



Dissatisfaction in Israel towards David's Administration during Absalom's Revolt (2 Samuel 13: 1-20: 1-49): A Comparative Discourse with Ghana's Political Affairs

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ABSTRACT

The current study investigates how Absalom's revolt unveiled challenges that the David administration faced to juxtapose these indices with similar crises facing Ghanaian political administration since it obtained self-governance. The study adopts a comparative approach proposed for studying the Bible by Brent A. Strawn. The paper reveals that both events that occurred under David's administration during the revolt and events that have been reported in Ghana's politics, though different in context, share similar incidents. Such events include indiscipline issues, delays in the adjudication process, imbalanced concentration of government activities among urban and rural areas, unhealthy partisan practices and finally, the incidence of ethnocentric tendencies. The paper suggests that such issues, when not handled properly, lead to dissatisfaction with the leadership of the nation. The study recommends that all political leaders must thoroughly deal with corrupt officials in case they abuse their office or misconduct themselves. Also, the judicial service must expedite their adjudication processes and give quick verdicts within a reasonable time frame to avoid thwarting justice, national resources must be fairly distributed and Ethnocentric tendencies should not colour our political appointments and alliances. The paper pinpoints loopholes in the Ghanaian political system since it obtained independence and offers what to consider as the way forward in a comparative study involving issues concerning Absalom's revolt.

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INTRODUCTION

Political problems are as old as the development of states in all human cultures. One obvious reason for such tendencies is that leaders are usually judged from various perspectives by their citizens and critics. A leader may be very successful throughout leadership, but when critics put his leadership to scrutiny, there will still remain grey areas that they might have failed to consider in one way or the other. Similarly, the book of Second Samuel suggests that the sectional conflicts that arose between the house of Saul and that of David were resolved. This was after the leaders of Israel pledged allegiance to David (2 Sam. 5). David, thereafter, put up several measures to solidify the newly united kingdom. Some of the additional measures he initiated include the renewal of his marriage with Michal

as a means of establishing royal connections with the house of Saul¹; expressing his innocence and displeasure before the people of the northern tribes over the death of both Abner and Ish-Bosheth, their leaders (2 Sam. 4:8-12); as well as choosing Jerusalem as his new administrative capital when both kingdoms were united under him (2 Sam. 5:6-10). The choice of Jerusalem, for instance, apart from it being the centre of both Judah and Israel, was a territory captured from the Jebusites. This made it a neutral ground that could easily be accepted by both kingdoms under him.

Generally, David's success stories have been highly eulogized, making it difficult to come to terms with his numerous weaknesses. Smith rightly observes that *the character of King David as presented in the Old Testament is rather hard to determine. He has so greatly been magnified by the Chronicler and by the Psalter that it is difficult to believe all that they say about David. If it were all true, we should have to deal with a most complex and contradictory character.*² Despite all the praises for his good leadership, conflicts between the Judahites and the rest of Israel resurfaced in David's reign during and after Absalom's revolt. Based on the response elicited from the various factional groups, one thing stands clear: David's success as an administrator and leader was not satisfying to some of the people located in certain regions within his geo-political administration. Many flaws in his administration were exposed at this time. Particularly, these were evidenced in the weaknesses the people saw in his judicial administration, his inability to lay down a clear line of succession and his laxity towards his children (supposedly heir-apparent) and some officials who misconducted themselves but yet left unchecked. Therefore, we need to put these challenges into perspective as a way to deduce a few implications of what critics have witnessed about Ghanaian politics after independence.

The political narrative about David and any other biblical leaders is similar to what is seen in the contemporary Ghanaian political milieu. This is because both the leaders in the Bible and those living today worked with human beings who have numerous concerns and grievances that they wished to be addressed properly. Though the book of Samuel and the records about David's political affairs were not written for Ghanaians, the similarities the account has with the nation's political affairs offer a good point to take a cue from this study. The paper reviews Absalom's revolt and the challenges that confronted David's leadership as well as that of Ghana in the last decades after independence. In this discourse, issues of laxity in disciplining corrupt officials, challenges in judicial processes, issues of neglect of certain geo-political areas and ethno-tribalistic problems in politics will be the focus of discussion.

