FROM DAVID TO SOLOMON (1 KINGS 1-2): AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION:

Scholars have treated the story of the succession of Solomon to the throne of David exhaustively over the years that one is not sure whether a new thing can be said about it. However, when we look at the various monographs on the story a couple of problems in them remain unsolved. For example, the idea that Solomon attained the throne because his mother was the most loved wife of David does not have any foundation in the biblical text.[1] To solve this and other problems in the narrative, I propose to use findings from anthropology to illuminate the problems involved in the transfer of power from David to Solomon. The anthropological data, taken from parts of Africa, suggest some solutions to the unresolved problems in the story of the succession of Solomon to the throne of David in Jerusalem. I propose a dialogue between anthropology and the biblical material.

This call for the use of anthropological approaches in biblical interpretation is not new. For example, Martin Noth's groundbreaking essay on the political organisation of ancient Israel before the establishment of the monarchy was based on the sociological findings of ancient Greek and Italian city-states.[2]

A recent comment by Bernhard Lang an adherent of the use of anthropological approaches to biblical interpretation speaks for itself. Lang writes of an ethnographer:

> In a working life of some thirty five years spent for the most part in West African villages as an ethnographer and clinical psychiatrist... I have become thoroughly familiar not only with certain mental phenomena seldom seen in Europe (such as 'spirit possession') but also with some almost universal primitive customs.... On re-reading the biblical narratives, I am now able to recognise many an item of behaviour there recorded as something, which I myself have seen.[3]

It is the use of this untapped data taken from Africa in biblical interpretation that I propose in this paper. If nothing at all, this will be an attempt at addressing the motive of the conference of the West Africa Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI) of 1976 at Ibadan. It was at that conference that the proposal for writing a commentary on the Bible that is relevant to our African context was first made.

In this paper I will limit myself to points of contact between the biblical and African lifestyles as revealed by social and cultural anthropology that can be used to interpret the biblical text. This selectivity is of essence here, because I perceive that this is the way that we can make our unique contribution to biblical scholarship. However, I will not gloss over differences between the two traditions. I will use material that has been accepted in the field of social and cultural anthropology as the means of this comparative study. The study is about the transfer of power from David to Solomon.

THE TRAGIC END OF DAVID:

We cannot have a very fruitful discussion on the transmission of the throne of David to Solomon unless we deal seriously with the last days of David. This story has been treated in a lot of monographs under the so-called "Succession Narrative."[4] In his last days David seemed to have become a senile old man. It was this situation of David that was exploited by Bathsheba and Nathan to the advantage of Solomon.

David's Weakness and Lack of Control:

David, the king of Israel, is very old and is gradually dying. In his hey days David married many women and even snatched some women from their husbands (e.g., 2 Samuel 5:13; 2 Samuel 11). In his last days, however, David could no longer arouse himself sexually by Abishag who was brought in to do just that (1 Kings 1:1-4).[5] I am aware of the fact that the Hebrew word *hamam* translated 'to make warm' does not directly connote sexual contact. However, here in 1 Kings 1:4 and in Eccl 4:11 there is the inference of sexual intercourse. In 1 Kings 1:4 it is clear that David could not perform his conjugal rights towards Abishag, which presupposes a certain expectation that he should have been able to do so.[6] If that were not the case, the alleged request of Adonijah to have Abishag as a wife would not have been interpreted as his desire for the throne (1 Kings 2:13-25).[7] Thus if the king, who was the embodiment of the throne, had become that weak and senile, it

shows that the nation was at the point of falling apart, and that situation was very dangerous for the kingdom. In such a volatile situation the incumbent could select the person to take his place. On the contrary, until such a selection is made public by the incumbent king the state was in a limbo. However, in non-determinate systems such as this, so long as a choice has not been made public, lobbying for the throne is open to all who feel they could lay claim to the throne. Every son of the king who thinks that he was eligible could contest for the throne. This may be the situation that led to Adonijah and Solomon vying for the throne. Therefore, at the time of David's ineffectiveness two main rivals to the throne - Adonijah and Solomon - emerged. In a situation in which the king is not saying anything somebody had to act. No thinking person would look on while a thing he or she would inherit gets spoilt. Thus Adonijah took steps to stop the decline in state machinery.

