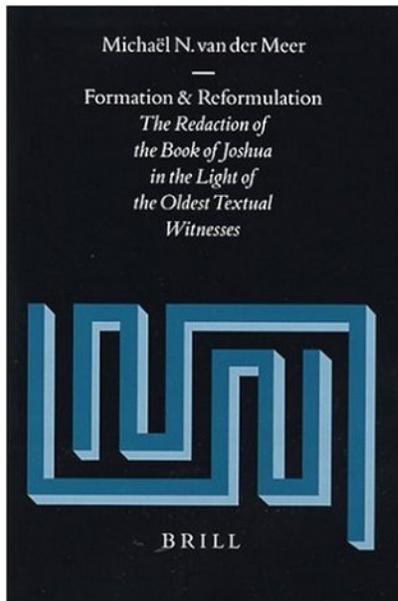


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**Meer, Michaël N. van der**

***Formation and Reformulation: The Redaction of the Book of Joshua in the Light of the Oldest Textual Witnesses***

Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 102

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The publication of a dissertation completed under Prof. Arie van der Kooij at the Free University of Amsterdam, this volume addresses the question, “Do the oldest extant witnesses of the book of Joshua reflect a stage in the formation of that book both different from and anterior to the version that came to be the canonized Masoretic text of the book?” (18). This question as addressed here has two aspects: (1) whether there is textual evidence for redactional activity in Joshua and (2) whether the LXX and Qumran witnesses betray one or more versions or types of the text of Joshua older than the MT.

After a chapter of general introduction, van der Meer devotes a second chapter to a discussion of the LXX. The chapter begins with a survey of available editions of LXX Joshua: Cambridge, Margolis, and Rahlfs. The bulk of this chapter is then an exhaustive survey of scholarly opinion regarding the character of the LXX in Joshua and its value for textual and literary criticism.

The next chapter discusses the Qumran fragments of Joshua: 4QJoshua<sup>a</sup>, 4QJoshua<sup>b</sup>, and XJoshua. Van der Meer claims that all three are close to MT, that they do not agree with LXX against MT or represent a non-Masoretic text, and that their differences with MT are due to scribal error in the fragments rather than “editorial reworking.” This chapter also treats what van der Meer calls “parabiblical texts”: other texts from Qumran and Masada

that resemble phrases, themes, or passages in Joshua. These, he concludes, were new compositions reformulating Joshua and are of no real value for uncovering the original process of formation behind the book.

In his fourth chapter, van der Meer considers the question of the redaction history of Joshua. His point of departure is the “Göttingen school” model of redactional layers. “Modern historical-critical research discerns basically the following three stages in the process of literary formation of the book of Joshua” (120). The three stages are a basic Deuteronomistic reformulation of pre-Dtr narratives (DtrH) followed respectively by nomistic (DtrN), and Priestly (RedP) redactions.

The remainder of the book focuses on four texts in Joshua (1; 5:2–9; 8:1–29, 30–35), which van der Meer presents as test cases. While the situation varies somewhat in each of these texts, van der Meer argues that the *Vorlage* of both the LXX and the Qumran fragments was essentially identical to the MT. The differences between the two are the result of literary reformulation by the LXX translator, interpreting and often condensing the stratified and redundant MT, in an effort to present a smoother, more readable narrative. Thus, van der Meer concludes, the MT represents the oldest extant text of Joshua, and the other textual witnesses do not reflect earlier stages in the formation of the book. Literary criticism and textual criticism must remain separate endeavors.

In essence, van der Meer’s argument is that the textual witnesses to Joshua do not support a particular redactional theory—that of the Göttingen *Schule*—about its composition. But this is not what textual critics such as Ulrich, Tov, and others, whom van der Meer portrays as his opponents, mean when they contend that literary and textual history overlap. Van der Meer ignores the extensive criticism that the Göttingen model has received and does not seriously consider other redactional theories. In remarking on Josh 20, he admits that the results of textual and literary criticism seem to coincide (535). He does not explain in detail how he would characterize this convergence. He does not even define what he means by redaction or editorial work, and that is what is at issue. Indeed, if he is correct about the interpretive nature of the LXX, would it not constitute a distinct edition of sorts?

Van der Meer’s work provides a reminder to textual critics of the need to be sensitive to the possibility of interpretive and stylistically motivated renderings on the part of the LXX translators. The possibility of abbreviation on the part of a translator or his *Vorlage* may not always be considered by textual critics as seriously as it should be. At the same time, van der Meer assumes implicitly that the LXX was based on the MT (cf. 408). He does not treat the boundary lists, which are probably the best evidence in Joshua of distinct textual traditions. In a sense, therefore, van der Meer abdicates the responsibility of doing textual

criticism and essentially proves what he assumes. This procedure is no longer defensible in the post-Qumran study of the Hebrew Bible, given the evidence for other books such as Jeremiah and Samuel. It leads van der Meer to some explanations of the Greek text, especially in 5:2–12, that appear to owe more to his creativity than to the translator's. If the LXX of Joshua is as interpretive as van der Meer claims, how can he be so certain that its *Vorlage* was MT? Textual critics working on Joshua, therefore, will want to be aware of van der Meer's treatments of individual passages but will need to use his work with caution because of its assumptions.