ROYAL SUCCESSION IN THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PEOPLE UNDER ARMS AS A DETERMINING FACTOR IN THE STRUGGLES FOR THE THRONE

by

TOMOO ISHIDA

Tsukuba, Japan

According to the biblical narrative in 1 Sam. viii 20, the monarchy was introduced into Israel when the people wanted to be like all the nations by having a king who would govern them and who would lead them in battle. There is a tacit understanding in this narrative that the police and military powers were inherent in kingship. Similarly, the biblical historiographers in the books of Samuel and Kings generally do not omit to mention the military factors involved in the foundation of new dynasties or in irregular successions to the royal throne in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, although they are never eager to report on purely political matters. It was not easy for them to explain the course of events without mentioning the military factors that had played the decisive role in the struggles for the throne.

In the present study the characteristic features of these factors will be examined by classifying them into groups by formulary expressions. In so doing, we shall reach the following two conclusions. First, these biblical historiographers used a definite technical term for king-making as a political action. Secondly, there was a contrasting development between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah concerning the people under arms as a determining factor at the establishment of the royal throne.

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Apart from David’s accession, the throne of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, including Saul’s monarchy, was seized ten times during its existence for about three centuries. In these dynastic foundations or changes, two types of seizure are differentiated one from the other in the

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biblical sources. While the first type was carried out by the people who helped their war-leader to the throne, the second was executed by usurpers who conspired against their lords. Each type is expressed by its set formula.

The first formula is formed by the expression wayyamlikû ʾotô “And they made him king” or wayyamlikû ʾet-P.N. “And they made so-and-so king”, with either kol-haʾām “all the people” or kol-yisrāʾēl “all Israel” as the subject. The second formula consists of the following four expressions: wayyiqsōr ʿālāw “And he conspired against him”, wayyakkēhû “And he struck him down”, wayyimlōk tahāw “And he reigned in his stead”. We shall call the first the wayyamlikû-type and the second the wayyiqsōr-type.

In addition, some biblical narratives tell us about the divine designation of several founders as future kings by prophets, when these founders were still commoners. These source materials are called prophetic narratives. Although they are strongly coloured by a certain theological interpretation of the course of events, with proper analysis we are able to obtain important historical information from these materials too.

According to our sources, the wayyamlikû-type foundation is recorded in the case of the following three kings: Saul in 1 Sam. xi 15, Jeroboam ben Nebat in 1 Kings xii 20 (cf. 2 Kings xvii 21), and Omri in 1 Kings xvi 16. On the other hand, the throne was seized in a wayyiqsōr-type coup d’état by the following five usurpers: Baasha in 1 Kings xv 27-8, Zimri in xvi 9-10, Shallum in 2 Kings xv 10, Pekah in xv 25, and Hoshea in xv 30. The dynastic changes made by Jehu and Menahem cannot be classified at once into either of the two types because of the irregular condition of the source materials. We shall deal with the problems later.

Among the three founders of the wayyamlikû-type, both Saul and Jeroboam have prophetic narratives, in which Samuel anointed Saul to be nāgīd (1 Sam. ix 1-x 16) or took him by lot as king (x 17-27), while Ahijah the Shilonite told Jeroboam the latter’s designation as king over Israel (1 Kings xi 26-40). In the meantime, the people remained passive according to the characteristic mode of prophetic narratives. It is striking, however, that the expression wayyamleḵ/wayyamlikû ʾotô “And he/they made him king” is missing in these narratives. The prophets anoint future kings and announce their divine designation, but the expression wayyamleḵ/wayyamlikû ʾotô is not used in connection with the prophets’ actions.

In this connection, mention must be made of two narratives in which the verb himlīk is used with God as the subject, i.e., in 1 Sam. xv 11, 35 in the narrative of Saul’s rejection and 1 Kings iii 7 in the narrative of Solomon’s dream. In both narratives the royal investiture is remembered