Adonijah's Adventure:

Saul, the first king, did not have this problem. Both Saul and his son Jonathan died in battle. After the death of Saul it was Abner who wanted to extend the reign of Saul in his son Ishbaal (2 Samuel 2:8-11). Thus David had no precedence to follow.[8] This is why at this point in time kingship in ancient Israel, the process of succession could be described as a non-determinate system, and anyone who thinks he has claim to the throne has to do something. So in the face of David's indecision Adonijah had to do something.[9] However, Adonijah was not merely acting on impulse. After all, he was legally the next in line to the throne, through the law of primogeniture.[10] Since he was David's eldest surviving son and David might have promised the throne to him, he decided to act. According to the deuteronomistic historian the elder son must not be by-passed in the distribution of property, presumably including holding of office too (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Again since the deuteronomisitc historian says that David had never offended Adonijah (1 Kings 1:6), David could have said and done anything to please Adonijah, including a promise for the throne. The words of Nathan to David also suggest this possibility. Nathan said, "My lord the king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne'?" (1 Kings 1:24). This being so Adonijah took the initiative to bring it into reality.

In any case, Adonijah took advantage of the situation to get supporters from David's court to rally around him in his bid for the throne, and possibly to constrain David to give him a public designation. So he organised an

enthronement party. Among the supporters present at the party were Joab the army commander and Abiathar the priest. Also, all the other sons of David, except Solomon, were invited to Adonijah's enthronement ceremony (1 Kings 1:7). This signifies their recognition of Adonijah as the heir to the throne. However other courtiers including Nathan, Zadok, Benaiah and members of David's personal guard, were also left out. Perhaps Adonijah thought that he could not depend on the support of these persons. It is curious why Solomon was not invited to Adonijah's enthronement ceremony. It may be possible that he perceived Solomon as the most likely rival, who may not accept the invitation. However, not inviting Solomon meant that Solomon, of all the sons of David, was to be careful for his life should Adonijah get to the throne. Unfortunate for Adonijah David did not support his actions. Moreover, the selective invitation was a threat to Nathan, a trusted courtier of David, and Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon. Thus Nathan concocted a plan to nib Adonijah's action in the bud.

Nathan's Plot:

When Nathan heard about Adonijah's installation he alerted Bathsheba. He then told Bathsheba to go and remind David of an oath he was supposed to have made to her that Solomon was to rule after him. It is interesting to note that it was Nathan who asked Bathsheba to go and remind David about the oath. In addition, Bathsheba was to ask David why he had allowed Adonijah to be made king instead of Solomon. In fact, it was Nathan who told Bathsheba what to go and say (1 Kings 1:13). This suggests that Nathan might be using Bathsheba to exploit the senility of David to their mutual benefit. Bathsheba was to impress upon David that, if he did not choose Solomon as his successor, both she and Solomon would be in danger when David died. While Bathsheba was still speaking, Nathan went in and supported her inquiry. Nathan asked David two questions about Adonijah's installation. Nathan's first question pertained to whether David had declared that Adonijah was to succeed him. The question Nathan asked demanded a negative response. The second question concerned why David had not told his servants which of his sons was to be his successor. This question was irrelevant if David had already promised Bathsheba that Solomon was to be his successor. It does mean that something else was the matter here. Simply put, David had not appointed his successor. However, the fact that some were not invited to this enthronement ceremony meant that they were seen as either people who were not supportive of or as rivals to Adonijah. The words of Bathsheba and Nathan were calculated to show David what he

should do. It also meant Nathan wanted to save the lives of Zadok the priest, Benaiah, Bathsheba, Solomon and himself. These were David's trusted courtiers, but who were not invited to Adonijah's installation party.

