

CHAPTER TWENTY

KINGSHIP

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At the latest with the unification of the state under the rule of a single king around 3000 BC, Egyptian theologians developed a sophisticated ideology of kingship that portrayed the pharaoh as the link between the spheres of men and gods (Baines 1995b: 95–7, 115; Dreyer and Ziegler 2002). This ideology justified his (officially) unchallenged rule at the head of the centralized state, and aided in its smooth functioning. Accordingly, various strategies were developed to express and reinforce this status, including royal dress and regalia, iconography, myths, rituals and propagandistic texts.

RULING WITH MAAT

In his capacity as an essentially 'divine' being, the Egyptian king enjoyed many prerogatives, but he also had obligations: to the gods, who – according to Egyptian belief – had 'created' him and 'given him the office of kingship', to the court and elite who accepted him as their ruler and in many cases were instrumental in bringing him to power (for example, when several royal sons were vying for the kingship, or when the previous ruler had no male heir), and to the general population, whose work sustained the country and its government. Explicit reference to these three domains can be found in a piece of wisdom literature generally dated to the early Middle Kingdom, the *Instruction for King Merikara*. Composed in the aftermath of the social changes brought about by the First Intermediate Period, the ideology of kingship reflected in this text had clearly undergone some important developments compared to earlier periods. However, this text is the most 'pragmatic' surviving treatise on the office of kingship, and reflects a tripartite view of the social world (outside of the kingship) that is attested throughout Egyptian history. In it, the deceased father of Merikara instructs him on the proper conduct of the royal office, and includes the following recommendations:

Make your monuments last through love of you!
Make the cor[vée workers] whom the city has gathered have plenty –
They will thank God for this bounty . . . and pray to [the Gods] for your health.
Respect the officials! Make your people well! . . .

Make your great ones great, so that they will enact your laws!
Someone wealthy of house cannot be partial ...

Do Truth so that you may endure on earth!

Make [many] monuments for God;

This makes the name of him who does it live.

A man should do what is good for his soul:

Performing the monthly service, putting on white sandals [i.e. ritual dress],

Joining the temple estate, keeping confidential the mysteries,

Entering into the sanctuary, eating bread from the temple!

...

God knows the man who acts for Him ...

(Parkinson 1997: 218–21)

All three levels of obligation – to the general populace, the elite and the gods – can be subsumed under the ideological notion of 'Ruling with *maat*', which is also explicit in this text (Assmann 1995a [1990]: 200–12). This concept is attested as early as the mid-2nd Dynasty, in the Horus name of its sixth king, Sekhemib-perenmaat – 'Horus strongwilled, who comes forth for [i.e. champions] *Maat*' (Wilkinson 1999: 202).

Maat is a term that has been translated in various ways (see Ockinga, this volume): it is most commonly rendered 'justice' or 'righteousness', but in the context of exercising the kingship it relates first and foremost to the maintenance of the cosmic equilibrium, which included the social and political spheres (Assmann 1995a [1990]: 219; Baines 1995a: 12). The cosmic dimension of *maat* is expressively conveyed in its mythical embodiment as a solar daughter and 'Eye' (that is, disc) of the sun god (Assmann 1995a [1990]: 160).

When, according to myth, the creator Atum brought about the 'first occasion' (*sef tefy*) of sunrise, he set into motion the cyclical equilibrium of the Egyptian cosmos, with its eternal sequence of interchanging day and night, of the waxing and waning of the moon and the months, of the agricultural seasons – dependent on the flooding and receding of the Nile – and of the reigns of kings, who counted their regnal years from the date of their own accession to the throne (Derchain 1975/76; Assmann 1995a [1990]: 174–95). This last practice points to the underlying idea that each new rule represented a 're-creation' of the status quo, and relates to a dogma of kingship that demanded of the office holder a continuous struggle against the threats to the existing order. Thus, the king would repel *isfet*, 'chaos, disorder, the untoward' (Derchain 1965: 24–8; Assmann 1995a [1990]: 213–22), which, depending on the context, could be mythically embodied in either the snake-demon Apophis, who threatened the course of the solar barque across the sky, the god Seth and his 'gang' of followers, who – among other things – stood for the illegitimate assumption of rule, or simply all the 'enemies of Egypt', internal or external. In defeating *isfet*, the king would maintain *maat* on a variety of levels, including the sphere of everyday life, where it affected the 'correct' way of life according to societal norms, social solidarity and – for the king – responsible government.

Accordingly, one of the most prominent artistic motifs in Egyptian royal iconography from the earliest periods onwards – predating even the time of the supposed unifier of the country – is the representation of the king smiting his enemies (Figure 20.1), generally with a stone mace, a motif that remained part of the royal iconographic repertoire until the very last days of pharaonic culture (Hall 1986).

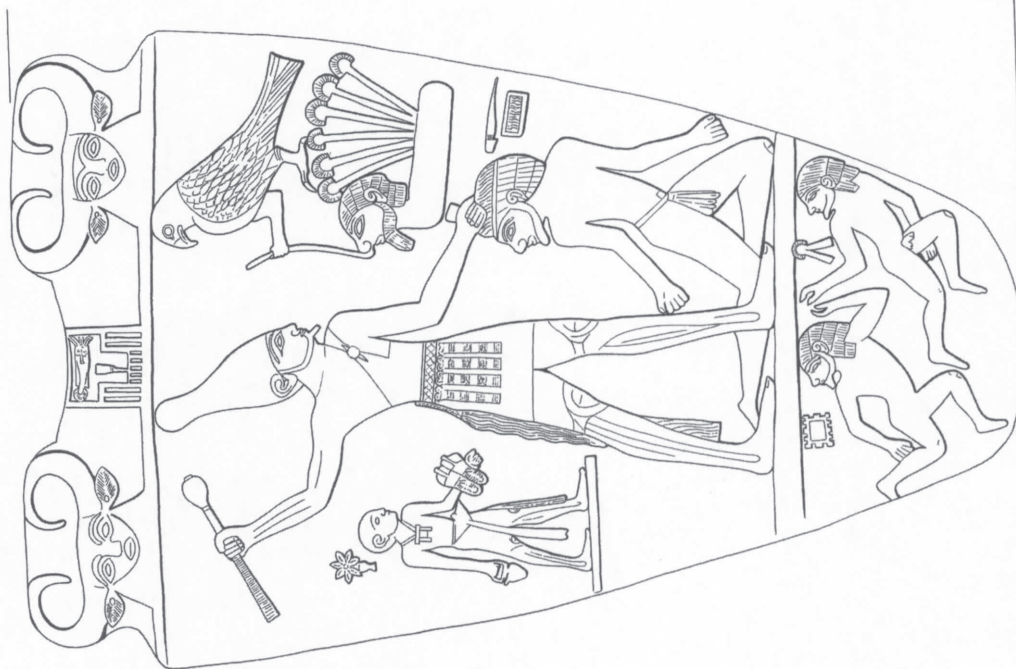


Figure 20.1 Narmer, wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt, smites a captive enemy, from the Narmer Palette, 1st Dynasty (Egyptian Museum, Cairo JE 32169/CG 14716) (from Kemp 1989b: fig. 12).