METHODOLOGY

The current study uses a comparative approach to studying the Bible popularized by Brent A. Strawn.³ The method allows the reader of the Bible to at least set two subjects alongside each other to look at them together to: (1) identify both similarities and differences, (2) reveal aspects of the subjects that may not have been readily seen if each was looked at in isolation.⁴ The current study aims to highlight similarities that a Ghanaian aware of his political issues will appreciate when looking at the issues that gave Absalom such massive support against his father, David, an astute politician. Though, the method has been used to compare different religious cultures, and similar Ancient Near Eastern cultural practices found among Israel and her neighbours it was cautiously and prudently adopted in this study to compare political practices in the Ghanaian context and that of the narrative under review.

¹ Compare 1 Samuel 25: 44 with 2 Samuel 3:12-16.

² J.M.Powis Smith, "The Character of King David," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1933, 1-11.

³ Brent Strawn, "'Comparative Approaches: History, Theories and Image of God', " in *Method Matters: Essays on Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Peterson*, ed. Joel M. Lemon and Kent Harold Richards. S. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 117.

⁴ It must however be noted that the paper deviates from western readers who have used the method to compare the cultures of Ancient Israel in the Bible with that of the neighbouring ancient Eastern cultures such as William W. Hallo, and others who have used the method to compare Israelite cultures with religions like Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism like Fredrick Max Muller.

Indiscipline of Corrupt Government Officials (2 Sam. 13:1-14:1-33)

David was a political figure and events connected to his family go a long way to affect the entire nation that he ruled as a king. This incident becomes more serious when such relatives are given political portfolios. In this section, we will deal with the case of Absalom's indulgences and later with Joab. In a monarchical nation where children of the ruling monarch equally have the opportunity to succeed their father, it is expected that the level of discipline and checks on these children far exceeds commoners. The inability to handle these children well, especially in criminal cases, will lead to raising unruly future heirs of the nation and create loopholes in the maintenance of order in the nation. Usually, some courtiers closely assess any incumbent king. When they realize that such a king lacks the confidence to punish wrongdoing, they end up forming factions and acting with impunity. That is the case with David in handling the deviant behaviours of his children and relative, in this case, Joab. Not only do readers see his courtiers finding fault with his discipline scheme but some of his biological children capitalized on his weak disciplinary decisions to misbehave. His poor handling of disciplinary issues spelt disaster for his leadership.

Amnon was the oldest son of David. Per the rule of primo-geniture, he was supposed to take over the seat of the kingdom after the demise of his father. He seems to have assessed that his father lacks the confidence to discipline them and has started to behave recklessly. His mother was Ahinoam of Jezreel. Tamar and Absalom, on the other hand, were children of David and Macah, daughter of the King of Gershur, thus his half-siblings. Amnon desired Tamar sexually, possibly because he saw her as his half-sister. Thus, he schemed with Jonadab to violate her. Amnon knew that it was inappropriate to touch an unmarried woman but went ahead to ravish Tamar with Jonadab's directive and encouragement (2 Sam. 13:2). When the news of the rape got to David, he became angry but neither disciplined Amnon nor did anything to console Tamar, his raped daughter. From David's indifference, Yamada sees the narrator as developing a characterization of the king as a man who lacks control of his family, thus opening the door for Absalom's revolt. He portrays David as a pawn in his oldest son's plans to seduce Tamar.⁵ Smith perceives David's refusal to discipline Amnon as the beginning of his trouble.⁶

In Israel, kings are administrators of justice.⁷ They are to ensure that culprits of an offense and all their accomplices are duly identified and punished according to the law without being selective.⁸ In Tamar's case, she did not receive justice from the man who sits on the judgment throne of the kingdom. This is no ordinary man than her own father and the one who exposed her to her present violation by Amnon (2 Sam. 13:6). Millgram questions David's action, *Is it that David is paralyzed by a sense of guilt, the spectre of the beloved Amnon inhibiting him from freely forgiving this murderer? Or could it be that the king is haunted by his role as chief justice of the land; how can he publicly pardon so blatant a murderer without totally forfeiting public confidence in the impartiality of justice in Israel?*⁹

Even though, nothing shows that Amnon will be the heir apparent to David, with his monstrous behaviour all discerning nobles among David's courtiers will perceive him as a misfit to the throne. More to this, David's indiscretion opened a dangerous gap for all his nobles and his discerning sons to take advantage of the situation by flouting the laws of the land, knowing that they would eventually go scot-free.

By this act, David will definitely lose his reputation, courage and respect from even his children, and Absalom, in particular, was the one who defied him in an act of vengeance for his sister's rape. Yamada once again supports this view by pointing out the looming danger coming against David when he said: *The varied responses of Absalom and David to Amnon's crime also set in motion a*

⁵ Frank M. Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible: A Literary Analysis of Three Rape Narratives* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 128.

