

## Honor and Shame in Sirach

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### Introduction

Ben Sira was a wisdom teacher in Jerusalem in the late third century through the early second century B.C.E., and Sirach, the collection of his teachings, was composed sometime between 190 and 175 B.C.E.<sup>1</sup> As a member of those colonized under the Greek empires, Ben Sira fought over new and dominant cultural values and norms, and Sirach illuminates how Ben Sira responded to Hellenistic cultural domination over the Jewish society. Through his teachings, Ben Sira attempted to renew and reaffirm the efficacy of traditional Jewish values, fidelity to Torah in particular. Within this entire picture, I will examine Ben Sira's honor and shame complex.

Scholars including Claudia Camp, J. T. Sanders, and David deSilva in the 1990s paid special attention to the honor and shame matrix in Sirach along with the contributions from cultural anthropologists who had investigated the honor and shame matrix as social values central to the Mediterranean/Hellenistic world.<sup>2</sup> All three scholars recognize that an investigation of honor and shame is helpful to examine social and cultural tensions of Sirach since the language and notion of honor and shame constitute the essential ideological ground for Ben Sira. However, since their approaches are primarily based on the anthropological method, they largely overlook another relevant context of Ben Sira. I suggest that postcolonial approaches, especially the concept of colonial hybridity, offer another nuanced insight to view the Jewish literature in that period. The colonial hybridity suggests that we cannot describe the life of the Judeans under the Hellenistic empires in a simple accept-and-reject dichotomy. Rather, the Judeans as the colonized would have searched for some kinds of synthesis between the two ways; some people would have accommodated the new socio-cultural norms, some others would have resisted against the gentile dominance, and others would have negotiated with the new environment. Literature in this contact zone might show the characteristics of the lives of the colonized people; they illuminate the hybrid nature of the people.

However, some literature contains something beyond *in-betweenness*. As Bhabha and Young argue, some discourses hybridize cultures of the colonized and the colonizers, and the hybridizing process can implicitly and explicitly blur the barrier between "center" and

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I will use "Ben Sira" as a reference to the author of Sirach, one of the Apocryphal books, and "Sirach" as a reference to the book itself.

<sup>2</sup> Claudia V. Camp, "Understanding a Patriarchy: Women in Second Century Jerusalem Through the Eyes of Ben Sira," in *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1991), 1–39; Claudia V. Camp, in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference, 28-31 July 1996, Soesterberg, Netherlands*, ed. Pancratius Cornelis Beentjes (Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 171–87; Jack T. Sanders, "Ben Sira's Ethics of Caution," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 50 (January 1, 1979): 73–106; Jack T. Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom* (Scholars Press, 1983); David A. deSilva, "The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Honor, Shame, and the Maintenance of the Values of a Minority Culture," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (July 1, 1996): 433–55; David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Baker Academic, 2004), 153–221.

“peripheral,” deconstruct cultural hierarchy in the culturally mixed zone, deprive the imposed dominant culture, and claim the authenticity of the colonized.<sup>3</sup> One can understand this sort of discourse as a counter-colonial discourse that could contain the power to disturb and subvert colonial discourses. Ben Sira’s use of the honor and shame matrix, in particular, shows this nature of colonial hybridity. I argue that Ben Sira 1) hybridized the Hellenistic cultural value of honor and shame and traditional Jewish understanding of honor and shame, 2) modified some notions of both traditions, 3) emphasized some particular implications, and 4) offered his own ideology of honor and shame, which conveyed resistant connotations. I will first examine how Ben Sira utilizes the honor and shame matrix of both Hellenistic culture and his own tradition, and then, I will discuss how he develops his own claim by hybridizing those two different concepts.