A theological treatise first attested in the New Kingdom, but potentially going back to the Middle Kingdom, states that the king was placed on earth by the solar creator expressly in order to maintain *maat* and defeat *isfet*: 'Ra has placed King NN on the earth of the living for ever and eternity, judging the people, satisfying the gods, bringing about Maat, and defeating Isfet' (Assmann 1970: 22; English translation in Assmann 1995b: 19–21).

Accordingly, *maat* was under threat whenever a king died, and every ruler had to re-found its order, which also involved the ritual re-unification of the Two Lands (Millet 1990) (Figure 20.2). On the late Old Kingdom Palermo Stone, a ceremony

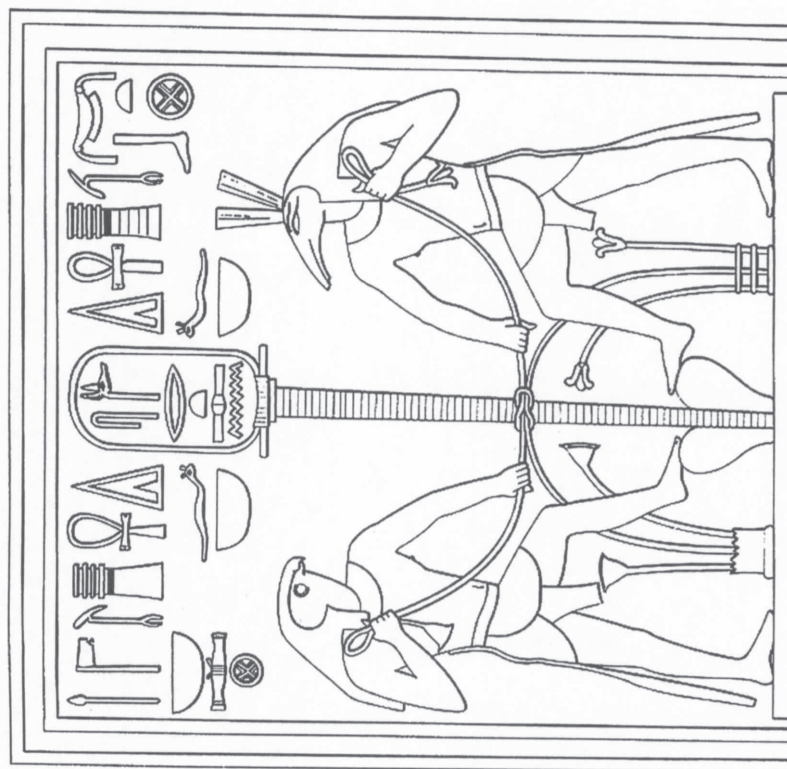


Figure 20.2 Symbolic expression of the 'unification of the Two Lands' on the throne-base of a statue of Senusret I from his mortuary temple at Lisht, 12th Dynasty (Egyptian Museum, Cairo JE 31139/CG 414). The gods Horus (left) and Seth (right), as representatives of the 'Two Lands', tie the heraldic plants of Upper and Lower Egypt, the 'lily' and papyrus, to the Egyptian hieroglyph *sema*, meaning 'to unite'. The group is topped by the birth name of Senusret I, and can be read as 'Senusret is the unifier of the Two Lands' (from Kemp 1989b: fig. 6).

of 'uniting Upper and Lower Egypt' appears at the beginning of every new reign (von Beckerath 1997: 14–15 with fig. 3). Representations and accounts of the king's battles against Egypt's external enemies – involving the iconography of smiting discussed above – were placed on the outer walls of temples, where they would serve a dual purpose: they reinforced to the general population the image and myth of the pharaoh as preserver of *maat* and Egypt, and represented, at the same time, a symbolic protective shield against all threats to the order of the cosmos – an image of which every Egyptian temple represented (Bell 1997: 132–3; most expressly in the Greco-Roman Periods: Finnestad 1985; 1997: 203–26).

While the origin of the smiting motif may be sought in actual historical battles, the image quickly became canonized. Many new rulers went to battle at the onset of their reign, but even the ones who did not were represented in the pose of smiting the enemies of Egypt and *maat*. To the Egyptian, eternally recurring ritual truth superseded an – unpredictable and unique – historical one (Hornung 1966; 1992: 147–64). The most famous illustration of this world-view can be found in the Egyptian accounts of the battle of Kadesh against the Hittites, from which the Egyptian army, led by Ramesses II, narrowly emerged intact (Murnane 1995b: 208–15; Silverman 1995: 51–2). We know from the diplomatic correspondence kept in the Hittite archives of the time that the conflict ended – after many years – in a truce. However, the pictorial Egyptian sources in particular present their pharaoh as victorious and divine, just as the ideology of kingship by *maat* demanded.

A further ritual guarantee of the maintenance of *maat* is attested from the First Intermediate Period onwards, when the concept of 'Raising *maat* to the Great God, the Lord of Heaven' appears in texts. From the later 18th Dynasty onwards, this is expressed iconographically in the king offering a figure of its embodying goddess to the gods (Teeter 1997). Even later, and most prominently in the Ramesside Period, the king would offer his own name (usually) containing the element '*maat*' to the head of the pantheon (Teeter 1997: 34).

THE KING AND THE GODS

In addition to the ideological implications, the practice of offering *maat* underlines the reciprocal nature of the relationship between king and gods. While text and images inform us that the gods 'bestow' the kingship upon the reigning pharaoh, 'placing' him on the 'throne of Horus of the living', conferring 'the entire world' to his hands and/or setting the foreign countries under his feet, the king repays this favour and prerogative by showing himself to be a responsible ruler who governs 'with' or 'in' *maat*, symbolically represented by the figure of the deified concept that he offers to the gods in his role of performer of their cults (see below).

This closely intertwined relationship of king and gods could be expressed in a number of other ways. Most poignantly, it finds illustration in the iconographic motif of king and god embracing (Figure 20.3), or engaged in similar poses of affectionate interaction.

Innumerable representations throughout the temples of Egypt depict the king in this pose, or holding hands with a deity. Where the theme is specifically the relationship with goddesses, he may be seated on the deity's lap, or nursing from her breast



Figure 20.3 Senusret I embraces Amun-Ra, from the White Chapel in the temple of Karnak, 12th Dynasty (photo P. Brand).

(Leclant 1960). In most scenes, moreover, the deity extends the hieroglyphic sign for 'life' (*ankh*) to the nose of the king.

These iconographic motifs reflect an important topic in the ideology of Egyptian kingship, which was also one of the foundations of the centralized state: the divine descent of the Egyptian ruler and his being fashioned in the gods' image, or as their 'likeness' (Hornung 1982b: 138–9; Silverman 1991: 65–6). The latter is made explicit in texts at least from the early Middle Kingdom onwards – for example, in the *Instruction of Amenemhat*¹ – and found a particularly poignant expression in Tutankhamun's birth name, which literally translates as 'Living image of Amun'.