It is clear that with the possibility of facing death, if Adonijah's plan succeeded, Nathan made up the oath David was supposed to have made to Bathsheba to save the lives of those perceived to be enemies of Adonijah. The problem with the reference to the supposed oath of David to Bathsheba is that it is not found anywhere else in the biblical narrative, not even in the deuteronomistic history. Furthermore, Bathsheba to whom that oath was supposedly made did not seem to remember that such an oath was ever made to her. Thus, the references made by Nathan and Bathsheba about David's oath (that Solomon was to be his successor) were meant to point David in the direction of his choice. Nathan's counsel to Bathsheba (1 Kings 1:11-14) suggests that if David ever made this promise, Nathan was the only person, perhaps with the exception of David himself, who has knowledge of David's oath that Solomon is to succeed David.[11] It does seem that it was not only David's sexual prowess that was failing him; more so David seems to be losing his mental faculty. Thus the scheme of Nathan and Bathsheba was merely a lobby at the most crucial time. It is not out of place to suggest that the words of Bathsheba and Nathan were meant to influence the ailing king to make the choice in favour of Solomon, their candidate.[12] As has been pointed out, timing is of the utmost importance here. At the end the senile old David succumbed to the pressure and uttered the word in favour of Solomon. David's words therefore did justify Nathan's suggestion, even if Nathan created that suggestion. Thus David publicly designated Solomon to be his successor, in the presence of Nathan and Zadok and Bathsheba (1 Kings 1:28-29).

David's designation of Solomon as the next king has been interpreted as Bathsheba's special influence in David's harem.[13] Yet, in this story, there is no evidence anywhere in the biblical material that Bathsheba wielded any special influence over and above the other wives of David. Again, Buccellati, a historical critic, argues that children born to a king before his accession to the throne were not eligible for the throne. He writes, "... only real princes – i.e., sons of a consecrated king – would be considered legitimate heirs to the throne."[14] He uses this to argue for the accession of Solomon to the throne of David. If that were true then Adonijah had equal, if not greater, rights to the throne since he was born to David after he had been anointed king at Hebron (2 Sam 3:2-5). Moreover, the reaction of Nathan, Bathsheba, David

and Solomon, even after he (Solomon) had ascended to the throne, shows that Adonijah had legitimate right to see himself as the heir-apparent to David's throne. Furthermore, there are examples in the deuteronomistic tradition which show that there were people who attained the throne although they were not, or could not have been, in the words of Buccellati, "real princes." These persons include Ishbaal, (2Sam 2:8-9), Joram, (2 Kgs 8:17), Ahaziah,(2 Kgs 8:26), Ahaz, (2 Kgs 16:2) and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:2). Thus, it is important that we take a close look at the appointment of Solomon. Evidence available in the text suggests that timing and persons around the king won that day.

THE APPOINTMENT OF SOLOMON AND THE DEATH OF DAVID:

Certain issues concerning the appointment of Solomon and the death of David need to be clarified. When Adonijah left out the names of Nathan, Benaiah, Zadok, Solomon and Bathsheba from the list of his invitees he put them in a very vulnerable situation. They may very well be perceived as enemies of Adonijah. This perception and its attendant rivalry between the new king and whoever was bypassed were crucial for the future of the kingdom. Thus, the appointment of Solomon by David close to his death was most crucial and timely to forestall any likely disruptions that could have erupted after the death of David.

David's Appointment of Solomon:

When Bathsheba went to David, upon the suggestion of Nathan, she reminded David that the choice of his successor was David's to make. It is known from social anthropology that the death wish of the dying person is taken very seriously in most primal societies.[15] Even in modern societies the last will (wish) of a person that is made closest to his or her death is the one that is most respected. The final will represents a person's ultimate desire.

Goody's study of the Lugbara people's approach towards a dying person is illuminating in this direction. Goody writes:

When a man is thought to be on the brink of death, the senior male in the compound personally informs those of the dying man's close agnates living nearby and sends boys or young men to tell others living away from the settlement.... The sick man's sisters, and among the LoDagaba, their sons, are also told. They are the ones who, together with his wives, should attend the dying man during his last hours;

> for the moment of death he should be sitting up, preferably
> in the arms of a close kinswoman. Indeed it is sinful for a
> man to die lying down, as if he were a slave with no one to
> take care of him....[16]

Thus, in his dying moments of David, his word as to which of his sons was to succeed him is what the people are seeking to hear. Bathsheba's words show that David had not made any public declaration of his successor. She said, "And now, my lord king, the eyes of all upon you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him" (1 Kings 1:20). These words of Bathsheba suggest that Israel want to avoid the inevitable uncertainties that the death of David may bring, if David did not appoint his successor before his death. What is of utmost importance under the circumstance is the voice of David as to which of his sons was to succeed him.[17] This may be the expectation of the people because David was no longer able to function as an effective king. A word from David concerning which of his sons would succeed him would clear the air of uncertainty that had prevailed in his silence.