### **Honor and Shame: In the Mediterranean World and in Proverbs**

Since the 1950s, many scholars, including social anthropologists such as Julian Pitt-Rivers and J. G. Peristiany, and biblical scholars, including Jerome H. Neyrey and Bruce J. Malina, have offered analyses of the values of honor and shame in the Mediterranean world and also in the biblical world. According to those scholars, the basic and essential characteristics of honor and shame in the Mediterranean world are as follows.<sup>4</sup> First, honor and shame are rooted in gender distinction in Mediterranean culture; honor is closely associated with males, and shame is mostly associated with females.<sup>5</sup> Second, honor connotes one’s claimed social status and public recognition of it, and shame usually means the loss of honor; preservation of honor means one’s effort to avoid shame. A man’s honor, thus, mainly relates to his women, his property, his political influence, his maleness, and his reputation. Third, one’s society and membership within the society are significant in the evaluation of one’s honor and shame. Fourth, honor can be ascribed or acquired. Ascribed honor is what one receives passively through birth, family

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<sup>3</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994); Bill Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, Routledge Key Guides (London ; New York: Routledge, 2000); John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester University Press, 2000); Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (Routledge, 2005); Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990); M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, University of Texas Press Slavic Series, no. 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> John George Peristiany, *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (University of Chicago Press, 1966); Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric Clark Stewart, *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models* (Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 85–102; Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 27–56; Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 1999), 25–66; J. G. Peristiany and Julian Pitt-Rivers, *Honor and Grace in Anthropology* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–18; Especially John K. Chance offers a detailed summary the development of anthropological approaches of honor-shame complex and the engagement of biblical scholarship. See John K. Chance, “The Anthropology of Honor and Shame : Culture, Values, and Practice.,” *Semeia*, no. 68 (January 1, 1994): 139–51.

<sup>5</sup> Peristiany, *Honour and Shame*; Chance, “The Anthropology of Honor and Shame : Culture, Values, and Practice.,” 142. Camp argues, “Honor and disgrace are acquired by men through women, especially through women’s sexual misconduct. Women are, therefore, both a ‘weak link’ in the chain of honor, but also powerful because of their ‘potential for collective disgrace.’ Shame is mainly a property of women, but it governs the relationship between the sexes.” Camp, “Understanding a Patriarchy: Women in Second Century Jerusalem Through the Eyes of Ben Sira,” 3; and Camp, 173. Also see David D. Gilmore, “Honor, Honesty, Shame: Male Status in Contemporary Andalusia,” in *Honor And Shame And The Unity Of The Mediterranean* (American Anthropological Association, 1987), 90.

connection, or endowment by other noble persons. Acquired honor is the socially recognized claim of worth that a person obtains by achievements. In sum, one can define the Hellenistic or Mediterranean honor as a man's ability to control the extension of self in economic, social, political, and gender issues and his power to handle the challenges of others to attack his honor. Sirach contains a number of parallels to the writings of Greek authors, such as Xenophon, Theognis, Euripides, and Hesiod, who discussed honor and shame.<sup>6</sup>

Among various Jewish traditions, the influence of Proverbs is prominent in Sirach.<sup>7</sup> Undoubtedly, there are other wisdom collections that contain some similar notions to Sirach and also differences; yet, I will not discuss all the similarities and differences between Sirach and other wisdom traditions since the main focus of this paper is on Ben Sira's use of honor and shame matrix.<sup>8</sup> Rather, I will delineate how Proverbs deals with the notion of honor and shame; and how Ben Sira utilizes the old tradition.

Concerning the honor and shame ideology, Proverbs shows some ideas which are quite similar to the Mediterranean value of honor, such as one's prosperity, good reputation (moral and communal virtues like almsgiving and charity), and well-being in one's life. Yet, one of the most distinctive and important ways to claim one's honor is honoring God. The text offers examples of how to honor the Lord. To trust (בטח in v.5), to know (ידע in v. 6), to fear (ירא in v. 7) the Lord are the ways of honoring the Lord. These honorable behaviors and attitudes bring certain results, in other words blessings. The person will receive a long life (v. 2), prosperity (v. 2), good reputation (v. 4), wealth (v.16), and peace (v. 17). As for the shame, the author of Proverbs utilizes the same notion of honor but in negative way. If one fails to honor God, it will lead the person to the shameful status. The instructions of how to honor God are also the instructions of how to avoid shame and disgrace. Furthermore, Proverbs underlines that the pursuit of wisdom results in acquiring honor. Since the author of Proverbs highlights that fear of the Lord is the beginning of all knowledge, and is essential for a wise life, the Proverbs' principle of the honor and shame complex as follows: one who pursues wisdom should acquire honor; the essential way of pursuing wisdom is to fear the Lord; thus, fear of the Lord is a definitive claim to honor.