Horus on earth

In addition to having been placed on the throne by the gods, and being their descendant, the Egyptian king was believed to be the embodiment of divine power on earth – an ideology that seems to have been formulated by Upper Egyptian rulers some time during the Naqada II period (Wilkinson 1999: 33–4). Some Egyptian king-lists, such as the Royal Canon of Turin, place a generation of gods before the first human kings of Egypt. They are succeeded by a group of 'spirits' (the Predynastic rulers), followed by the legendary Meni/Menes (Baines 1995a: 14–15; von Beckerath 1997: 20). As far as the fragmentary papyrus can be reconstructed, it appears that it is the falcon god Horus (of Hierakonpolis) who was thought to have been the last divine king on earth (Gardiner 1959: pl. I). This corresponds to the Heliopolitan myth of creation, where the creator god set in motion the conception of a divine line of kings, ending with Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris (Lesko 1991: 90–4). With the ascent of Horus to the throne, his father Osiris became the deceased god-king of the Netherworld.

From the earliest periods, the Egyptian king was identified with this falcon-god, and thus with the last divine ruler on earth. This is evident from the oldest of Egyptian royal titles – attested already in the late Predynastic Period – the Horus name (Quirke 1990b: 22–3; Wilkinson 1999: 201–3). This title – adopted upon accession – was written within a so-called *sewkh*, a hieroglyph of the palace façade constructed in the niche-architecture typical of the late Pre- and Early Dynastic Periods, and surmounted by a squatting falcon, symbol and embodiment of Horus (Barta 1990; Figure 20.9). In this way, the title also alluded to the fact that the king was 'hidden' in (and thus represented by) the palace, just as the gods were hidden in their temples (Hornung 1982b: 139). The modern term used for the Egyptian king – Pharaoh – derives from the Egyptian title *per-aa*, literally 'Great House/Estate', in other words 'Palace'. The palace separated the ruler from the people – in the same way that a flagpole demarcated the sacred, and thus segregated and inaccessible, area of temples, and evolved into the Egyptian hieroglyph for 'god', *netjer* (Baines 1995b: 122–3).

The identity of the king and Horus could be expressed in various ways. Among the most striking are items of feathered dress – an actual example survives from the tomb of Tutankhamun (Egyptian Museum Cairo JE 62627; see, e.g., Saleh and Sourouzian 1986: 191) – and depictions of the ruler as half falcon, half man (Figure 20.4). Representations of the king with a falcon either squatting on the back of his throne, or attached to the back of his head/crown in a protective gesture (spread wings) seem to relate to the personal protection of the king by this god. Texts, moreover,

inform us that the king was sitting on the 'throne of Horus of the living', and one of the epithets used to refer to the incumbent to the throne was 'falcon in the nest'.

THE FIVE-FOLD TITULARY – ASPECTS OF KINGSHIP

The king's Horus name was soon augmented by other royal titles that reflected his relationship with the gods. The first to appear was the *nisut-bity* title (Quirke 1990b: 23–4; Wilkinson 1999: 205–7). This expressed the other central element of Egyptian royal ideology, its duality. The first use of this title dates to the middle of the 1st Dynasty, in the reign of Den, whose 'accession' (*khat nisut bity*) is recorded on the Palermo Stone. The title literally translates as 'He of the sedge and the bee' and thus refers explicitly to the dual nature of the kingship, first and foremost over the two geographical units of Upper and Lower Egypt. It is thus that Greek texts translate this title, and Egyptian sources, too, attest to such a geographical significance. Egyptology has traditionally translated it in the same way, as 'King of Upper and Lower Egypt', but the vaguer 'Dual King' has become fashionable in recent years, since other 'dual' royal aspects, such as a human/divine nature, can also be included under such a translation. *Nisut* was also the generic term used to refer to the king in texts (the Egyptian word for the office of kingship, *nevyt*, is derived from it), while *bity* alone was more prominent in administrative contexts.

From the late 3rd Dynasty onwards, the *nisut-bity* title appeared enclosed in a ring, the so-called cartouche (cf. Figure 20.2), as was the later 'Son of Ra' name (see below). The cartouche's Egyptian designation, *shen*, expresses its protective function, while its form of a never-ending circle (or oval) reflects a symbolism of everlastingness.

With the advent of the *nisut-bity* title, which was prefixed to the king's throne name (or *prenomen*), his role in 'binding together' (the two halves of) Egypt and the cosmos moved into the centre of Egyptian royal ideology. The title was of great political and theological significance, as changes to the *nisut-bity* name of certain rulers attest. Thus Mentuhotep II changed his name from Nebhepetra to Sematawy, 'Uniter of the Two Lands', after the recentralization of the state in the middle of the 11th Dynasty (Gestermann 1987). Most *nisut-bity* names were compounded with the element Ra, attesting to the importance of the sun god for kingship and state.

Another expression of the king's dual nature, firmly attested from the reign of Semerkhet (second half of the 1st Dynasty) onwards,² was the *nebt* title, 'The Two Ladies' – a reference to the king's protection by, and descent from, the two goddesses embodied in the Double Crown of the Egyptian ruler, the vulture Nekhbet of Elkab and the serpent Wadjet of Buto (Baines 1995b: 127; Wilkinson 1999: 203–5). Moreover, the latter was symbolically present in the uraeus serpent adorning the king's forehead. In texts the king could appear as the son of these deities, and images showed him nursed by them.

A further, if much later, important step in the development of the full titulary was taken with Djedefra's (early 4th Dynasty) assumption of the *sa-Ra*, 'Son of Ra' title, which was prefixed to the birth-name (or *nomen*) of the ruler (Quirke 1990b: 25). With it, the king's divine descent from the (theologically increasingly important) solar and creator god became firmly entrenched in Egyptian royal ideology. According to Egyptian patrilineal conventions of inheritance, he was thus a legitimate ruler.