In these matters, however, timeliness is of the essence in the selection of the new king. Adonijah's move had been done in haste when David had not made his word public. The issue can no longer be delayed. Adonijah had had himself acclaimed king, and Solomon was also having his eye on the throne. Both men have supporters in the court of David and the battle lines have been drawn. Yet, no one has got the accent of the incumbent. If David did not utter the word at this time, the kingdom stood the danger of disruption. However, in times like these when the king himself had become senile, it was the claimants nearest to him who could influence the king to appoint him his successor. They were the people who had shown that they cared about how the king died, and therefore they were worthy of the king's estate. This is where Adonijah fell short. He had no one close by to influence David on his behalf. This was the same moment that worked to the advantage of Solomon. Nathan and Bathsheba were close by to influence the ailing king in Solomon's favour. The speeches of Bathsheba and Nathan were carefully worded to achieve this desired end (1 Kings 1:11-27).[18] Nathan and Bathsheba showed that they cared for David, but that they had been left out of the enthronement ceremony of Adonijah. Bathsheba went further to stress the fact that if David did nothing to the contrary she and Solomon would be considered enemies, and presumably be killed (1 Kings 1:21).[19] It was at this point that the plan hatched by Nathan came to fruition. David then succumbed to the pressure and appointed Solomon as the next king after him. He told

Bathsheba, "Solomon your son shall reign after me, and shall sit upon my throne in my stead" (1 Kings 1:30). However, the public designation of the next king by itself is not meaningful unless steps are taken to bring that proclamation into reality and to get military support that can secure it.

Military Support for Solomon:

It is true that the most important issue in the selection of the new king was the appointment by the incumbent king. However, after David uttered the word, it was necessary to then bring it into reality. The first step in this direction was achieved by the military support that Solomon had and the public declaration that followed.

In this direction, it is important to note that Adonijah did not forget to include some persons of military importance on his invitation list. Adonijah invited Joab the commander of the army. Joab was a very crucial inclusion in Adonijah's entourage. However, Solomon also got the support of Benaiah who was in charge of the Cherethites and Pelethites.[20] Among the Ankole of East Africa eligible princes had to seek support from the people themselves.[21] Goody writes concerning the Ankole, "The ruler was not simply the favourite of his father, the nominee of the dynasty, nor yet the most skilled in battle; his victory depended upon popular support...."[22] This was specifically practised among the Buganda. When the incumbent king has made his choice it is left for the people (all the leading chiefs) to give their consent. Any rejected prince who tried to fight for the throne is at a risk of being killed. If the people fail to achieve this consensus there was bound to be a civil war. If one got the needed support, all the rejected princes are reduced to commoners.[23]

In the story under review, if Adonijah and his entourage had not agreed to David's appointment of Solomon as the new king there would have been a civil war, as it happened after the death of Saul (2 Samuel 1-2). However, on hearing of the designation of Solomon as the new king Adonijah's supporters panicked and disbanded (1 Kings 1:49). Thus, Adonijah did not get the necessary support, when he most needed it, to oppose the selection of Solomon. Jones has pointed out that the fear of Adonijah and his supporters stemmed out of the possible reprisals from David's professional mercenaries, under the command of Benaiah.[24] Therefore Adonijah was deserted and this caused him to fear for his own life. Thus he sought for and had Solomon's pledge that he would not die provided he retreated into ordinary lifestyle. On this issue Jones again writes, "Although the reader does not know that Adonijah

was to die later, the narrative has skilfully prepared the way for it by placing the responsibility entirely on Adonijah himself."[25]

