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Review of Katherine E. Southwood, *Marriage By Capture in the Book of Judges: An Anthropological Approach*. Society of Old Testament Studies Monograph Series 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

By Philip F. Esler

Judges 19-21 contain some of the most disturbing narratives in the Hebrew Bible. Judges 19 recounts the story of the Levite of Ephraim, climaxing in the sexual and murderous assault on his concubine by the Benjamites of Gibeah and his dispatching her dismembered body to all the tribes of Israel. Judges 20 describes the fratricidal war of Israel against Benjamin that results, leaving only 600 Benjamite men alive. Judges 21 relates how the people of Israel, having sworn not to give their daughters in marriage to Benjaminites, arranged the mass kidnapping of young women by the men of Benjamin so they could be compulsorily married to them to avoid this tribe being cut off from Israel. This happened on two occasions, the first at Jabesh-gilead (vv. 8-15) and the second at Shiloh (vv. 16-24). Most readers will find these narratives shocking, not least because of their underlying theme of violence against women and, perhaps, because of the resonances they evoke of the capture and sexual enslavement of thousands of Yazidi women and girls by ISIS in August 2014.

Over the years commentators have struggled with what to make of Judges 21. Yet absent from these efforts, until the publication of Katherine Southwood's *Marriage by Capture in the Book of Judges: An Anthropological Approach*, is any attempt to understand the kidnapping and forced marriage of the women in Judges 21 in relation to similar phenomena known in our own times. Given that the textual data are so alien to modern Western notions of marriage, why not look for more distant comparative material to enhance our understanding? Yet hitherto this has not happened. What makes this omission even more remarkable is that marriage by capture has been of interest to anthropologists since 1865 and is now the subject of a large body of research from many cultures across the world. Daniel Hankore used some of this research, focused on the Hadiyya people of Ethiopia, in his 2013 work *The Abduction of Dinah: Genesis 28:10-35:15 as a Votive Narrative* (Cambridge: James Clarke) in relation to the narrative of Dinah in Genesis 34. Yet the ethnography on marriage by capture is more closely comparable with Judges 21 than with Genesis 34.

That social phenomena extremely similar to what we find in Judges 21 could be largely ignored by Hebrew Bible scholars for 152 years—either through intellectual inertia or deliberate neglect—probably reflects the academic insularity of much biblical research. On the other hand, it redounds to Southwood's credit that she has set off on her own path, seeking out the disciplined social-scientific research available on marriage capture and bringing it powerfully to bear on the two narratives in Judges 21 and other relevant phenomena in the Hebrew Bible. In so doing, Southwood has made the most significant contribution to understanding this deeply troubling part of the Hebrew Bible in the long history of critical scholarship.

Chapter 1 (1-54) covers methods for and recent approaches to the investigation of Judges 21. Southwood begins with references to scholars who have found Judges 21 not to have much significance or use other than its status as an appalling narrative, before seeking to situate the narrative in the wider course of Judges 19-21 (1-6). After this, in spite of the repeated refrain, "In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did what was upright in his own eyes," she warns against recent scholarship's advocacy of kingship as the hermeneutical framework for understanding this part of the text (6-13). She then considers research focusing on the role of women in Judges 21, giving prominence to Phyllis Trible's *Texts of Terror* (1984) but questioning aspects of this approach. At this point she sounds a note, rightly in my view, that she will repeat later, against the practice in some reaches of scholarship of condemning instances of violence against women in biblical texts on the basis of contemporary ethical principles (15-17). While the use of the Bible as warrant for all manner of oppression means that texts like these should be scrutinised closely, such scrutiny should begin with a close analysis of the cultural meanings of the relevant phenomena in their own social context. Southwood points out, for example, that the application of the word 'rape' to some of the biblical attacks on women is generally inapposite because there is no biblical concept that quite matches the meanings we attach to 'rape.' I would further add that failing to understand biblical violence against women in terms of ancient Israelite culture actually means we may often underestimate the horror of what is described (as with the fate of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13, who interprets her tragedy not as Amnon's violation of her but as his refusal to marry her). Then comes a discussion of examples of related phenomena in Graeco-Roman literature and law (17-24). The next two sections relate to the redaction of Judges 17-21 in light of the Deuteronomistic History (24-32) and the date of the text (24-46), the critical issue being whether it was pre- or post-exilic in provenance. Southwood finds the latter option more persuasive (46), especially because this reasonably situates the text in close relation to the problems (for example, of inter-marriage with foreigners) that troubled the Judeans who had returned to Yehud in the Persian period. The chapter concludes with a brief but potent defence of the application of models drawn from anthropology in the interpretation of biblical texts (46-54) as 'providing suggestive ways in which to contextualise the limited data presented within the text itself' (54).