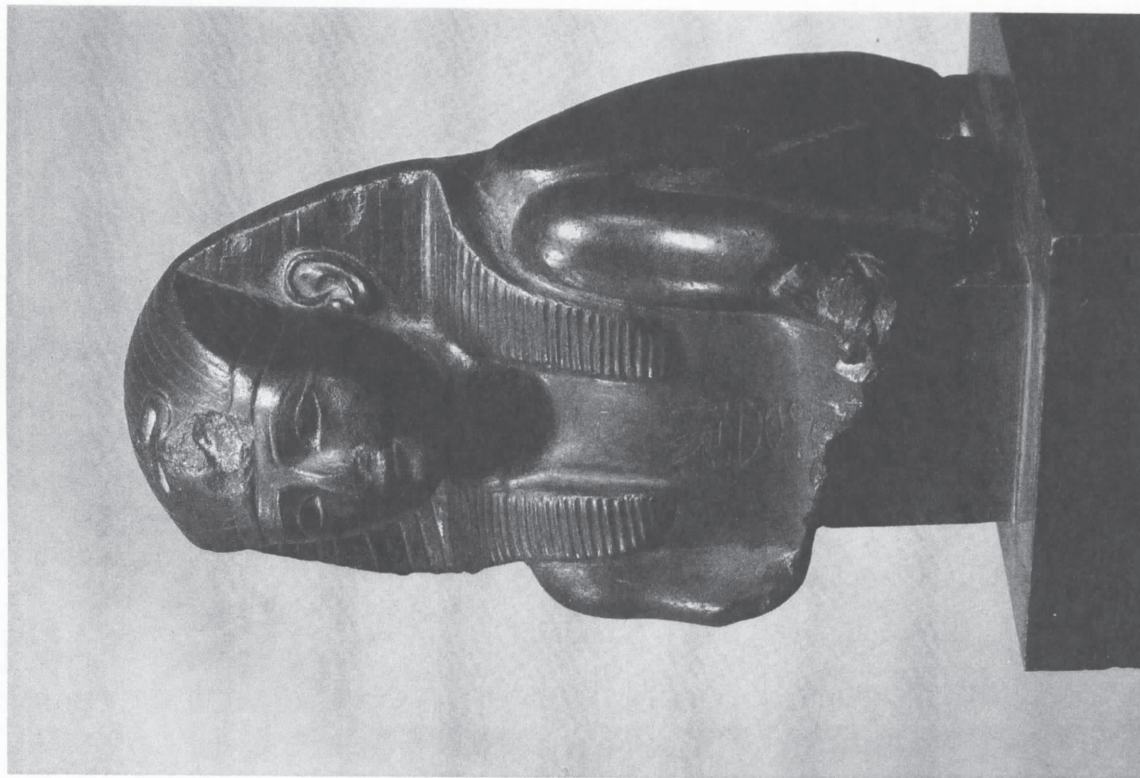


Figure 20.4 An 18th Dynasty king as a falcon (Louvre E 5351) (Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY).

However, it has been argued that we may also see a first step away from the image of the fully divine king, to one whose divinity was, in its explicit dependence on the gods, limited (Hornung 1982b: 141–2, 191–2). This circumscribed divinity of the king may also have found expression in a further common epithet, *netjer neter*, 'the perfect(ed) god' (Silverman 1991: 65; Baines 1995a: 9), which may imply a (ritually) 'acquired divinity'.

Be that as it may, the significance of the sun god Ra for Egyptian royal ideology is omnipresent in the sources from this time onwards: not only was the king believed to be his son, he was also his 'representative' (*sety*) on earth – an epithet he shared with gods such as the lunar Thoth (as the night time ruler of the sky), and the creator and patron of craftsmen Pthah (Goebis, in press: chapters 2.1.1; 4). The king's rule was said to be 'like that of Ra, forever', and his crowns were those 'of Ra on the first occasion (of creation)'. These formulaic statements were retained throughout Egyptian history, even when, from the Middle Kingdom onwards, Amun(-Ra) emerged as the new head of the pantheon and, later, 'king of gods', and the ruler's legitimacy increasingly derived from him.

Finally, under Djedefra's successor Khafra, a further title became an established part of the titulary, which remains obscure to this day: the (Horus of) Gold Name (*Hor nbw*) (Wilkinson 1999: 207–8). The gold sign, without the Horus falcon, had appeared in conjunction with royal names from the time of Djoser onwards (as seen on the Palermo Stone). The title may bear some relationship with the early cultic centre of the god Seth, Nebu/Ombos, and some scholars maintain that the squatting Horus falcon on top of the sign for Ombos expressed the final victory of Horus over Seth. Others have suggested that it emphasizes the divine nature of the king, since the flesh of gods was believed to be golden (Quirke 1990b: 11).

MYTHS OF KINGSHIP

Several of the royal titles discussed above make references to gods of Egyptian myth with whom the king wished to associate himself. As stated, these mythical associations, representing the ruler as son, representative and embodiment of gods on earth, served to legitimize his claim to the throne.

Thus, besides being the Son of (Amun-)Ra, the king's identification with Horus made him at the same time the son of Osiris and Isis, and the competitor of his uncle Seth, who was also contending for the throne. Snippets of this myth are attested from the Pyramid Texts onwards, but the fullest account is found on the Ramesside Papyrus Chester-Beatty I, which has Horus and Seth battling over their claim to the throne in various ways and guises, until Horus finally triumphs in the court of the Lord of All (Griffiths 1960; Broeze 1996). While one meaning of this myth is clearly the victory of *maat* over *isfet*, with Seth representing the latter, a subsidiary significance is the emphasis on legitimate patrilinear succession. Several accessions to the throne by royal brothers are attested throughout Egyptian history, but the preferred means of inheritance was from father to son, as the myth of Horus and Seth makes emphatically clear: Seth is tricked by Isis into saying 'Shall one give the cattle (here symbolizing the inheritance of the kingship) to the stranger while the man's son is here?' (e.g. Lichtheim 1976: 217).

The *Contendings of Horus and Seth* further serves to illustrate the fate of the deceased king, who was identified with Osiris (among other gods) from the Pyramid Texts

onwards. Osiris became the ruler of the Netherworld – the myth accords him a full royal titulary – and judge of the dead. As such he would – most explicitly from the New Kingdom onwards – merge with the sun god Ra when the latter entered the Netherworld at sunset, and thus be cyclically, and eternally, reborn (Hornung 1982b: 93–5).

This solar-osirian concept finds expression in both the funerary architecture and literature of Egypt: the pyramids, preferred funerary monuments of kings in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, are commonly accepted to represent replicas of the primeval mound, the location of the first sunrise out of the aquatic pre-creation universe, and 'stairways' to the heavens, as some of the texts found in the pyramids from the late 5th Dynasty onwards suggest (e.g. Lehner 1997: 34–5). Boat-burials found near several pyramids relate to the deceased king's wish to remain mobile in the afterlife, just as the sun and stellar gods journey across the heavens in boats. The rock-cut tombs of the New Kingdom with their descending corridors represent the path of the setting sun into the Netherworld, to the place where the union with Osiris took place every night. The numerous Underworld Books ornamenting their walls attest to this belief (Hornung 1990b).

Unsurprisingly, new steps in the mythical ideology of kingship were often taken by rulers whose claim to the throne was not undisputed. The most famous myth of royal legitimization is that of the Divine Birth, which, in its canonized form, is first attested under Hatshepsut of the 18th Dynasty (Brunner 1964; Silverman 1995: 70; Assmann 2004). It is obvious that this pharaoh, both by virtue of her gender and her transcending the role assigned to her by state and tradition – as regent for her nephew Thutmose III – had a particular need to emphasize the legitimacy of her claim to the throne. Images and texts relating to the conception of the ruling king by Amun-Ra, king of gods, and the queen of the predecessor are recorded on the walls of Hatshepsut's funerary temple at Deir el-Bahri and became an established part of the royal dogma from this time onwards (Figure 20.5). However, as stated, virtually all pharaohs, from the Old Kingdom onwards, found textual and iconographic means of representing themselves as 'bodily sons' of the gods. A narrative surrounding the divine conception of the first three kings of the 5th Dynasty by Ra and his high priest's wife appears already in the late Middle Kingdom (Papyrus Westcar = Papyrus Berlin 3033; for a translation see Parkinson 1997: 116–19), and may have been written to legitimize the succession of rulers in the mid-13th Dynasty.