The story of the death of David comes alive, at least for the African, when we perceive that it bears resemblance to the mortuary practices of some African societies that have been documented in anthropological studies. 1 Kings 1 simply tells us that when David was about to die some persons came around him. It is possible now to see the importance of the persons around David during his dying moments and the subsequent events that took place. We know from the LoDagaba people that it is a male child that inherits the king. It is also the responsibility of one of the close female relatives of those who have the right to inherit who takes care of the dying man. In the case of the LoDagaba inheritance is matrilineal. Thus one cannot but expect to see close female relatives of the sons to inherit the king as ones who rally around the dying king. May be they are there to hear the expression of his last will.[26] In ancient Israel the texts tell us that inheritance was patrilineal, specifically a son or sons of the dying man inherited him. The biblical historian stipulates that in matters of inheritance the first-born is not to be bypassed, even for a son of a loved wife (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Thus the notion that Solomon is chosen because he was the son of the most loved wife of David does not only lack support in the biblical text, it goes against this stipulation of the biblical writer. Now since ancient Israel was patrilineal, it is not surprising that among the persons present was Bathsheba whose son Solomon acceded to the throne of David (1 Kings 1:15 ff). These persons help David to make a smooth transition from the world of the living to that of the dead. The situation here is similar to that of the LoDagaba described above.[27] In the process Bathsheba had all the time in the world to influence David in the choice of his successor.[28] In the long run, even if what Nathan plotted was merely a figment of his own imagination, now it became a reality when David made the declaration based on the supposed oath.

The biblical writer ascribes the words of David in designating Solomon as dependence on the deity on two grounds. In the first place David claims the oath he was supposed to have made to Bathsheba as his reason for designating Solomon as his successor. In the second place he asked Nathan the prophet and Zadok the priest to anoint Solomon as king. By this act divine legitimisation has been placed on the designation of Solomon. It must be recalled that the claims were sought for Adonijah when he was anointed king. In such a case civil legitimisation did not automatically make the person so designated a king. There was the need for sacral legitimisation.

Sacred Legitimisation of Solomon:

A close look at David's words (1 Kings 1:29-30) reveals another important element - divination. In the field of anthropology Goody writes:

> Whatever procedure is used for the selecting among the possible successors, whether it be by bullet or ballot, the human choice often requires the confirmation of divine authority. Either the electors themselves are seen as guided by God (or by his clergy), or else they resort to some material device in order to divine the wishes of the unseen powers.[29]

We see a similar occurrence to this in the designation of Solomon as the new king of Israel. After David had appointed Solomon to be the next king Bathsheba said, "May my lord King David live for ever" (1 Kings 1:31b). The point has already been made that Bathsheba did not mean that David should continue to live forever. Rather, Bathsheba was wishing that David's dynastic rule should continue in the reign of her son Solomon.[30] Up till this point in the narrative of the rise of Solomon to the throne, sacral legitimisation has not come to fruition. It is true that Solomon had been publicly acclaimed king, however, in ancient Israel no person became a king until there was divine legitimisation in addition to civil designation and acclamation.[31] Thus Zadok the priest, with the help of Nathan the prophet, was made to anoint Solomon. It is at the anointing that sacral legitimisation is believed to have taken place (1 Kings 1:38-40). After there has been a sacral and civil legitimisation the appointed person was then acclaimed the new king. From that time on the new king takes charge of the nation. Thus Solomon took measures to ensure his hold on the power that had been given him. In the meantime David died.

The Death of David:

It is not one of the views religious persons would like to consider as a possible occurrence in ancient Israel that David might have been assassinated after the said appointment of Solomon. The Buganda of Uganda maintained that it was dangerous to publish in advance the choice of a successor, since the likelihood is that the designated person may murder the incumbent to hasten his ascension to the throne.[32] In almost all societies the king was the embodiment of the entire nation. The person of the king was supposed to represent the fertility and well being of his entire nation. In this line of thought there is a direct correspondence between the condition of the king

and that of the state. So that the king's well-being and that of the nation are affected not only by death, but also by age, sickness, and especially decreased sexual potency.[33] Thus among the Shilluk of Sudan, "at the first evidence of lessening powers, the king is secretly suffocated and his body walled up in a mud hut."[34] It is possible that a similar 'royal suicide,' a practice that also existed in traditional English and French political systems, did occur in David's death.[35]

There is no reason not to suspect that the Solomon party could have hastened the death of David. Any more delays that might cause David to change his mind were undesirable. Thus his quick death was of great importance for the stability of the nation. It is possible then that David was helped to die immediately after he designated Solomon his successor. To put it bluntly, the Solomon group most probably committed a royal suicide.[36] This curiosity is created by the fact that the biblical writer tells the reader nothing of how David died except the supposed orders he gave to Solomon to kill his enemies (1 Kings 2:1-11). In fact, the supposed order of David to have his enemies eliminated by Solomon is as curious as his death..