Yet, the Mediterranean society does not closely connect wisdom to one's piety; instead, it highlights the philosophical and sapiential nature of wisdom. In addition, there are subtle but significant differences between the two cultures regarding the role of public recognition. In Proverbs, one who honors God acquires honor from the congregation, the community of the pious people. When one honors God, God also honors the person; moreover, he acquires honors among the congregation. The congregation witnesses one's deeds of honoring God. The congregation honors the person (usually by honorable remembrance in the future). Thus, one of the important roles of the congregation is to acknowledge one's relationship with God. Whereas the Jewish society pays more attention to the favor of God, the Mediterranean society focuses on the social recognition in the process of evaluating whether one is honorable or dishonorable.

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<sup>6</sup> deSilva, "The Wisdom of Ben Sira : Honor, Shame, and the Maintenance of the Values of a Minority Culture.," 434; Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*, 27-60.

<sup>7</sup> One can find a number of parallels and similar teachings on the both collections: Prov 18:22 and Sir 26:3 on marriage; Prov 13:24 and Sir 30:2, 13 on sons; Pro 25:17 and Sir 21:22-23 on neighbors; Prov 18:24 and Sir 6:5-7 on friends and friendship; Prov 16:31 and Sir 25:6 on the glory of old people; Prov 21:3 and Sir 35:1-9 on the importance of keeping commandments over sacrifice; Prov 3:27-18 and Sir 4:1-5 on almsgiving; Prov 5:3-4, 21:9, and 31:10-31 and Sir 26:1-27 on warnings about women; and so on. See Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*, 3-19.

<sup>8</sup> Other than the book of Proverbs, other Judaic wisdom traditions such as Qoheleth, Job, and Psalms share some similarities with Sirach. E.g. Qoh 4:8, 6:2 and Sir 14:4; Qoh 7:14 and Sir 33:14-15.

## **Ben Sira's Honor and Shame Ideology**

Sirach shares many features that Proverbs and the Mediterranean honor and shame matrix reveal, and certain teachings overlap both Proverbs' and Mediterranean notions. Similar to Mediterranean honor and shame matrix, Ben Sira discusses social values, such as good social relations, economic and political status, good looks, noble family lineage, proper speech, good household relationship, and self-restraint, as resources that make one honorable.<sup>9</sup> As concerns Proverbs, Ben Sira follows the basic ideas in Proverbs. Pursuing wisdom and God-fearing life are the important topics of Ben Sira: 1:1-20; 2:1-18; 4:11-14; 6:18-37; 14:20-27; 15:1-10; 24:1-34; 34:14-20. And Ben Sira's ethics, such as honor parents, household relationship, the marriage bond, friendship, and almsgiving, convey similar notions to Proverbs.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, at the same time, Ben Sira modifies some notions, emphasizes particular views, and hybridizes certain ideas. The whole section of 10:19 to 11:6 illuminates the core of his honor and shame ideology:

Whose offspring are worthy of honor? Human offspring. Whose offspring are worthy of honor? Those who are fear the Lord. Whose offspring are unworthy of honor? Human offspring. Whose offspring are unworthy of honor? Those who break the commandments.... The prince and the judge and the ruler are honored, but none of them is greater than the one who fears the Lord. Free citizens will serve a wise servant.... My, child, honor yourself with humility, and give yourself the esteem you deserve.... The poor are honored for their knowledge, which the rich are honored for their wealth.... Many kings have had to sit on the ground, but one who was never thought of has worn a crown. Many rulers have been utterly disgraced, and the honored have been handed over to others. (10:19-11:6)

This passage reveals three main characteristics: the emphasis on obedience to Torah, wisdom and fear of the Lord as opposed to economic power, and wisdom and fear of the Lord instead of social and political strength. These characteristics will show that Ben Sira's honor and shame ideology conveys subversive and resistant connotation against the Hellenistic ideology.