Even the 'monotheist' Akhenaten, while aiming to abandon all myths in favour of a single divine concept of the Aten, still mobilized some very old mythical constellations in order to enhance his claim to the throne. He declared himself the sole son of his god, and his *ka* and representative on earth (Silverman 1995: 74–9), while presenting himself – in both text and image – as Shu, the firstborn son of the Heliopolitan creator god Atum. Certain representations indicate that his queen, Nefertiti, could be equated with Shu's twin sister Tefnut/Maat. In this way, the Amarna monarchs associated themselves with a generation of gods far older than the traditional royal deities.

THE RITUAL KING

A further 'myth' of kingship can be discerned in the representation of the reigning monarch as the sole performer of all cults throughout the land, which was also

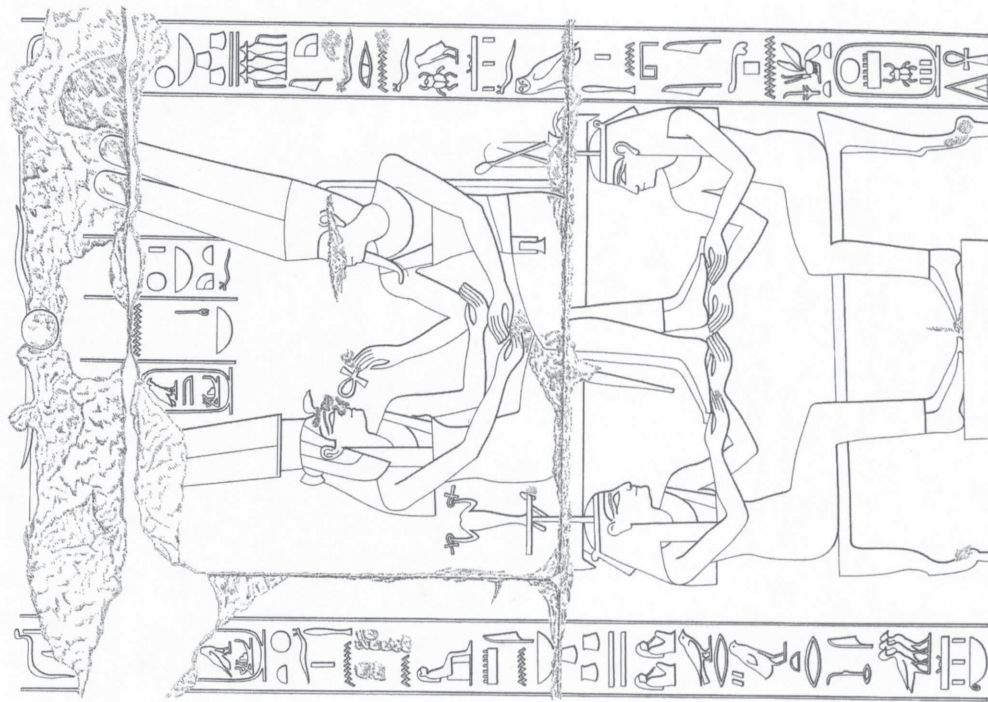


Figure 20.5 The god Amun-Ra and queen Mutemwiya conceive king Amenhotep III in a scene from his divine birth cycle at Luxor Temple (from Kemp 1989b: fig. 70).

expressed in his epithet *neb ʿry (i)khet*, 'lord of performing the rituals'. In reality, the rituals would have been performed by priests, and references in documents such as the above-cited Papyrus Westcar, which emphasizes the fact that 'His Majesty [king Nebka of the 3rd Dynasty] himself did the performance of the rite', suggest that this was a rather exceptional occurrence. Kingship ideology, however, made the ruler the mediator between gods and men, and as such he was represented as performing the rituals for the gods on the walls of all temples (Traunecker 2002). In return for his services and the maintenance of *maat*, the gods confirmed the king in his office and presented him with a long and prosperous reign. This reciprocal ritual relationship between king and gods has been labelled with the Latin phrase *do ut des* ('I give so that you may give') by Egyptologists.

As stated, ritual was of paramount importance for the Egyptian world-view and its guarantor, the king. In ritual, the world became ordered, knowable and controllable. Moreover, it allowed its human actors to assume the roles of gods, and the priests to assume the role of the king. As his titles suggest, the king essentially fulfilled the role of the creator and king of gods, (Amun-)Ra, on earth, while being – at the same time – Horus, his descendant. Hence, many of the rituals attested from Egypt concern the maintenance and renewal of the cosmos.

Rituals of victory, for example, are closely related to the iconographic motif of the king smiting his enemies, discussed above (Serrano 2002: 79–91). In them, the pharaoh symbolically destroyed the forces of chaos, who could appear in the form of human enemies (but might be represented by simple pots of red clay that would be broken), hippopotami (as in part of the myth of Horus enacted annually in the temple of Edfu) or other wild animals, such as wild bulls, lions or other game. Ritual hunts, in particular, provided a good basis for emphasizing the king's physical strength, and – from the mid-18th Dynasty – this aspect of the royal persona became increasingly important (Redford 1995: 157–84). Thus, Amenhotep II informs us at length about his physical exploits in the areas of sport and warfare, claiming to have rowed at the stern of a boat with 200 men for 'three miles ... without interrupting his stroke', and to have shot arrows from his moving chariot at four targets of copper in succession, 'so that it [each arrow] came out of it [each target] and dropped to the ground' (Lichtheim 1976: 42).

A further prominent set of rituals decorating the walls of temples and ritual objects relates to the foundation of temples or other institutions (e.g. Wilkinson 1999: 222, 305–6; Gundlach 2001: 368). Every foundation was equated with the moment of the first solar creation (Reymond 1969), and the king assumed the role of the creator god in this context. Early examples of such, and related rituals, appear already on late Predynastic monuments such as the Scorpion macehead (Figure 20.6).

A third set of rituals, finally, represented the king as facilitating the cyclical renewal of the cosmos. Examples of these include the celebrations surrounding the ritual death and resurrection of Osiris at Abydos (Schäfer 1904), the raising of the *djed*-pillar, and the festival of Sokar (Gaballa and Kitchen 1969; Gaïnndorge-Hérel 1994; Wilkinson 1999: 301–2).