CONSOLIDATION OF POWER:

It is known from anthropological data that a dying person normally reveals his or her secrets to his or her heirs.[37] In the face of many claimants to the throne, it was the responsibility of the person who eventually emerges as king to consolidate the power that had been entrusted to him. In the case of Solomon the means to achieve both ends had been preserved for us in an order that David was supposed to have given to Solomon before he died.

Elimination of Rivals:

It is not uncommon to see new kings eliminating all their rivals. Succession to the throne in Buganda is illuminating in this area. Southwold has preserved a few examples of kings who killed possible claimants to the throne. In the early part of his reign Muteesa confined his brothers in prison. The mother of Muteesa I of Buganda had all his brothers (about twenty of them) except two killed. Ssuuna II had all sixty of his brothers, except two, burnt. Earlier, Ssemakookiro was supposed to have allowed his mother to put all his brothers except three to death as soon as he had several sons born to him.[38] This elimination of former claimants to the throne was to make for the peace of the kingdom. A. Kaggwa was quoted to have ascribed

Ssemakookiro's action to an order by the principal god of Buganda. Kaggwa wrote this concerning the oracle, "If you wish to live long, arrest all your sons the princes, confine them and keep them in prison, and thus you will obtain peace."[39] It is conceived that confinement of claimants was a way to ensure peace and security of the kingdom. Again among the Ankole of Uganda, "... in the accession war, it sometimes happened that one of the Mugabe's brothers would flee to another kingdom and later return and slay the king."[40] Abimelech's experiment is a good biblical example (Judges 9:1-57). It seems that if David did give those directives to Solomon they should be read in the light of this information above.

David, it is reported, gave some directives to Solomon as to how to deal with some personalities. Solomon was to deal drastically with Joab and Shimei - two men whose actions had not favoured David. It can be said that Joab's crime in killing Abner who was under David's protection made David the culprit (2 Sam 3:27);[41] again, Joab's killing of Absalom against the expressed wish of David and forcing David not to mourn the young man was an affront to him (2 Sam 18:5; 19:5-8); Joab's assassination of Amasa, David's kinsman, was a serious blow to the king who had sent Amasa on that errand (2 Sam 20:10); and lastly, Joab's support of Adonijah (1 Kgs 1:1-10, 19), all go to make him a dangerous person for the reign of Solomon The account suggests that Joab had to die for these acts of his.

The case of Shimei is more difficult. Shimei is identified as the man who cursed David when he was running away from Absalom (cf. 2 Sam 16:5-8). Shimei apologised to David for cursing him and David is reported to have accepted his apology and made an oath not to kill him (2 Sam 19:16-23). Oaths were supposed to be respected by the persons who made them and from persons upon whom such oaths were made. David himself had allowed the massacre of seven male descendants of Saul because Saul allegedly broke an oath Israel had made with the Gibeonites (Josh 9:3-27 cf., 2 Sam 21:1-22). In light of the Gibeonite story cited above, the supposed request here does not make sense as a mere death wish of David. It is plausible that David took those measures to strengthen his hold on the throne. Thus the killing of Shimei here rather makes sense when we read it in the light of Solomon following the example of David in eliminating all his enemies. For if David sanctioned the massacre of the male descendants of Saul on account of Saul's default in acting against the Gibeonites with whom Israel had made a pact, David could not forget that the descendants of Shimei would not call for blood-vengeance if Solomon reversed the content of that oath. Thus, it is more probable that

something else was the matter here. It is rather clear that the supposed wishes of the dying king were not merely for vengeance on behalf of David, but also for the consolidation of the throne of Solomon. The issue is that those who did not like the previous king would not like his choice for the throne. Moreover, it is probable that Shimei might have been part of the group that had given support to Adonijah.[42]

Again, Abiathar who also gave support to Adonijah was removed from priesthood (1 Kings 2:27). It was Solomon's prerogative to make sure that he got a firmer grip of the throne. Thus, as in the case of the Ankole above and David's own examples, Solomon eliminated all who had supported his rival for the throne. This suggests that the supposed directive from David might have been made up because David was so senile that he had to be helped by Nathan and Bathsheba to appoint Solomon as his successor. What is more plausible is that David's courtiers and his successor – Solomon – took decisions for and executed them in his name.