### **Obedience to Torah**

The beginning of the passage – “Whose offspring are worthy of honor? Those who are fear the Lord. Whose offspring are unworthy of honor? Those who break the commandments” – contains the leitmotif of Ben Sira's honor and shame ideology. This verse claims that “fear of the Lord” and “obedience to the commandments” are the essential criteria to evaluate one's honor and shame. It seems that Ben Sira follows the main principles of Proverbs. Yet, Ben Sira does

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<sup>9</sup> One can find at least five major topics in Sirach: 1) wisdom and God fearing life in 1:1-20; 2:1-18; 4:11-14; 6:18-37; 14:20-27; 15:1-10; 24:1-34; 34:14-20; 2) Social ethics in 6:5-17; 9:10-16; 19:13-17; 22:19-26; 37:1-6; 4:20-6:4; 41:14-42:8; 3) teachings about women and issues of sexuality in 9:1-9; 25:13-26:27; 36:26-31; 42:9-14; 4) the encomium of Jewish ancestors in 44:1-50:24; 5) and God's sovereignty and justice of God in 15:4-15; 33:7-15; 39:12-35.

<sup>10</sup> 3:30-4:10; 6:5-17; 9:10-16; 19:13-17; 22:19-26; 37:1-6; 4:20-6:4; 41:14-42:8.

not just follow the traditional Jewish notions, but he nuances the notions. Ben Sira formulates his honor and shame complex as offering a subtle but significant modification of Proverbs' honor and shame ideology. That is his emphasis on obedience to Torah. I argue that the emphasis on obedience to Torah implies that Ben Sira attempted to synthesize Proverbs and the Deuteronomic tradition.

Ben Sira emphasizes obedience to Torah more than the author of Proverbs does. The vocabularies "law תורה" and "commandment מצוה" are prominent in Sirach, whereas Proverbs contains five occurrences of "law" and ten occurrences of "commandment(s)," Ben Sira uses "law" twenty-nine times and "commandment(s)" twenty-six times except for the encomium section (in chapters 44-50). Furthermore, while the author of the book of Proverbs exclusively uses "fear of (יהוה)," Ben Sira also uses the Deuteronomic term "fear of (אלהים)." In addition, he attempts to link notions "wisdom" and "fear of the Lord" to "obedience to Torah." Sirach 10:19 says, "Whose offspring are worthy of honor? Those who fear the Lord.... Whose offspring are unworthy of honor? Those who break the commandments." In 19:20, Ben Sira says, "the whole of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and in all wisdom there is the doing of the Law." Also, Sirach 15:1 says, "Whoever fears the Lord will do this, and whoever holds to the law will obtain wisdom." Like Proverbs links fear of the Lord to wisdom, Ben Sira links wisdom to obedience to Torah. Obedience to Torah equates to wisdom and fear of the Lord as a significant way to claim one's honor in Ben Sira's ideology. Hence, the frequent use of Deuteronomic terms and direct connection between Torah and wisdom and honor signify Ben Sira's interests in Deuteronomic notion. It appears that Ben Sira mainly receives and follows the ideas of Proverbs, yet he adds Deuteronomic notions to the wisdom tradition.<sup>11</sup>

I argue that, through the synthesis of Proverbs and [Deuteronomic] Torah, Ben Sira attempted to emphasize authentic Jewish theology in his discussion of honor and shame. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, "The use of signifiers of authenticity may be a vital part of the attempt by many subordinated societies/ to argue for their continued and valid existence/ as they become inevitably hybridized and influenced by various social and cultural changes."<sup>12</sup> Ethical virtues and wisdom must have been cross-cultural values in the process of claiming one's honor. The Judeans probably witnessed that the Greek society had philosophical teachings and ethical virtues, which were similar to what they had received through their wisdom traditions. Yet, fear of the Lord and obedience to Torah were authentic tradition to the Jews. So, we can deem that Ben Sira emphasized genuine values of his own tradition as important sources to claim one's honor in attempting to preserve the authenticity and agency of the Judean society. In the context of cultural conflict with Hellenistic cultural dominance, Ben Sira, as a wisdom

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<sup>11</sup> Few scholars discuss the implication of the emphasis on obedience to [Deuteronomic] Torah. Collins notes, "He [Ben Sira] is in effect introducing the Torah of Moses into the wisdom school, and thereby attempting to combine two educational traditions." He also argues that this combination is a "representation of what is meant by the identification of wisdom and Torah in the rabbinic tradition." E. P. Sanders also argues, "Sirach was intentionally defining the values of the well-established wisdom tradition in terms of the Mosaic covenant: that wisdom which is universally sought is in fact truly represented by and particularized in the Torah given by God through Moses." Additionally, Osterley notes that there might be a tendency to legalistic Judaism in Sirach. Yet, we do not have much evidence to argue Ben Sira's tendency toward legalistic Judaism, and the influence of Proverbs is prominent in Sirach although Ben Sira receives Deuteronomic notions. See Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 53-54; E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Fortress Press, 1977), 331; W. O. E. Osterley, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English, with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Several Books*, ed. R. H. Charles, vol. 1 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), 304; Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*, 24-25.