⁶ J. M. P. Smith. "The Character of King David." *Journal of Bible Literature* 52, no. 1 (April 1993): 8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3259476>

⁷ cf. 1 Kings 3:16; 2 Kings 6:28

⁸ Victor Lonu Budha, *The Biblical Concept of the 'Davidic Covenant' in 2 Samuel and Ezekiel and Its Implications for African Leadership* (AOSIS, 2023), 57.

⁹ Hillel I. Millgram, *The Invention of Monotheist Ethics: Exploring the Second Book of Samuel*, vol. 2 (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 393.

developing tension between Absalom and David, leading to the son's rebellion against his father. Absalom takes it upon himself to avenge his sister by killing Amnon and thus usurps the father's role in so doing.¹⁰ By saying Absalom usurped the father's role, what Yamada's statement implies is that Absalom sees himself as more qualified than the father to take the right actions in disciplinary issues. Thus, Absalom later carved his way and almost succeeded in taking over the throne. He might have done this due to bitterness against his father over the Amnon incident as well as the lack of justice rendered to her sister. It would not be far from right to propose that his killing of Amnon clearly supposes his disregard for his father's incompetence in ensuring proper discipline. Myers observes another cause for the newly emerging problem in the United Kingdom when he said that: *discontent and rebellion and the complex question of succession accentuated the necessity for a more stable order*. He further adds that *David probably came to realize that personal union was not enough to hold his vast empire*.¹¹

Myers avers that *Absalom seems insecure about his position because he might have already known the promise of the throne to Solomon by David (1 Kings 1: 30) thus making his own position to the throne precarious*.¹² Others like Millgram justify Absalom's decision to take the throne when she said, on his return David formally accepted Absalom, but this is far from forgiveness and sincere reconciliation...Absalom thus conceived to push his father aside and seize the throne. She further observes that David failed to use that chance to win back his criminally errant son.¹³

The other threat to David's leadership was Joab. Joab's consistent disobedience of David, especially in the case of Absalom's murder, and David's inability to put his activities under check is a problem related to the exhibition of nepotism in government and the lack of discipline of wayward relatives in David's leadership. When it comes to giving a government or leadership portfolio to a family member, two critical questions must be asked. If the leader realized that his relative was incompetent, what should he do? Secondly, if the relative is competent but insubordinate or defies the ruling political leader's order, what should the leader do? It is a fact that familiarity does not promote development and progress in leadership, especially when it lacks checks and balances. However, employing hard-working family members who are ready to comply with the rules and regulations of an established institution is not bad.

Joab was King David's nephew, born to his sister Zeruah (1 Chron. 2:16). The character of Joab as the commander of the army of Israel under David was a complex one. His war skills made him invaluable to David's effort to consolidate his kingdom. David trusted Joab and he performed very well as a military commander. At the same time, there are instances in which Joab acts ruthlessly against David's order to the extent of blatantly disobeying David before the whole army. Although Joab's loyalty to David is indiscernible, he sees himself as very powerful and the main key supporter of David. David knew about Joab's defiance and support for him at the same time. David knew that Joab had previously murdered Ish-Bosheth and Abner against his command (2 Sam. 3:22-4:12). He fears that in the counterattack on Absalom's forces, Joab might definitely strike his son to death and cautioned his three army generals to spare his son, but Joab blatantly defied his order (2 Sam. 18: 1-5). At this point, Joab appears to be a major threat to David's authority as a leader. Right from Hebron, Joab persistently disobeyed him with impunity. Several reasons explain why David failed to deal with Joab. Joab was, first of all, his relative and due to their relationship, David finds it difficult to punish him even when he defied him by killing Absalom.

Scholars like Millgram think that Joab's action was a rebuttal to Absalom for burning his field when he needed his help to reunite with his father. Joab always learned from the past and saw this as an opportunity to remove a possible threat.¹⁴ Whatever the reason for his action, one would have expected that, as a good statement, David should have applied the principles of justice equally to all people,

¹⁰ Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible: A Literary Analyses of Three Rape Narratives*, 128.

¹¹ J.M. Myers, "David," in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 771-82.

¹² Myers, "David."

¹³ Millgram, *The Invention of Monotheist Ethics: Exploring the Second Book of Samuel*, 394.

¹⁴ Millgram, *The Invention of Monotheist Ethics: Exploring the Second Book of Samuel*, 400.

including relatives who behave contrary to orders and the law. If he put the northern soldier who claimed to have killed Saul and his family when seeking power to death, what prevented him from dealing with Joab? This weakness demonstrated before the entire nation definitely weakened David's power and authority over the nation. David's laxity with his children had now passed on to his courtiers, who were now defying him publicly.