One would have assumed that with the public anointing and acclamation of Solomon as king over Israel and Judah, and the elimination of Joab and Shimei the throne of Solomon would have been fairly established. However, one big hindrance also laid in the way. That hindrance was Adonijah, the son of Haggith, who had earlier laid claim to the throne. Among the Buganda of Uganda when the incumbent has made his choice, it is left for the people (all the leading chiefs) to give their consent. Any rejected prince who tried to fight for the throne is at a risk of being killed. If they fail to achieve this consensus there was bound to be a civil war. However, when one got the needed support, all the rejected princes are reduced to commoners.[43] It is common in most indeterminate systems that when a king emerges he eliminates other rival claimants to the throne who do not succumb to him.[44] This seems to be the case with Adonijah. In the case of Solomon the story goes that Adonijah was still interested in the throne. This is shown by the supposed interest he expressed for Abishag, David's concubine. It is known that the wives and concubines of a king go to his successor (2 Samuel 12:8). Thus for another person, other than the new king, to express his interest in any such wives and or concubines demonstrated his desire for the throne itself (2 Samuel 3:7f). But this story is developed with a new emerging role in ancient Israel - i.e. the role of the queen mother who is also the mother of the king. Having played a very prominent role in the enthronement of her son, Bathsheba now helps her son to consolidate his hold on the throne. The story goes that Adonijah went to Bathsheba to make a request

to have Abishag for a wife. By this request, whether true or framed, Adonijah signed his own death warrant. The story is so baffling beyond belief. Jones, for example, writes:

> It is difficult to understand why he approached the king's mother, who had taken such an active part in wrenching the kingdom from him. Why did Bathsheba accede to his request? Was she as naive as Adonijah and expected the king to grant what she calls a 'small request' (v 20)? Or was she so crafty in state affairs that she decided to mention Adonijah's request to Solomon knowing beforehand what the outcome would be?[45]

It does seem that Bathsheba was playing the role mothers of the kings of Buganda mentioned had played. She most probably was finding ways of helping Solomon get a firmer grip on the throne. This means that Bathsheba might have made up the request of Adonijah in order to have him eliminated. Thus Solomon only had to say the word and Adonijah was killed (1 Kings 2:13-25). With Adonijah out of the way Solomon was now left with a free hold on the throne.

Conclusion:

This is only a sketch, but it cannot go without noting that the results of the use of anthropological approaches in biblical interpretation had a lot of contact with that of the historical critical methodologies. However, the use of anthropology in biblical interpretation opens ways for us to see the Bible in a new light - our African experience (via anthropology). Again, a large proportion of the primary data in anthropological studies was taken from among African cultures. Thus the use of anthropological methods in biblical interpretation is bound to make the Bible come alive in religious education for both lay and ordained ministry in the Church and for the academy in Africa. This is the crucial way in which scholars who use this method can make substantial contribution to scholarship. Moreover the future is even brighter, since a much larger proportion of that data remains untapped. We may continue to use the historical critical methodologies in religious education in order that we may be able to dialogue with its practitioners and understand their works. However, if we want the Bible to have an effect on our people, which is what religious education is all about, then I advocate that we de-emphasise the use of the historical criticism in religious education since it has lost its vitality in that direction, if it ever had any. When we use this methodology the study

iis bound to have a positive impact on our people and we shall also make contribution to scholarship.

NOTES

[1]J. Alberto Soggin, "The Davidic-Solomonic Kingdom" in *Israelite and Judaean History* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 364.

[2]Martin Noth, *The History of Israel* (New York & Evanston, 1958) 85-109.

[3]Bernard Lang, ed. *Anthropological Approaches to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress/London: SPCK, 1985), 1-20.

[4]James A. Montgomery, A *Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* New York: Scribner's Sons, 1951), 67; R. N. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: A Study of 2 Sam 9-20 and 1Kgs 1-2.* (Naperville, IL. Allenson, 1968), 8; Leonhard Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David.* (Sheffield: Almond, 1982), 82.

[5]J. Mauchline. "I & II Kings" in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (London: Nelson, 1962), par 292a; Gwilym Jones *1 & 2 Kings* Vol. 1. The New Century Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids, MI/London: Eerdmans/Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984), 89.