<sup>12</sup> Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Studies*, 18.

teacher, would have desired to offer instructions to his audiences how to preserve identity. Obviously, obedience to Torah, perhaps including some legal observances, was one of the most effective and important instructions to the Judeans in the cultural borderland.

### **Wisdom and fear of the Lord than economic power**

Wealth was one of the most crucial resources to claim one's honor in the Greek society. In addition to the Greek notion, the Jewish wisdom tradition also conveys relatively positive tendency toward wealth. For example, one of the prominent themes in the wisdom traditions, the theory of retribution highlights that hard work and faithful life promise wealth and success. This notion signifies that the Judeans viewed one's wealth and prosperity in a positive perspective. It appears that Ben Sira also took the notion for granted. Ben Sira shows a positive tendency on wealth in many places. Undoubtedly, Ben Sira generally follows conventional value related to honor-shame and wealth from both Greek and Jewish traditions, and he clearly acknowledges that wealth is a significant source for acquiring honor.

However, Ben Sira claims that the pursuit of wisdom and fear of the Lord are more important and honorable than one's economic success. Ben Sira establishes this notion in 10:22-24, 27; 11:14; 14:3-9; 32:24; 34:25; and 40:13. As deSilva points out, "The value of wealth depends on whether or not/ that wealth was acquired in accordance with obedience to Torah; similarly, the lack of wealth carries no intrinsic disgrace."<sup>13</sup> This shift is significant since the concept implies that the poor can acquire honorable status. In 10:19-11:6, Ben Sira argues that those who break the commandments are unworthy of honor no matter if they are rich or not; in contrast, the poor's glory is the fear of the Lord, and they are honored for their knowledge. Thus, fear of the Lord, obedience to Torah, and wisdom are essential prerequisites to claim one's honor before acquiring economic power.

As Ben Sira elevates the poor, he criticizes the rich and urges caution in cultivating the rich. Sir 13:21-24; 14:3-19; 21:8; 27:2; 31:8 contain Ben Sira's criticism toward wealth and the rich. These passages warn the rich against dishonest and untruthful gaining of wealth. Again, it might be a cross-cultural notion that honor should not come from wealth gained unjustly. I argue that Ben Sira's criticism toward the rich is not just a general criticism toward unjust economic activities; rather, we can interpret his criticism as condemnation toward Greek's economic exploitation. In 13:3, Ben Sira says, "A rich person does wrong, and even adds insults; a poor person suffers wrong, and must add apologies. A rich person will exploit you if you can be/ of use to him, but if you are in need he will abandon you." In this saying, Ben Sira links "rich" to the notion of "exploitation;" and he portrays a rich person as one who exploits poor people. A similar idea occurs in 34:21-31, in which Ben Sira notes that God will not accept the sacrifices of those who have exploited the poor. 19:8 says, "Whoever builds his house with other people's money is like one who gathers stones for his burial mound." And 34:25-27 says, "The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a murderer. To take away a neighbor's living is to commit murder." Although economic stability or financial security was one of the essential dimensions of real life, many Jews must have experienced unstable economic and financial status. Furthermore, the new social norms and lifestyle would have shaken up the traditional Jewish faith and culture as well as their economic system.

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<sup>13</sup> deSilva, "The Wisdom of Ben Sira : Honor, Shame, and the Maintenance of the Values of a Minority Culture.," 445.

Concerning this context, Ben Sira re-interpreted the implications of some economic notions, wealth and poverty, and shifted the center of gravity from socio-economic success to religious conviction in his discussion of honor and shame. For his ideology, Ben Sira collected various resources from his own and also Greek, and hybridized the resources to make his claims more compelling to his contemporary audiences. In this way, Ben Sira attempted to reaffirm the essential Jewish tradition, such as Torah and fear of the Lord; and, at the same time, he challenged cultural and economic influence from the foreign power.