In comparing the issue of indiscipline of corrupt relatives of a leader and its consequences, the variables for the case of Ghana may not be the same as those of the biblical case of David, yet there are striking similarities. Abdul-Kahar, Ebi and Nassar rightly observe that generally, indiscipline has been the main cause of insurgencies and retardation of progress in Ghana right after independence from colonial rule. They point out that this issue makes the government unable to implement national development policies and plans. Members of political parties, sponsors of parties, and relatives of politicians are sometimes given preferential treatment across the board.¹⁵ Bauer and Darkwa further note that when it comes to those who qualified to be ministers in Ghana, such a decision was influenced by affiliational, representational and experiential criteria, as well as a reward for prior commitment and contributions to the party.¹⁶

Adjibolosoo examines similar issues in President Acheampong's regime.¹⁷ In his estimation, national accusations of favouritism against Acheampong's regime, brought the nation almost to the verge of its collapse. This was seen in giving government contracts, social favours, economic benefits, and political appointments to his immediate relatives, friends, and those who worked to prop up his government. People who were not close to him or did not have any other avenues through which to be listed on Acheampong's elite list could not receive any personal financial gain. He notes that many who thought they could get closer to participating in the booty-sharing process became dissatisfied and discouraged about his leadership. He concludes that Acheampong's capitalism became the downfall of his government.¹⁸

Another thing that has to be considered when friends and affiliates are given political appointments by a leader is the issue of checks and balances. When a leader surrounds himself with his close relatives or political affiliates in government, it becomes very difficult for him to exercise checks and balances on their corrupt practices, incompetence and mismanagement. It also leads to appointments not usually based on merit and competence. In Ghana, the winner-takes-all attitude of our political operations has also led to indiscipline and the neglect of qualified state-men to lead certain key offices. Most political officeholders usually do not meet the expectations of the people. They are usually interested in their gains as political parties rather than in prudently managing the national resources to develop the nation. The opposition from one regime to another always blames the sitting government as being incompetent, but when they are given power, the situation does not improve very much. Danso researched most of the perennial problems of the nation that subsequent governments keep struggling to overcome. Focusing his research on Accra-Tema municipalities, Danso mentions government's ineffective delivery of services such as water, electricity and garbage disposal for the business community in Ghana, causing the nation to push for a change in governments. 77% of the participants in this research were dissatisfied with the water supply, 67% were dissatisfied with proper waste disposal and 67% with electricity. He concludes that this kills the nation's potential to reach full productivity and opportunities to compete in the global free enterprise system in the business sphere.¹⁹ These indices pointed out still persist from one government to another.

¹⁵ Abdul-Kahar Adam, Ebi Shahrin Bin, and Nasser Salim Moh, "Conceptualisation of Lack of Discipline and Probity as the Main Cause towards Good Governance Practice," *International Journal of Public Policy and Administration Research* 6, no. 1 (2019): 12–22, 15.

¹⁶ Gretchen Bauer and Akosua K. Darkwah, "'The President's Prerogative'? The Cabinet Appointment Process in Ghana and the Implications for Gender Parity," *Politics & Gender* 18, no. 2 (2022): 546–73.

¹⁷ Ignatius Kutu Acheampong was a Ghanaian military officer and politician who was the military head of the state of Ghana from 13 January 1972 to 5th July, 1978, when he was deposed in a palace coup.

¹⁸ Senyo Adjibolosoo, "Ethnicity and the Development of National Consciousness: A Human Factor Analysis," in *Critical Perspectives on Politics and Socio-Economic Development in Ghana* (Brill, 2003), 107–32, 122.

¹⁹ Kwaku Abiam Danso, *Leadership Concepts and the Role of Government in Africa: The Case of Ghana* (Xlibris Corporation, 2007), 163.

In the past, when civilian leadership downplayed their mandate to govern and were accused of mismanagement, the military took the opportunity to take over. Biswal, studying Ghana's early stages of independence, states that the army came out of the barracks for the first time and made their presence felt in the corridors of power when they studied the reasons for coups in neighbouring nations. They saw that the civilian government had failed and saw themselves as competent to intervene. Issues of tribalism, localism and economic mismanagement crippled the economy cutting short the rising expectation of the masses. Thus, rising economic hardship led to the popular welcome of the military takeover in 1966.²⁰ From the accusation against Ignatius Kutu Acheampong, it is clear that the military government were not equally vindicated by the very accusations they raised. Indiscipline and weaknesses in a political-administrative set-up have always engineered coup d'état in Africa and Ghana to be specific. Absalom's basis for overthrowing David and Joab's defiance of his authority appears to be a glaring biblical example. Another area of David's leadership for a comparative analysis of Ghanaian political developments to be assessed will be in the area of judicial practices.