[6]Jones *1 & 2 Kings* 89; Jerome T. Walsh and Christopher Begg, "1-2 Kings in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary,* eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy. (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1992),162.

[7]John Gray, *1-2 Kings* (London: SCM, 1970) 89.

[8]B. A. Ntreh, "Transmission of Political Authority in Ancient Israel" Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation 1989. Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 27.

[9]Simon DeVries *1 Kings.* Word Biblical Commentary 12. (Waco, Texas: Words Books, 1985), 13.

[10]J. A. Soggin, "The Davidic-Solomonic Kingdom" in *Israelite and Judaean History (IJH).* (London: SCM, 1977), 364.

[11]Noth, *The History of Israel* 203; Montgomery, *Critical & Exegetical Commentary,* 93.

[12]Noth, *The History of Israel* 202-203; Gray *1-2 Kings,* 87-88; Jones, 93

[13]Noth, *The History of Israel* 203; G. W. Anderson, *The History and Religion of Israel* (London:Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), 57; Soggin "Davidic-Solomonic Kingdom" 364.

[14]Giorgio Buccellati, *Cities and Nations of Ancient Syria: an Essay on Political Institutions with Special Reference to the Israelite Kingdoms* Studi Semetoci 26. (Rome:Instituto Studi del Vicino Oriente, 1967, 222.

[15]Jack Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors: A Study of the Mortuary Customs of the Lodagaa of West Africa* (Stanford; Stanford University, 1962); Jack Goody, ed. *Succession to High Office.* Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology 4. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1966.), 1-56.

[16]J. Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors*, 49.

[17]J. Goody, *Succession to High Office*, 15.

[18]Soggin "Davidic-Solomonic Kingdom," 365; Gray *1-2 Kings*, 93-94; DeVries *1 Kings*, 9-10.

[19]Noth, *The History of Israel*, 203; Walsh and Begg, "1-2 Kings," 163.

[20]The Cherethites and Pelethites were mercenaries who constituted the majority of David's private army that rallied around him during his self-imposed exile in the land of the Philistines and who had fought in his defence throughout his reign. See 2 Samuel 15:18; 20:7, 23; 1 Kings 1:38, 44; P. Kyle McCarter,"The Historical David" in*Interpretation* Vol XL (1986), 121-126.

[21]J. Goody, *Succession to High Office*, 18.

[22]J. Goody, *Succession to High Office*, 19.

[23]Martin Southwold, "Succession to the Throne in Buganda" in *Succession to High Office*, ed. Jack Goody, Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology 4 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1966), 92-93.

[24]Jones, *1 & 2 Kings*, 105.

[25]Jones, *1 & 2 Kings*, 105.

[26]Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors*,49.

[27]Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors*,49.

[28]J. T. Walsh and C. T. Begg, "1-2 Kings," 163.

[29]Goody, *Succession to High Office*, 21.

[30]Jones, *1 & 2 Kings*, 97; DeVries, *1 Kings*, 16.

[31]Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 113.

[32]Southwold, "Succession to the Throne in Buganda," 113.

[33]Richard Huntington & Peter Metcalf *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), 155.

[34]Huntington & Metcalf, *Celebrations of Death*, 155.

[35]Huntington & Metcalf, *Celebrations of Death*, 159-175.

[36]The secrecy around the deaths of kings makes this suggestion plausible. Huntington and Melcalf (*Celebrations of Death* 173-175) write on this practice in most cultures. We cannot conceive that ancient Israel was above such a practice that was so common in most cultures until very recent times.

[37]Goody 50

[38]Southwold, "Succession to the Throne in Buganda," 114-115.

[39]As quoted by Southwold, "Succession to the Throne in Buganda," 115.

[40]K. Oberg, "The Kingdom of Ankole in Uganda" in *African Political Systems*, eds. M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (London & New York: KPI & Int. African Institute, 1987), 143.

[41]DeVries, *1 Kings*, 35

[42]Jones, *1 & 2 Kings*, 117-118.

[43]Southwold, "Succession to the Throne in Buganda," 92-93.

[44]Southwold, "Succession to the Throne in Buganda," 87-89.

[4545]Jones, *1 & 2 Kings*, 112.

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