### **Wisdom and fear of the Lord than social and political power**

In a similar way to his teaching about honor and shame and economic power, Ben Sira underscores that the fear of the Lord and keeping the commandments are greater than political and social power. Although Ben Sira does not negate political or social power itself, in many places he explicitly emphasizes fear of the Lord is more honorable than honorable status in a political and social dimension. Concerning the space limitation, I will discuss just one of the most interesting sections. That is the encomium of Jewish Heroes in 44:1-50:24. This encomium illuminates how Ben Sira hybridizes the Jewish and the Mediterranean traditions in order to claim his own ideology. The encomium section is similar in form and content to Greek encomia, which can be found in some material, such as Thucydides' *The History of the Peloponnesian War* and Dio Chrysostom's *Orationes*.<sup>14</sup> In these Greek encomia, the Greek ancestors are honored by their kingly achievements and virtues related to war. Ben Sira's encomium is also a eulogy text, which conveys hortatory character. Yet, the encomium of Ben Sira is not a simple celebration of Israel's heritage and praise of their heroic figures. It serves to enforce the values and motives – wisdom and fear of the Lord. In the entire encomium, Ben Sira focuses on how the Jewish ancestors kept God's commandments and how they feared the Lord. In the lives of heroic figures, Ben Sira highlights that Torah obedience is the path to honor and lasting distinction. This encomium is an example of colonial hybridity that contains subversive and resistant nature. Ben Sira hybridizes the hortatory form of Greek literature and the traditional Jewish ideology. At a superficial level, his encomium is a conventional praise of heroic figures, but it connotes significant modification. The encomium to the Jewish heroes encourages the Jews to take pride in their ancestors and traditions and to see the loyalty to the ancient covenant as the path to their own honorable remembrance in the future. Since the Jews were in the colonized situation, it must have been difficult to claim their political and military authority. Thus, the paradigm shift from political or social power to religious virtues and wisdom was an effective way to claim their national pride and their agency.

Further, Ben Sira discusses the ephemeral nature of current social and political power. In Mediterranean society, the honor and shame ideology relate to contemporary social and political status in many cases. Ben Sira also perceives this nature and points out that many people who gained social status have been often challenged by others and disgraced.<sup>15</sup> Instead of this

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<sup>14</sup> See C. F. Smith, *Thucydides I* (London: Heinemann; New York: Putnam's: LCL; revised ed., 1928), 335–39; *Dio Chrysostom*, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge : London: Harvard University ; Heinemann, 1949), 391–93.

<sup>15</sup> 11:5-6. The agonistic nature of honor and shame matrix in the Mediterranean world signifies this notion. According to Neyrey and Malina, one of the important ways of acquiring or loss of honor is a challenge and response (riposte) process. According to Malina and Neyrey, honor was acquired through a challenge-riposte exchange. This challenge-riposte exchange usually comprises four steps: claim (often implied by action or gesture), challenge, riposte, and public verdict. Especially the last step, public verdict, involves “the receiver's behavior that enables the public to pass a verdict: a grant of honor taken from the receiver of a challenge and awarded to the

ephemeral honor, Ben Sira emphasizes honor that can last eternally.<sup>16</sup> Ben Sira highlights the honor and reputation that is acquired through wisdom will last forever and will be memorable in his faith community. Concerning the subjugated context of the Judeans in Ben Sira's time, the wise or virtuous Judean could not have the social status easily that the Hellenistic elite or the rich person does, and the good name might not produce a reputation that guarantees higher and better social status in the contemporary society. In this context, Ben Sira points out the ephemeral nature of social or political status and underscores wisdom and fear of the Lord that can produce eternal honor.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, re-defining the notion of honor and shame by utilizing prominent socio-cultural norm of the Greeks and Judaic traditions can be understood as an intentional hybrid of Ben Sira. His program claims that true honor is achieved by the pursuit of wisdom and the obedience to Torah. Through this program, Ben Sira implicitly criticizes Greeks' cultural value; at the same time, he esteems the Jewish values and encourages the Jews to preserve pride and authenticity of the oppressed. Hence, Ben Sira's Jewish, traditional wisdom provides a tool by which to maintain resistance against the ideology of Hellenistic elites.

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successful challenger, or a loss of honor by the challenger in favor of the successful recipient of challenge." See Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 29–32; Malina, *The New Testament World*, 33–36.

<sup>16</sup> 37:26; 39:9.