59-60) and also the obedience to the law gain more importance. The affirmation in 1 Kgs 8:60, that only Yhwh is God indicates the transformation from dtr monolatry to monotheism. This monotheistic perspective also occurs in Deut 4, a chapter, which is considered to belong to latest additions to the book of Deuteronomy⁴⁵. The order to destroy the altars of the nations (Deut 12:3) preludes 2 Kgs 23:15, where this expression occurs for the last time in the DtrH (before in passages as Ex 34:13; Deut 7:5; Jud 2:2; 6:30-31; 2 Kgs 23:12). If there exist a compositional intention between Deut 12:3 and 2 Kgs 23:15, this could mean in the context of the early Persian period that these text may also reflect a polemic against Samaritan and other Diaspora sanctuaries⁴⁶.

The different endings of the DtrH

The different perspectives of the successive editions of DtrH are also reflected in their respective endings: 2 Kgs 23:25*: "Before him there was no king like him, who turned to Yhwh with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses." As we have underlined, the Josianic edition of the books of Kings wanted to celebrate the Josiah as the new David and the only king who totally accomplished the theological program of Deut 6:4-5. The statement in 2 Kgs 25:21: "and so Judah was led away from their land to the exile" was probably the

45) Cf. for instance Juha Pakkala, "Deuteronomy and 1–2 Kings in the Redaction of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets" in *Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch, Hexateuch, and the Deuteronomistic History* (ed. Konrad Schmid and Raymond Person Jr.; FAT II/56; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 133-162, 140-141, with more bibliography.

46) There is no doubt that the dtr ideology of Jerusalem as the only legitimate sanctuary of Yhwh did not reflect the reality of the early Persian period in which existed a Yhwh sanctuary in Egypt (Elephantine), Samaria and perhaps also in Babylonia; cf. Jan Dušek, "Mt. Gerizim Sanctuary, Its History and Enigma of Origin," *HeBAI* 3.1 (2014): 111-133.

closing remark of the exilic DtrH. The exile appears as the conclusion of the whole history, creating at the same time the myth of an “empty land,” suggesting that “all Israel” had been deported, which is in contradiction to the historical facts and other biblical accounts⁴⁷). The idea of the “empty land” reflects a Golah ideology, the “true Israel” is the “exilic Israel.”

If 2 Kgs 25:21 originally was the conclusion of DtrH in the exilic period, we must assume that very soon verses 22-26 were added. This passage holds the information about the anarchic situation in the land (which is described in detail in Jer 40-42), and so to a certain extent corrects v. 21. This passage ends with the flight of the rest of the population to Egypt: “And all the people parted...and went to Egypt...” Here the entire history of the people of Yhwh, which started with the Exodus from Egypt, is practically annihilated. There is no more negative way to express the end of a history⁴⁸).

How should we understand 25:27-30, which represents the conclusion of the books of Kings in its present form? The account on the improvement of the Judean king Jehoiachin’s situation, who receives a place of honor at the table of the Babylonian king, following Noth, was added, because this event, although lacking any historical significance, still “belongs in the account of the fate of the Judean kings”⁴⁹). In no way should it be read as to “herald a new age”⁵⁰). The slightly laconic attitude of Noth towards these verses soon caused opponents: often the verses were interpreted as a more or less discrete hope for the continuity of Davidic dynasty or even the hope of the coming of a messianic king⁵¹). But these verses hardly offer any

47) Hans M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the ‘Exilic’ Period* (Symbolae Osloenses; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996).

48) Richard Elliot Friedman, “From Egypt to Egypt: Dtr¹ and Dtr²” in *Traditions in Transformation. Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 167-192.

49) Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 117.

50) Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 143.

51) Gerhard von Rad, „Die deuteronomistische Geschichtstheologie in den

basis for such an interpretation, because this passage mentions neither children nor an eventual successor. Important literary parallels to the destiny of Jehoiachin are the Diaspora-novels in Gen 37-50, Dan 2-6 and Esther. In all these texts an exile is brought out of prison and receives an important role at the court of a foreign king (2 Kgs 25:28; Gen 41:40; Dan 2:48; Esth 1:3); this new position is marked by a changing of the clothes (2 Kgs 25:29; Gen 41:42; Dan 5:29; Esth 6:10-11; 8:15)⁵². All these stories insist on the fact that the land of deportation has become a land where Jews can live and manage interesting careers. The destiny of Jehoiachin symbolizes the transformation of exile into Diaspora.