In addition to perpetuating the link between king and gods, other important rituals established and defined the relationship between the king and his subjects, and – in particular – the elite. The Palermo Stone records both royal visits to cultic installations, as well as the *shemes-Hor*, 'the following of Horus', which occurred every



Figure 20.6 'King Scorpion' ritually founds, or opens, what is believed to be an irrigation canal, Scorpion macehead, late Predynastic Period (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford E 3632).

two years and is generally believed to have been a royal tour through the kingdom for the purpose of inspection, tax-collection, and – potentially – the exercising of judicial authority (Baines 1995b: 126; Wilkinson 1999: 220–1).

The famous Middle Kingdom tale of the courtier Sinuhe, who fled Egypt to live in Syria but was welcomed back to the Egyptian court at the end of his life, provides some insight into the procedures at court during a royal audience. In this tale, Sinuhe is received at the palace portals, guided to the audience chamber, and has to prostrate himself in front of the enthroned Senusret I, whom the text calls a 'god'. Having been raised up, the queen and royal princesses, in performing a ritual 'pacification' of the – potentially enraged – king, function as intermediaries between king and courtier (Parkinson 1997: 40–1), much as, in temple reliefs, goddesses are often shown as facilitators in the interaction between god and king.

Many of the best surviving representations relating to the architecture of, and life in, Egyptian royal palaces date to the Amarna Period. One of the frequently depicted themes is the appearance of the king to the people/elite at a so-called 'window of appearance', which, ornamented with friezes of fiery uraeus-snakes, underscored the radiantly divine appearance of the king in his regalia. On these occasions he could reward deserving members of the administration or army with symbolic and other gifts – the so-called 'gold of honour' is particularly well attested (e.g. Ertman 1972; Kemp 1989b: 287–9) (Figure 20.7).

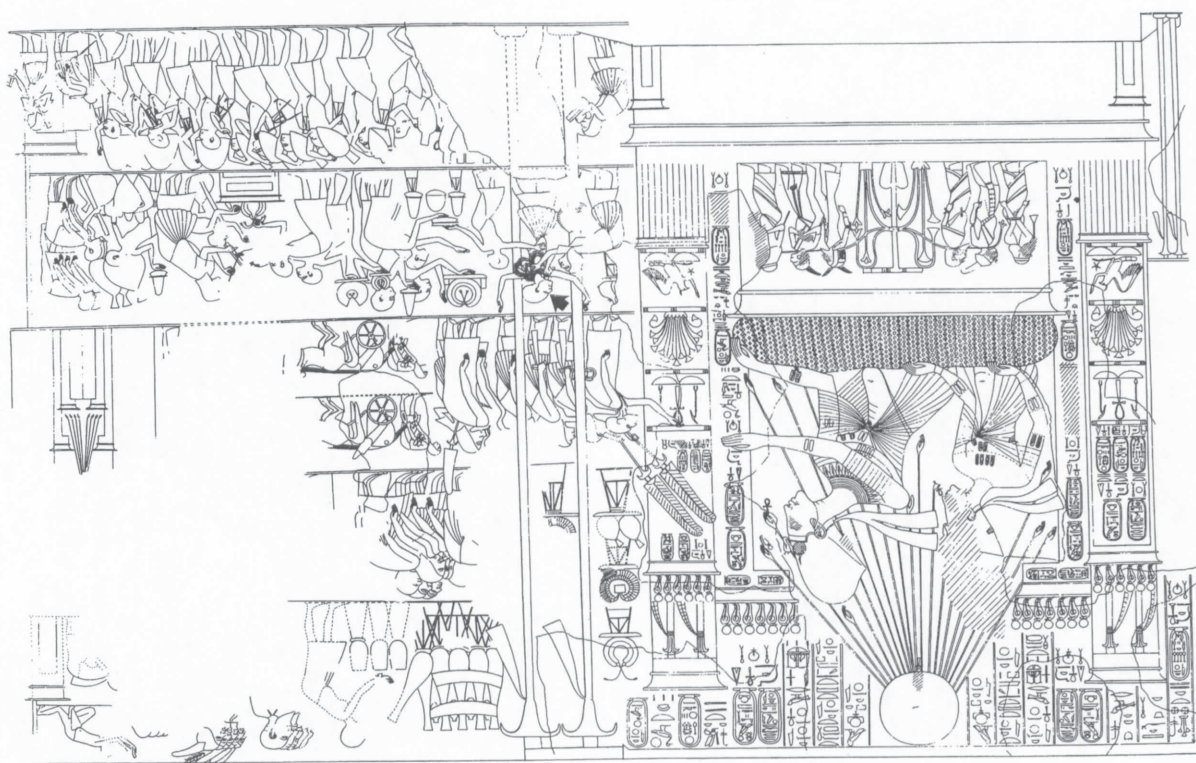


Figure 20.7 Akhenaten at the 'window of appearance' in one of his palaces bestows the gold of honour on a loyal official (from Kemp 1989b: fig. 92).

On these occasions, the king could also receive foreign delegations and be presented with prisoners of war (Bleiberg 1984; Gordon 2001: 547). They would – ritually – acclaim the Egyptian king and accept his superiority over all other rulers, and a number of prisoners of war could be ‘sacrificed’ in honour of the gods at certain times. The practice is in line with the official view of non-Egyptians as the eternal enemy and antithesis of the Egyptian world order, which had to be eternally subdued by the ruling king. The contemporary diplomatic correspondence, by contrast, often tells a very different story (examples in Moran 1992).

Rituals of accession and royal paraphernalia

The rituals most significant for the office holder himself were those that related to his accession to the throne. As stated, royal ideology held that the king was both conceived and crowned by the head of the pantheon. Already in the Coffin Texts, the ‘ornaments of Geb’, and thus of kingship, are presented to Horus by the solar creator Atum. Key scenes of the coronation ritual are found on the walls of all Egyptian temples, but the exact sequence of events remains unknown to this day. Papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.50, dating to the fifth or fourth century BC, describes a ritual for the confirmation of the kingship on the occasion of the New Year’s celebrations, and we can assume that the rituals surrounding the actual accession to the throne would have been similar (J.-C. Goyon 1974). The steps attested are the following: waking, leaving the palace, purification, entering the temple, coronation, royal induction, nursing by goddesses, enthronement and announcing the titulary.

It is yet again Hatshepsut who has left us the most explicit description of her coronation, in a sequence of scenes on the outside walls of her ‘Red Chapel’ in the temple at Karnak (Figure 20.8) (Lacau and Chevrier 1977).

It remains disputed to this day if the actual ritual coronation would have involved priests in the role of the crowning deities, and if there were, indeed, as many steps as Hatshepsut depicts. The only ‘historical’ account of a coronation appears on the Rosetta Stone and dates to the Ptolemaic Period (196 BC). There, Ptolemy V is simply said to have worn the Double Crown of Upper and Lower Egypt (see below) during his ceremonies of accession: ‘His Majesty appeared in glory in it in Hatkaprah [Memphis] when every ritual of the royal installation in the temple was performed for him after he had assumed his supreme office. . .’ (after Quirke and Andrews 1988: 21).