Delay of adjudication Process

It is the tactic of all aspirants of political power to appeal to all who are discontented with the existing regime by trying to win popular confidence and support by promising a better government and offering special favours. Absalom adopts this very tactic.²¹ His first scheme was to capitalize on the weaknesses in David's judicial services to the nation and exploit that to his advantage. The kingdom under David now looks expanded and the growing administrative oversight of David kept him separated from the common people. Instead of having a decentralized system of judiciary where minor issues are handled, it appears that trivial judicial matters were still brought to the palace of the monarch (2 Sam. 14:6). Such tendencies slowed down the justice system and led to duress on the monarch, making him not have adequate time to swiftly judge cases. Smith contends that it appears that there was no officer analogous to a chief justice under the king's leadership. He continues to argue, that the subjection of all Israel judicial cases to David's sway caused an influx of cases and the rate at which cases were disposed of can hardly be slower among the ten tribes after David had become their king than it was during the previous anarchy. It is more probable that civil cases multiplied faster since the king was occupied with wars.²² Absalom, however, having a hidden objective, made time to listen to the grievances of the people. This made him succeed in stealing their hearts. He exhibited strong affection in the process of adjudicating matters under false pretence in a very dramatic way, but in the end, it had the right impact (1 Sam. 15: 6). According to Bruce, Absalom continued like this for four years until he stole the hearts of all the men of Israel.²³

In like manner, the judicial problems David faced as a leader shed light on those of Ghana. Contrary to the case of David's judicial administration, Ghana has a separate political arm called the judiciary that separately takes care of legal matters. There are also various court ranks across the nation, such as the Court of Appeal, the High Court and the Regional Tribunals to help handle the pile of cases on the desk of the judiciary at various levels. However, one reason why Ghanaians have mistrust in the Ghanaian judiciary system at all levels is delay in court rulings and or judgements. This takes an unnecessarily long time, causing a lot of distress among plaintiffs seeking justice. As Gyampo accurately observes, *One basic tenet of the rule of law and adjudication of justice is the need to follow due process of law. Admittedly, doing this in any competent law court may bring about delays. However, when such delays become unreasonable and without justifiable cause, they cause unnecessary hardships for people in a manner that undermines human right and access to justice.* He further notes, *one problematic area in Ghana's justice system is the issue of delay in court long after*

²⁰ Tapan Prasad Biswal, *Ghana, Political and Constitutional Developments* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1992), 94.

²¹ Gnana Robinson, *Let Us Be like the Nations: A Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel*, vol. 9 (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 228.

²² William Smith, *Dr. William Smith's Dictionary of the Bible Comprising It's Antiquities, Biography, Geography & Natural History* (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1877), 1510.

²³ Frederick Fyvie Bruce, "David," in *The International Bible Commentary with New International Version*, ed. William Foxwell Albright (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 764.

hearing a case. He further provides serious implications of such tendencies in his concluding remarks by stating that: *giving a court ruling soon after a case has been heard keeps the facts fresh in the minds of the trialing judge so that a wise judgment can be made. Memories of parties, their witnesses and even facts may fade or totally escape the judge where rulings are unduly delayed. Delayed judgment may breed unnecessary paranoia regarding the cause of the delay. It becomes oppressive to parties involved, creates frustration and tension and induce attempts at wrong doing.*²⁴

Absalom's ability to win the hearts of the majority of the Hebronites with his swift adjudication of issues of justice in a way expressed the frustrations, grievances and discontent with the monarch's judiciary set-up. Just as the case of the Ghanaian delayed justice system seems very frustrating to the people. The succeeding discussion will look at the issue of over-concentration of development in cities and administrative capitals.

