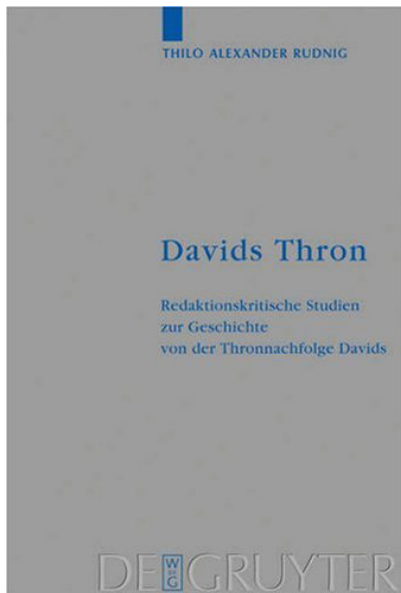


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Rudnig, Thilo Alexander

Davids Thron: Redaktionskritische Studien zur Geschichte von der Thronnachfolge Davids

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This monograph represents a slightly revised Habilitationsschrift submitted in 2005 to the Evangelisch Theologischen Fakultät of Münster University and reflects a virtual tidal wave of redaction-critical studies on the Pentateuch and historical books emanating from German universities. This one focuses on what Leonhard Rost called “The History of the Succession to the Throne of David,” but instead of viewing it as a single unified narrative written at one time by an author in the early Solomonic period, Rudnig now subjects it to this “new” methodology of redaction criticism, which sees it as the product of continuous editing and revision from the tenth to the third centuries B.C.E. The precise delineation of these editorial layers is the task of this study.

Rudnig’s introduction briefly surveys the scholarship of the Succession Narrative from Rost to the present with a view to placing his own approach within the context of this earlier work. On the one hand, he sides with those scholars who identified many later additions, mostly Deuteronomistic, to a document that they regarded with Rost as an early composition. On the other hand, Rudnig also agrees with scholars such as myself who regard all or most of the work as post-Dtr, and therefore without Dtr additions. Rudnig attempts to combine these two approaches by retaining a very small *Grundbestand* as tenth century but the largest part of the work as multiple strata of postexilic additions. He further restricts his investigation to only those blocks of texts

that, in his view, have to do directly with the theme of succession: 2 Sam 11–12; 15–19; 1 Kgs 1–2. In this way he excludes with a few brief remarks those parts of the Succession Narrative (i.e., 2 Sam 9–10; 13–14 20) that Rost and others have long accepted, to say nothing of 2 Sam 2:8–4:12; 6:16, 20–23. He further treats 2 Sam 7 in a short excursus, identifying it as a kind of protochronistic work irrelevant to the discussion, with any allusions to it in 1 Kgs 1–2 being merely very late glosses. In the chapters that follow, Rudnig meticulously lays out the complex stratification of each unit as a process of successive ideological expansion on the theme of dynastic succession and its legitimacy. He concludes his study by setting forth the limits of the various strata and their historical and social context and then diagramming a translation of the texts with varying typescripts in such a way as to illustrate the editorial stratification.

According to Rudnig, this elaborate process of editing and revision began with a basic body of texts (*Grundbestand*) consisting of source fragments preserved in the royal archives of David and Solomon: the conquest of the Ammonite city of Rabbah (2 Sam 11:1a*; 12:29, 31b); the account of the defeat of Absalom's revolt (15:1aβγb, 12b; 17,22abα*; 18:1a, 6, 9b, 15aab, 16a, 17a); the birth of Solomon (11:2, 4aaβb, 5, 27a*; 12:24ba2); and the account of the succession (1 Kgs 1:5, 7, 8aab, 38, 39a*, 39b, 40aαγb). These archival documents were then brought together in the Solomonic period by an editor as a royal inscription, carved in stone, for the greater glory of Solomon, and in this form they were preserved unchanged until they were incorporated by Dtr into his larger history. To this early editor Rudnig attributes only a few verses that create links between the texts.

When Dtr took over this text he likewise added only two verses (1 Kgs 2:10–11), his transition formula. How exactly this document fits within Dtr's work, both before and after, is not clear. Rudnig rejects 1 Kgs 2:1–4 as Dtr and as the obvious precursor of 2:10–12, although it is widely accepted as such, and he rejects 1 Kgs 2:12 because it contradicts his reconstruction of the primitive source that is prior to Dtr, which makes Solomon a usurper of the throne. Nevertheless, 1 Kgs 2:12 completes the transition formula and has clear connections with 2 Sam 7 (Dtr). A subsequent major revision in the Persian period is identified as antidynastic, a theme that I earlier offered as the concern of the Court History as a whole (J. Van Seters, "The Court History and DtrH," in *Die sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids* [ed A. de Pury and T. Römer; Fribourg: Unviversitätsverlag, 2000], 70–93) but that Rudnig now limits to just one of a number of strands. He also suggests that there is a substantial theodicy stratum, divided among three editors, that emphasizes retribution in a way similar to the book of Chronicles. This is a rather remarkable suggestion, given the fact that Chronicles omits almost the whole of the Succession Narrative and idealizes David and Solomon. There are numerous additional strata of editorial revision extending well into the Hellenistic period.