The only crowns bestowed in the above-cited Papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.50 are the *sehed*-band and the *uweret*, and the Double Crown which is said to be represented here by a white *sheep*-band (J.-C. Goyon 1974: 55). However, the multiplicity of Egyptian crowns is borne out by the iconographic record, and relates to the multi-part character of the royal titulary: the king, like the sun god, united in himself a variety of aspects. Thus Thutmose III asserts in his coronation inscription: ‘I was elevated in dignity because of the crowns, which are on his [Ra’s] head; his uraeus was fixed on my head . . . he has fixed my crowns (for me) and assembled my royal names for me’ (Sethe 1905: 160.1–3).

In receiving the various crowns, the king underwent a process of deification during which he was externally likened to Ra (Goebis, in press). This transformation was enhanced by the assumption of other multicoloured, and in particular golden and

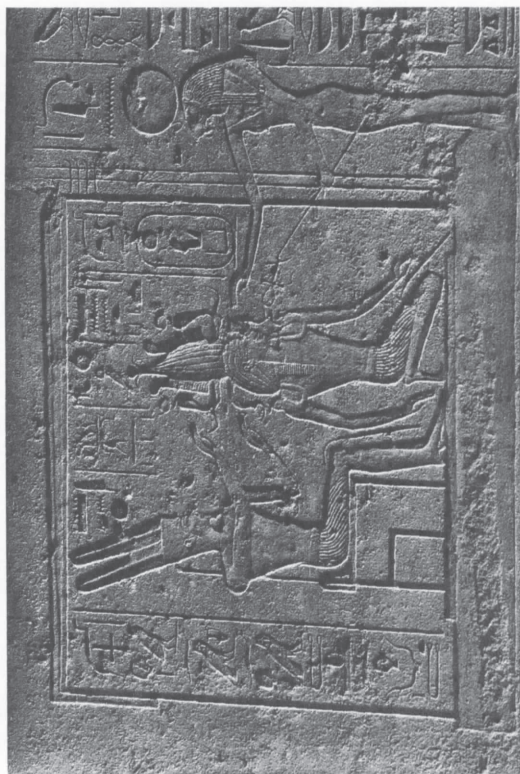


Figure 20.8 Hatshepsut, wearing the oldest attested royal dress – a pleated *shendyt*-kilt with bull's tail and a broad collar – is crowned by Amun-Ra with a combination of the *nemes*-headress and the *Atef*-crown. The accompanying text refers to the latter as the '*Atefu*-crown of Amun-Ra'. The numerous uraei adorning the crown imbue it, and its wearer, with fiery luminosity (photo P. Brand).

silver, paraphernalia, such as collars, bracelets, anklets, staffs and sceptres, that made him appear as the radiant 'god' that kingship ideology professed him to be. In addition, the height of many of the Egyptian crowns pointed toward the heavenly or divine. In Hatshepsut's coronation, one text describes her crown as 'piercing the sky'. Adornment with the fiery uraeus, embodying the solar eye, as well as with solar or stellar discs, whose number proliferated from the later New Kingdom onwards, added yet more fiery radiance (Figure 20.8).

The sequence of crowns bestowed on Hatshepsut in her Red Chapel comprises (some blocks are destroyed) the *nemes* $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$; the white or golden *khat* or *afnet* $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$; the Blue Crown $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$ and cap (*khepresh*); the *ibes*-wig and *sehed*-headband with uraeus $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$; the Red Crown $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$ (*desret*, *net*, *mekhus*, *bit(it)*); the White Crown $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$ (*bedjet*, *shemas*; in some contexts *uweret*) (Figure 20.9); the Double Crown $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$ (*pa-sekheny*; *phenti*; *uweret*); the *Atef* $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$ and *hemhem* $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$; the *hemu* $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$, a combination of the Amun-crown base $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$ surmounted by a pair of falcon or ostrich feathers, and (usually) augmented by a pair of ram's horns and a solar disc (here standing in for the missing Double Feather Crown (*shuty*) $\overline{\text{𓏏}}$); and an otherwise unknown headdress, the Crown of Atum (see Goebis 2001 for brief descriptions of the individual crowns and their symbolism).

As stated, the multiplicity of Egyptian crowns relates to the many aspects of Egyptian kingship, of which the various crowns and other regalia were symbols. In particular, from the early New Kingdom onwards, combinations of crowns became more and more popular, with increasing numbers of ornaments — uraei, discs, horns — being added. All of these elements functioned as 'hieroglyphs' that could be combined into 'iconographic sentences', to be read by the viewer of the royal person or image. This interpretation is supported by several cases of royal representations with headaddresses that have been altered posthumously.

The *sed*-festival

A further festival of utmost importance for the kingship was the jubilee celebrated after 30 years of rule, and thereafter every three years — the *sed*-festival (Hornung and Staehelin 1974; Wilkinson 1999: 212–15). Its earliest attestations date to the early 1st Dynasty (Serrano 2002: 42–78, esp. 77). The festival represented a renewal of royal potency and a reaffirmation of the king's divine descent and legitimacy. Some of the ceremonies surrounding this occasion emphasized the physical strength of the king, who had to run around markers that symbolized Egypt/the created world (Figure 20.9) (actual examples survive in the funerary complex of Djoser's Step Pyramid), and drive cattle. The fact that royal rule had to be ritually re-asserted entails the possibility of a 'loss' of divinity and divine favour, and raises the question of how divine the Egyptian king really was.

KING OR GOD?

The multiplicity of Egyptian crowns, and the elaborate rituals associated with their assumption, suggest that the king's coronation was of utmost importance, and represented a rite of passage during which he was transformed into a divine being (Goebis, in press, esp. chapter 4). A certain 'degree' of divinity was claimed by incumbents when they alluded to having been 'kings in the egg'; that is, from birth, and the same ideology was expressed in the myth of the divine birth. However, the fully fledged 'divine' king only emerged after his accession, attesting to a perceived distinction between the 'person' of the king (*hm*) and his office, as expressed by the five-fold titulary and other epithets (Silverman 1995: 65). A particularly important role seems to have been played by the assumption of the royal *ka*. A person's *ka*, which has been translated as both 'double' and 'life-force', was created at the same time as the human body. In the case of the king, it could be carried behind him in the form of a human-headed and crowned standard during public appearances. From the time of Amenhotep III, Luxor Temple was the place where the new ruler merged with the *ka* of his royal ancestors during the Opet-festival (Bell 1985; 1997: 137–45). This, and all other ceremonies of deifying the king, can be interpreted as a means of uniting the concepts of a mortal and a divine ruler in one person (brief summaries by Silverman 1991: 58–72; Baines 1995a: 4–5; Traunecker 2002: 145).