Imbalance attention between Capital Cities and smaller Towns on issues of Development

In most nations, the greatest part of the national revenue is generated from the cities but most of the natural resources for export and development are from rural communities. In addition, it is in the cities that most administrative functions take place. All the major government administrative activities are concentrated in the cities. This makes concentrating development in the cities indispensable. However, this could become problematic to any ruling government if they fail to extend progressive activities to the smaller communities and villages as well. Absalom knew the importance of choosing the right place as his camp to gather followers and amenities for his insurgency. Hebron was thus chosen by him. He spent four years building support. It was, however, easier for the Hebronites to accept Absalom for several reasons. Foremost, that was his place of birth, making him easily connect with them.²⁵ Second, Hebron was his father's first administrative capital before he moved it to Jerusalem. Thirdly, Absalom might have chosen Hebron in fulfilment of a vow made to Yahweh whilst fleeing from David into exile at Gershur.²⁶ The fact remains that Absalom, using Hebron as his administrative centre of operations, became easier since the Hebronites were obviously dissatisfied with the relocation of the capital to Jerusalem. Miller even thinks that David's decision to move the capital made the Hebronites hostile to him.²⁷ This was possible because it would reduce their relevance in national matters unlike the days when they were the political capital. Thus, Absalom deceived David into allowing him to stay at Hebron after killing Amnon under the pretence of honouring a vow he made to God. His real intention was to start his rebellion and to keep the conspiracy away from David.²⁸

Similarly, the Ghana government, from one political party to another, have not paid much attention to development in rural areas where gold, diamond, bauxite, cocoa, timber and other natural resources are produced. Their drinking water is bad and the roads are in a deplorable state. Since the majority of election votes come from the cities due to overpopulation, the government tend to pay more attention to the cities than these communities. In the Area of mining, Adomako-Kwakye thus accuses the government of Ghana of not doing much to improve the deplorable conditions that exist in mining areas. He points out that the government of Ghana set up the Mineral Development Fund to aid development in mining areas but has not been successful in ensuring that mining communities benefit sufficiently from mining revenues since development still does not take place. He further points out that mining has gone on for over 100 years in Ghana, but developmental challenges facing the mining communities remain, with agitation from the towns. What makes the situation worrying, according to him, is that Ghana's constitution vests all resources in the president on behalf of and in trust for the people of Ghana. This confidence put in the hands of the president has not helped mining communities very much. He argues, therefore, that part of the revenue accrued from minerals must be reserved for a national fund that is managed by a body that is not related to the state for the development

²⁴ Ransford Edward Van Gyampo, "Justice Delayed Is Justice Denied: A Call for Timeous Court Rulings in Ghana," *Journal of Law, Policy & Globalization* 21 (2014): 36.

²⁵ Read details from 2 Samuel 3: 2 ff.

²⁶ Virginia Miller, *A King and a Fool? The Successive Narrative as a Satire* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 142.

²⁷ Miller, *A King and a Fool? The Successive Narrative as a Satire*, 142.

²⁸ Read further from 2 Samuel 15:7.

of mining areas and part be used for the development of mining communities.²⁹ Lawer, Lukas and Jorgensen agree with Kwakye that development in limestone mining areas has equally received less attention, revenues accrued are not transparent and indigenes of the Krobo region of Eastern Ghana are poor.³⁰ If all resources accrued from communities and regions were well managed and used to develop the originative areas in Ghana, the villages would have developed more than even the cities and rural-urban drift would not have been a problem. Unhealthy partisan conflicts and frictions between the ruling government and opposition will be the next to be considered.

Undue Partisan conflicts and Frictions

In politics, we have instances where a section of people devote their allegiance to a particular political party. In this instance, the opposition to undo the success of the incumbent government sometimes tries to undermine the good works of the sitting government through their invectives, diatribes and criticism. Similarly, it appears no matter how hard David attempted to win the attention of the Saulide group, they still looked for opportunities to denounce him and possibly reclaim the throne for the household of Saul. After Absalom staged his revolt, several events revealed this sense of mistrust. While David was further away from Jerusalem, running from Absalom's onslaught, Mephibosheth's steward, Ziba, approached him. The scene revealed mistrust between the house of Saul and David. Ziba, Mephibosheth's steward, approached David with gifts. He informed David that his master had remained in Jerusalem, expecting that David's overthrow would bring the restoration of the throne of his grandfather to him. In response, Ziba received half of Mephibosheth's estate as his reward (2 Sam. 16:1-4). Although Mephibosheth's later response indicates that Ziba was a sycophant (2 Sam. 19:25), David's unwavering decision to keep giving half of Mephibosheth's estate as mentioned earlier to Ziba indicates mistrust of the household of Saul (2 Sam. 25:21-30). It is not wrong to posit that David thinks the Saulide group will do anything to sabotage him for the throne. Edwards comments that Ziba has hopes of using this opportunity to take some of the properties of Saul that David has already restored unto Mephibosheth to himself, is also possible.³¹

In a related episode following this line of argument, Shimei, a relative of Saul, encountered David at Bahurim, whilst the king was fleeing from Absalom, cursed him, pelted him with stones and blatantly accused him of blood guilt for taking Saul's kingdom (2 Sam. 15:5-14). This incident supports the idea of sectional conflicts within the supposedly united kingdom between the house of Saul and David. I agree with Bodner when she says, Shimei obviously saw David as a usurper who had stolen the throne from Saul in the same way Absalom was now stealing from him.³² It is also right to respectfully argue that the conflict between David and Saul's household continued up to the end of the united kingdom.