The problems with this redactional analysis are legion, beginning with the reconstruction of his primitive *Grundbestand*. When all the fragments are taken together they cannot possibly constitute the substance of a royal inscription, and no clear parallel is ever offered. Instead, Rudnig merely makes a brief reference to the royal apologies of the Hittites and Assyrians, so often invoked for the Succession Narrative as a whole, which do not resemble his reconstructed text in the least. The fact is that even this greatly reduced *Grundbestand* is anachronistic in many details and no different in date from his latest texts. David is portrayed in 2 Sam 11:1a*; 12:29, 31b as a king who annually sent his troops into the field in the spring of the year to attack foreign cities and bring back rich booty for the royal treasury. This is not the activity of a petty ruler of Jerusalem in the tenth century but the regular practice of the imperial kings of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia. In the account of the revolt of Absalom (2 Sam 15–19), in the revolt of Sheba (2 Sam 20), and in the palace intrigue and struggle for the throne (1 Kgs 1–2), mercenaries play an important role in the military makeup of David's forces. In 1 Kgs 1:8, 38, part of Rudnig's primitive text, Benaiah, who is the commander of the Greek mercenaries (the Pelethites = *peltastai* and the Cherethites = Cretan archers, who are also the royal bodyguard), belongs to the party of Solomon, as a rival to Joab, the commander of the regulars. This practice of using Greek mercenaries, and precisely these same light-armed troops under their own commander as a complement to the regular army, was a standard practice of the late Persian kings and satraps, as attested in Xenophon's *Anabasis* (see R. Waterfield, *Xenophon's Retreat: Greece, Persia, and the End of the Golden Age* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006], esp. 68–86), but is totally out of place in the time of David. The whole portrayal of revolts and harem intrigues is so typical of accounts of late Persian politics that one has no difficulty in placing this colorful narrative within its appropriate historical context. The attempt to carve out a primitive text by trying to avoid all obvious anachronisms as "editorial" additions will not work.

If there is no primitive text prior to Dtr, and if Dtr is not the inventor of the present narrative, then what is left is the imaginative creation of an author in the late Persian period? There is nothing that is earlier within the Succession Narrative. The entire construction of a complex process of extended editorial revision and expansion is left without foundation and completely unnecessary in order to account for the present story. So much of the division into layers is quite arbitrary. A few examples among many will make the case. Rudnig identifies the genre of itinerary within the story of the revolt of Absalom in 2 Sam 15:16a, 17b, 23*, 30ab; 16:14; 17:24ab_a, 26; 18:7*, 17b; 19:16ba, 40a, but it is not clear why such an itinerary should be viewed as a separate source. Itineraries are regularly found imbedded within the narratives of military campaigns, as in Assyrian royal inscriptions and Xenophon's *Anabasis*, and are integral to their composition. Rudnig points to the itinerary as consciously imitating the exodus-conquest motif,

especially in the references to crossing of the Jordan and Gilgal in 19:16ba, 40a, and views this as a *golah*-oriented theological addition. However, what he fails to note is that there is a very explicit use of the exodus-conquest motif in 15:23–24 that directly imitates the role of the ark in the crossing of the Jordan in Joshua (Josh 4:10–11), even to the point of verbatim phraseology. In 2 Sam 15:23–24 two priests, Abiathar and Zadok, arrive with the Levites bearing the ark of the covenant until all the people pass over the Kidron and out of the city. Rudnig attributes only verse 23 to his itinerary and includes verse 24 in his theodicy revision and late glosses. In doing so, however, he misses the whole point of the parody on the exodus motif: (1) the ark arrives late after most of the people have already crossed the Kidron into the wilderness; (2) the ark does not guide the people on their journey through the wilderness but is sent back to Jerusalem with the priests and Levites, to be occupied by Absalom.

For the final days of David, Rudnig also discerns a “David-biography stratum” to which he attributes most of 1 Kgs 1:1–4, 14, 19–31; 2:1–3, 3b. What remains quite curious about such a reconstruction is that Rudnig attributes to the same author parallel references to David’s advanced age in 1 Kgs 1:1–4 and 2:1–2, 3b which have entirely different functions. The first is clearly to denote David’s senility and loss of any control over the events that follow, while the second shows a clear and decisive transfer of power from David to Solomon directly, just as one finds in Dtr with Moses and Joshua (Deut 31:1–8), although he eliminates most of the admonition as a later addition. However, 1 Kgs 2:1–4 has all the hallmarks of Dtr and fits best with 2:10–12. If one cannot follow the most obvious indicators of literary source analysis (doublets and distinctive language), then the whole process of redaction criticism becomes completely arbitrary.

These few examples could be greatly multiplied, but there seems to me little point in doing so. There is no question that the work reflects a great deal of scholarly labor, examining a broad range of relevant literature to construct an erudite hypothesis. Yet it seems to me just another example of a method that has gotten out of control. One can only imagine the many ancient editors required to produce these few chapters, and alongside them there were many others working on other parts of the David story. And for the other portions of Samuel more editors were needed, and yet more for all the other historical books, with some “senior editors” putting it all together. These all somehow had an official role in producing new editions within the bureaucracy of Jerusalem. Such a fragmentation of the text by Rudnig into a mass of editorial trivialities, if correct, reflects one of the great literary wonders of the ancient world. The Succession Narrative, which many believe to be the most remarkable and polished narrative of the whole Hebrew Bible (see G. von Rad, “The Beginning of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel,” in idem, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays* [Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966], 176–204), was produced, not by authorial design, but by a prolonged period of “editorial”

revisions and corruptions of the text. I know of no classical or Near Eastern text whose “editorial” history is comparable to such a development, not even the works of Homer.

It is true that Gerhard von Rad, in his study of the Yahwist, and Martin Noth, in his work on Dtr in Joshua to Kings, protested against this kind of fragmentation, but their words have long been drowned out by the continental clamor for the new method of redaction criticism, as reflected in this work (see J. Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the “Editor” in Biblical Criticism* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006], 257–76). Those who advocate the “new” method of redaction criticism will no doubt take great delight in threading their way through all the intricacies of redactional analysis in this weighty tome, but for some of the reasons outlined above I do not count myself as one of them.