The end of DtrH

The DtrH finally was “dissolved” around 400, when the book of Deuteronomy became the last book of the Torah, and the discussion between a Hexa- or a Pentateuch was decided in favor of the latter⁵³. In this context the book of Deuteronomy was transformed by a Pentateuchal redaction to become the conclusion of the Pentateuch. This redaction added the epitaph in 34:10-12: “never again a prophet like Moses arose in Israel, a prophet whom Yhwh knew face to face...” These verses indicate,

Königsbüchern (1947)” in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (TB 8; München: Chr. Kaiser, 1958), 189-204; English translation: Gerhard von Rad, “The Deuteronomistic Theology of History in the Books of Kings” in *Studies in Deuteronomy* (Studies in Biblical Theology 9; London: SCM Press, 1953), 74-91.

- 52) Thomas Römer, « La fin du livre de la Genèse et la fin des livres des Rois: ouvertures vers la Diaspora. Quelques remarques sur le Pentateuque, l’Hexateuque et l’Ennéateuque » in *L’Écrit et l’Esprit. Etudes d’histoire du texte et de théologie biblique en hommage à Adrain Schenker* (ed. Dieter Böhler, Innocent Himbaza and Philippe Hugo; OBO 214; Fribourg - Göttingen: Academic Press - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 285-294; cf. similarly Ronald E. Clements, “A Royal Privilege: Dining in the Presence of the Great King” in *Reflection and Refraction. Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (ed. Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim and W. Brian Aucker; VT.S 113; Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2007), 49-66; Michael J. Chan, “Joseph and Jehoiachin: On the Edge of Exodus,” *ZAW* 125 (2013): 566-577.
- 53) Thomas Römer and Marc Z. Brettler, “Deuteronomy 34 and the Case for a Persian Hexateuch,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 401-419.

that the following history contained in Joshua to Kings is not to be understood on the same level. In a way the “Former Prophets” became “deutero-canonical books” in regard to the Torah, the Pentateuch.

The idea that no prophet compares to Moses, expressed in Deut 34:10 is also a modification of the dtr conception of the prophet, which is expressed in Deut 18:15: “A prophet like me Yhwh, your God, will rise⁵⁴ from the midst of your brothers, and you shall listen to him.” Against this dtr point of view, seeing Moses as the first of a long list of prophets, the Pentateuchal redaction underlines the unique position of Moses, the only mediator of the divine law.

The linking of Deuteronomy to the previous books (Genesis-Numbers) was also realized by inserting the names of the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at strategically decisive passages of Deut, for example at the beginning (Deut 1:8) and at the end of the book (34:4). Originally the “fathers” (*’abôt*) that are so often mentioned in Deuteronomy and other books of the DtrH are not the Patriarchs but the generation in Egypt or later generations. This reflects the dtr preference of the Exodus as the foundation myth of the people of Yhwh and their rejection of the patriarchal tradition⁵⁵.

The Pentateuchal redaction identified the dtr “fathers” with the Patriarchs⁵⁶ runs through all the books of the Torah and underlines its coherence: Gen 50:24; Exod 3:15-16; 4:5; 32:13; 33:1; Lev 26:42; Numb 32:11; Deut 1:8; 9:27; 34:4, establishing the divine promises to the Patriarchs

54) Same root *q-w-m* as in Deut 34:10.

55) See especially T. Römer, *Israels Väter. Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition* (OBO 99; Freiburg (CH) - Göttingen: Universitätsverlag - Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990); and for a English summary Thomas Römer, “Deuteronomy in Search of Origins” in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah. Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (ed. Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville; SBTS 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 112-138.

56) Such an identification of the dtr fathers and the Patriarchs does not occur in the Former Prophets. This fact confirms the existence of a Pentateuchal redaction in the book of Deuteronomy.

as a main theme of the Pentateuch. The transformation of the book of Deuteronomy into the end of the Pentateuch was the end of the DtrH. The following books were gathered together with prophetic scrolls. Therefore, the prophetic character of Joshua to Kings was emphasized by the integration of prophetic stories (Elijah and Elisha) in the book of Kings. So the DtrH disappeared until it was rediscovered by Martin Noth.

Abstract

This article deals with the current debate about the so-called “Deuteronomistic History” (DtrH). It presents the different positions in Old Testament scholarship and argues for a model that takes into account as many observations as possible brought forward by the tenants of different positions. An analysis of Deut 12 shows that there is indeed evidence that one should distinguish in the dtr edition of the books from Deuteronomy to Kings three main layers and eras: a first dtr edition in the 7th century BCE, a second revision dealing with the problems of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem during the 6th century and a last revision in the first half of the Persian period in a segregationist perspective. This threefold edition can also be detected in three different conclusions of the DtrH. When Deuteronomy was cut off from the following books in order to become the conclusion of the Pentateuch, it underwent a redaction that emphasizes its function as the last book of the Torah.