In the context of Ghanaian politics, the issue of political parties trying to undo the good works of the opposition, adopting sabotaging schemes to get power or showing blatant signs of ingratitude to the good works of one succeeding government to another is very glaring today. It is not only in David-Saulide conflicts that we see the issue of one political group doing everything possible to supplant the other. Bentil did a very good job in analyzing the issue of adversarialism and insult in Ghanaian politics in the quest of the opposition government to take over power from the sitting government. He notes that in spite of Ghana's emerging culture of political stability, it still faces several challenges which including, among others, abuse of incumbency. Using the two major political parties, NDC and NPP, Bentil gives a few examples of instances where actions taken with good intentions by the incumbent have been turned down by the opposition.³³ He cites the 2008 national awards under J. A. Kuffour, where the then-opposition candidate Atta Mills turned down his national honour to be awarded to him

²⁹ Chris Adomako-Kwakye, "Neglect of Mining Areas in Ghana: The Case for Equitable Distribution of Resource Revenue," *Commonwealth Law Bulletin* 44, no. 4 (2018): 637–51.

³⁰ Eric Tamatey Lawer, Martin C. Lukas, and Stig H. Jørgensen, "The Neglected Role of Local Institutions in the 'Resource Curse' Debate. Limestone Mining in the Krobo Region of Ghana," *Resources Policy* 54 (December 2017): 43–52, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2017.08.005>.

³¹ Melva Hammon Edwards, *Covenant Love* (Indiana: Author House, 2010), 154.

³² Keith Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 72.

³³ NDC – National Democratic Party and NPP- New Patriotic Party are the major political parties in Ghana.

by the sitting president due to partisan politicking.³⁴ He also cites a similar scenario where an invitation by the then ruling party NDC to engage the opposition to discuss matters of national interest at Senchi in 2014 (an exercise which was started under their watch with former president Kuffour) was blatantly declined by the opposition, even though there were legitimate concerns raised about the mode of invitation.³⁵

From the observation of Mattes and Gyima-Boadi, adversarial political systems aim at scoring cheap political points even if it requires taking an opposition position that is inconsistent with their previous positions or policy, and in the process demeaning or humiliating the opponent. He adds that this makes one wonder whether the boiling issues are factual or they are just riding on the whims of a party line. He concludes by advising that if adversarial politics is played in a constructive and measured manner, it helps put the government on its machinery or toes.³⁶ Finally, issues of tribalism and ethnicity will be analyzed.

Ethnicity Tendencies

What makes a leader great is his ability to put aside tribal affections at all times and make himself available to all people groups or tribes in the nation. Any time a leader leans too much on his tribal roots, he ends up antagonizing or offending the other groups in the nation. After the battle, the northern Israelites were the first to attempt sending David to Jerusalem but not Judah, his tribe. David declined the offer and instead sent Abiathar and Zadok to encourage the people of Judah to restore him to the throne, reminding them that they were the first to make him king (2 Sam. 19:11). The context of David's actions appears to be politically inexpedient. It was the Judahites who supported Absalom's rebellion in Hebron, he could have allowed northern Israelites to be at least part of those who were to bring him to Jerusalem without using divisive language and actions. His words seem to suggest that he has no respect for the northern Israelites who defended and rescued him in the rebellion staged by Absalom.

In a similar vein, when it comes to Ghanaian politics, Chazan avers that ethnic politics, despite severe vacillation in regime types and ideological predilections, have come to play an increasingly prominent role in Ghanaian politics since 1957. This was exacerbated in the 1970s. However, it has been positively acknowledged that ethnic composition of Ghana's first seven regimes has varied from Akan groups during the Nkrumah years; through Ga-Ewe coalition under the National Liberation Council (NLC); the Central Akan (Asante-Brong) alliance of Busia; the ethnically more balanced National Redemption Council (NRC)- Supreme Military Council (SMC) constellation etc.³⁷

One area where Ghana's politics has not been very healthy is how ethnicity influences elections in the nation's democracy. Aidoo and Botchway's research cautions on this subject that the tendency to engage in over-ethnicization election, if not properly managed, can lead to ethnic clashes, especially during electioneering periods. They proposed that Political groups must avoid inciting ethnic groups against one another in the name of winning votes.³⁸ It is easier to hear during elections that a specific ethnic group prefer voting for those from their tribe, which is quite worrisome.