In Chapter 2 (55-103) Southwood sets out the anthropology relating to marriage by capture (a description she admits is not perfectly apt yet appropriate given its origins with McLennan). She begins with treatments of marriage and kinship in anthropology (55-66). She then discusses and defines marriage by capture. The practice has a variety of forms. Sometimes it is a ceremonial mock capture, while on other occasions men go raiding for wives. Individual women may be involved, or groups of them. Sometimes the woman's parents agree in advance, sometimes not (67-78). Attitudes to the practice tend to be ambivalent, with it often being understood as a peripheral form of marriage yet also damaging to the social system (84-86). Of utmost importance is that it normally occurs in patrilineal societies which favour arranged marriages and bride-prices and which place a very high value on a

woman's being a virgin at marriage. Virginity is a factor within local systems of honour and shame and the bride-price of a woman captured by another man is greatly reduced or eliminated, so that her only realistic prospects for marriage are with her captor (78-84; 86-95). Of great significance for the comparison with Judges 21 is the extent (especially seen in Lori Handrahan's research in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan) to which marriage by capture reinvoles and reestablishes a past ethnic tradition which allows male ethnic identities to be reconsolidated (95-102). Characteristic of this chapter is the very large and rich body of anthropological research which Southwood has discovered relating to marriage by capture and the skilful way she has analysed this material with an eye to what we find in Judges 21.

To establish a broader context for interpreting Judges 21, in Chapter 3 (106-145) Southwood considers other data in the Hebrew Bible relating to virginity, marriage and rape. Much of this data reflects, at an admittedly broad level, social features similar to those found in cultures in which marriage by capture occurs. Foci for the discussion include texts such as the law in Deut 22:23-29 (concerning sexual crimes), 2 Samuel 13, Genesis 34 and Deuteronomy 21: 10-14 and Num 31:14-18. The latter two passages concern marriage with women captured in war and while they are not truly analogous with the situation in Judges 21 the text from Numbers 31 does link virginity and issues relating to the assertion of ethnic identity. One aspect of the argument of this chapter is the highly astute examination of the meaning of *h'n* in its ancient Israelite context and the difficulty of aligning the word with modern understandings of rape.

In Chapter 4 (146-188), entitled 'Judges 21 as an Example of Marriage by Capture in the Hebrew', Southwood aligns the insights from anthropology with the textual data in a textbook example of the comparative method. Her initial point is the distinction to be drawn between Numbers 31 and the first capture in Judges 21 (vv. 10-12), since in the latter case the women are not war captives but Israelites, nor is there any religious motivation for their capture (148-153). The second capture, of women who have come out to dance at a festival (Judges 21:19-23), is correlated with the practice of raiding for wives, and here Southwood discounts theories that claim the occasion was one of sexual license with the women, in effect, inviting their capture (153-164). She surmises from the ethnography that early readers would have presumed such capture led to retaliation against the Benjaminites, because of the damage sustained to family honour, while the women concerned would have needed to stay with their captors since the prospect of their marrying someone else, with a bride-price being paid, were remote (164-174). Southwood's next section deals with the question of kinship, especially the paradox that the men of Benjamin were treated both as ethnically foreign to other Israelites (and hence denied endogamous marriages), a position similar to that in Ezra 9-10, and yet at the same time as still part of Israel (174-186).

In the final substantive chapter, entitled 'Marriage by Capture within an Ethnic Narrative: Judges 21 as a Social Critique of Superficial Unity in the Persian Period' (189-231), Southwood takes up the issue of ethnic unity, the point of central tension in Judges 21. After considering an array of current approaches

that situate the text on a spectrum from anarchy at one end to unity (actual or ironic) at the other (189-197), Southwood addresses the question of who is Israel in this narrative. How does one continue to insist on particular values derived from God and the unity of Israel when one Israelite tribe defies those values, a situation for which Deuteronomy 13 offers comparable material (197-202)? There follows a discussion of the link between marriage by capture and ethnic tradition, with the former being used to assert the latter. The solution to the ostracism of Benjamin from Israel produced by the oath in Judges 21:1 is to allow Benjaminite men to practise marriage by capture so as to reassert the ethnic unity of Israel (202-207). To establish the basis for her final conclusions on the text, Southwood then offers a highly informative discussion of 'ethnic narratives,' which are especially influential in times of social 'rupture.' The text functions as a weapon of ethnic power whose authors make claims concerning Benjamin, with the stereotypical nature of the representation rendered complex by the fact that this tribe is both outgroup and yet also part of Israel. The Benjaminites are thus 'internal foreigners' (207-223). Her final proposal is that the Judges 21 narrative functions as a social critique of unity in the post-exilic period. As with Ezra 9-10 and Neh 13:23-17 marriage and ethnicity are inextricably linked, with an 'internal foreigner' figuring in these texts and in Judges 21. Ultimately, Judges 21 warns against the creation of any superficial unity between Israelites and Benjaminites that might put at peril the culture and values of ethnic Israel. The text allows a post-exilic Israelite audience to socially construct Benjaminites, or their like in Yehud, as in some sense foreigners and thereby to silence any doubts concerning the merits of ethnic unity.

To expand upon a point made earlier in this review, while the critical scholarship of the Hebrew Bible has never hitherto offered such a framework for interpreting this text, once one has read this volume one is struck by the necessity of positioning Judges 21 in relation to the anthropology of marriage by capture, especially in situations where the practice is caught up in the re-assertion of ethnic identity. It is simply no longer possible for interpreters to attempt responsible historical criticism of this text in ignorance of or disregard for the anthropology of marriage capture.

In the best tradition of radically innovative biblical interpretation, Southwood has established a framework for the discussion of the historical meaning of Judges 21 that is now the inevitable starting-point for future analysis, whether or not one agrees with all the details of her particular conclusion. The members of the Society of Old Testament Studies should be gratified that their new Monograph Series has been inaugurated by so substantial a work of original scholarship as this.