Sackey warns that politicization of ethnicity, if not managed, can negatively affect the democratic consolidation of the nation and negatively impact the development of Ghana. Therefore, she proposes that the government must enact specific policies to address the ethnic composition of officials in their

³⁴ John Agyekum Kuffour was Ghana's president from 2001 to 2009 and John Evans Atta Mills was Ghana's president from 2009 to 2012.

³⁵ Shadrack Bentil and Gilbert A Aidoo, "The Negative Implications of Adversarialism and Politics of Insult in Ghana: An Overview," *Developing Country Studies* 8, no. 4 (2018): 7–13.

³⁶ Robert Mattes and E Gyimah-Boadi, "The Quality of Two Liberal Democracies in Africa: Ghana and South Africa," in *Quality of Democracy: Improvement or Subversion* (California: Centre on Democracy, Development and Rule of Law and European Forum Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, 2003), 1–37, https://fsi9-prod.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/QoD_paper_Mattes_-_Gyimah_Boadi.pdf.

³⁷ Naomi Chazan, "Ethnicity and Politics in Ghana," *Political Science Quarterly* 97, no. 3 (September 1, 1982): 461–85, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2149995>.

³⁸ Gilbert Arhinful Aidoo and Thomas Prechi Botchway, "Ethnicity, Religion and elections in Ghana". *UCC Law Journal*, 1, 2 (December, 2021), 419.

government and draw reform programmes that will bridge the economic gaps between different parts of the country.³⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GHANAIAN CONTEXT

In view of the glaring problems raised in both contexts, the following recommendations could be considered to help improve some of the few challenges scholars have raised about Ghanaian politics:

Firstly, in an attempt to ensure probity, fairness and accountability, all political leaders who engage in any form of scandal, corrupt practices or misappropriate state funds and resources must be allowed to face the full rigours of the law without favouritism. Those found guilty must be prosecuted and punished according to law. The practice whereby corrupt officials are allowed to face the law, but it appears they always get off scot-free without any firm verdict passed must be re-examined.

Secondly, the judicial services must expedite their decision process and provide a quick verdict within a reasonable period to parties who are affected. This does not mean the decision given by the court should not be thoroughly investigated. However, instances where a case will be pending for almost a decade in a court weaken evidence and trust in the judiciary.

Thirdly, all sitting governments must prioritize the provision of quality infrastructure, especially to communities which provide natural resources that enrich the country. This will enable the people within that enclave to also benefit from their own natural resources.

Fourthly, tribal or ethnocentric politics must be effaced from our politics. Comments, invectives, consideration of key appointments, and political campaigns must be done without any comments that will trigger tribal tensions. This is necessary to help the nation's effort to achieve political unity and to curb political insurgencies.

CONCLUSION

The paper serves as a dialogue between the events that took place in David's leadership and administration during Absalom's revolt by comparing the variables with the Ghanaian context. It makes readers see how the Bible addresses and raises various issues about human activities, including those that we see in politics. This has become possible because the response of the people who lived in the biblical times to political BEHAVIOURS OF THEIR LEADERS is synonymous with THE RESPONSE OF GHANAIS TO SIMILAR POLITICAL BEHAVIOURS OF OUR TIME. Their context is indeed different from our context and their form of political governance differs from that of their Ghanaian context. A comparative engagement of the two political worldviews leaves much for readers to admire. The study has revealed the various challenges that David faced and tested those variables using the Ghanaian political trajectory as a case study. Though one cannot impose the conclusions from the biblical text on the Ghanaian context, a comparative assessment that allows literature written from the Ghanaian perspective to give a picture of how the same situation has been assessed in Ghana is possible. This, in a way, makes the bible relevant to contemporary readers to appreciate how the biblical text sheds light on the Ghanaian context. It has been made clear that such issues discussed when not handled well by any nation, can spell disaster.

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³⁹ Irene Sackey, The Politics of Ethnicity and Religion in Africa: A Comparative Study of Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire. *International Journal of Education and Religion* 3, 2 (April, 2021), 103.

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