However, it appears that the divinity of the king, however elaborately expressed in text and iconography, was still limited, as the above-cited epithet *neter-nefer* implies. An actual cult of living kings, modelled on that of the gods, only appeared in the 18th Dynasty and employed its own iconography, which included the

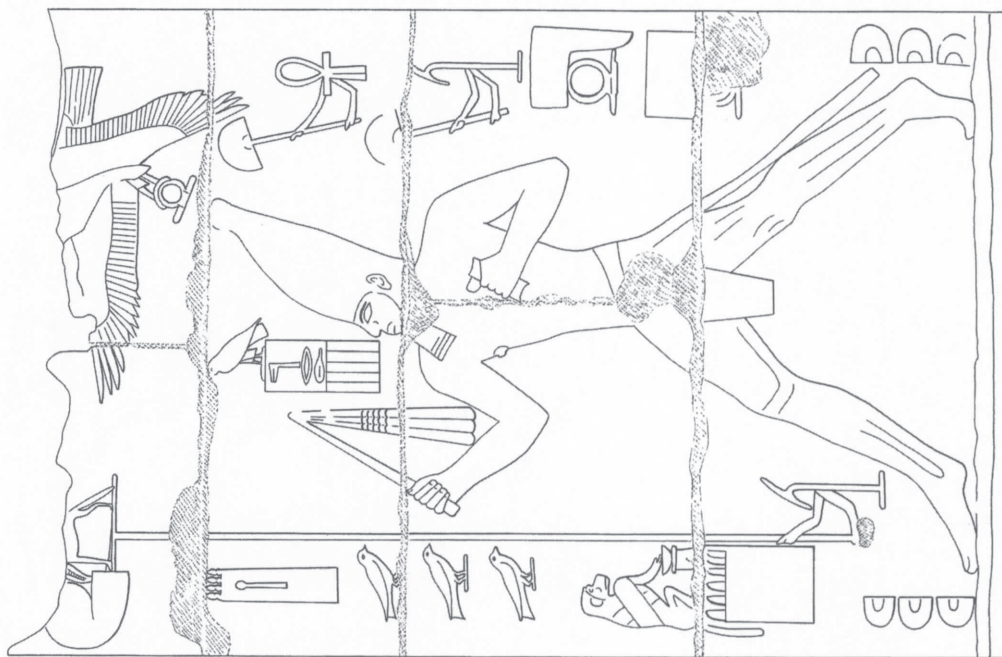


Figure 20.9 Djoser — his Horus name, Netjeri-khet, is inscribed in the *sebek* or 'palace façade' in front of his White Crown — during his ritual *sed*-festival runs around an area delimited by two sets of markers. The ritual served to confirm his territorial claim to Egypt (from Kemp 1989b: fig. 20).

so-called horn of Amun, a curved ram's horn fixed at the side of the ruler's head(dress), and full solar or lunar discs which could, at times, appear to 'hover' above the king's head (Bell 1985: 266–9) (Figure 20.10).

In summary, it is clear that the ideology of divine kingship was one of the prime motivating factors of the centralized Egyptian state. We can state with relative confidence that Egyptians participated in the gigantic royal building projects – of

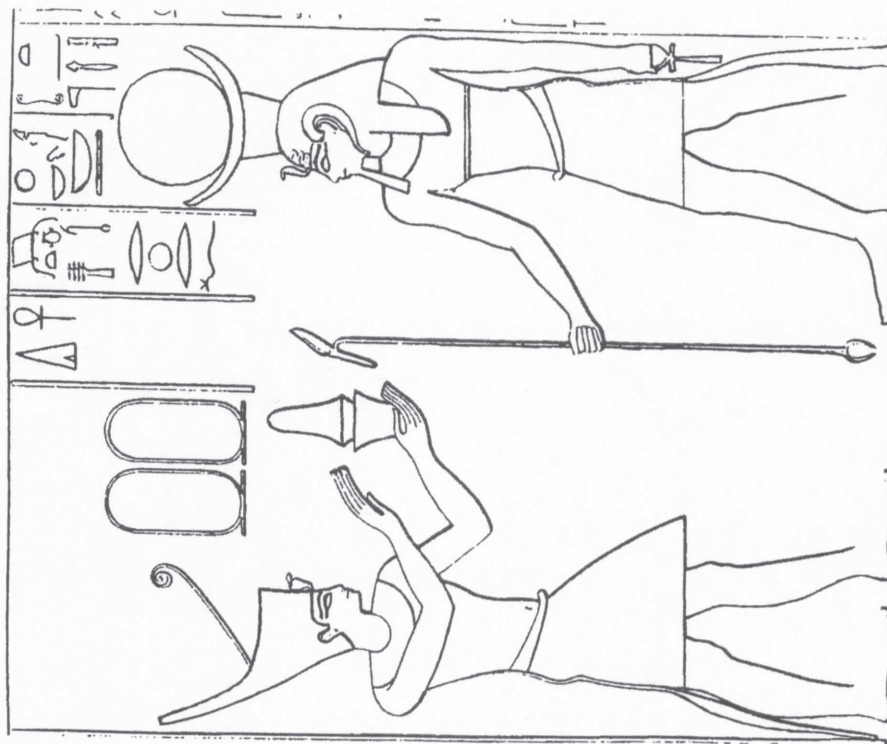


Figure 20.10 Amenhotep III venerates his own, deified, self in the temple at Soleb in Nubia. The deified king sports a *nemes*-headdress surmounted by a lunar disc and the ram's horn of Amun, and is carrying the *ankh* and *was*-sceptre characteristic of deities (after Wildung, D. (1977) *Egyptian Saints, Deification in Pharaonic Egypt*, fig. 4, New York: New York University Press).

tombs, temples and other structures – not only because they were forced to do so by an authoritative state apparatus, but because they truly believed that they were supporting the representative of the sun god on earth in maintaining the cosmic equilibrium, *maat*. As stated, this concept also entailed the preservation of the social hierarchy, in which the king, royal family and a relatively small and affluent elite dominated the mass of common Egyptians. Accordingly, the former groups had an obvious interest in propagating and augmenting the myths of divine kingship. The fact that the various dynasties of foreign rulers adopted Egyptian symbols and myths of the divine king serves to illustrate just how successful this system must have been.

Certainly, there were differing positions. From the Middle Kingdom, following the uprooting of social values in the First Intermediate Period, there is evidence that admits to the mortality and fallibility of the king. At the same time, authors were able to compose (sometimes rather disrespectful) stories about the actual (that is, non-ritual) lives of kings, even if these were generally fictional. A particularly striking example is the *Tale of King Neferkara* (probably Pepi II of the 6th Dynasty) and his homosexual relationship with one of his generals, Saseket (Parkinson 1997: 288–89). In the aftermath of the Amarna 'revolution' and later, during the rule of various foreign dynasties in Egypt, the Egyptian elite increasingly directed their attention and expectations to the gods, and away from the now conspicuously imperfect king, in a process that is mirrored in the diminished respect shown to the Egyptian king and court in neighbouring countries (Rösler-Köhler 1991; Baines 1995a: 33–42). The famous *Tale of Wenamun* (Lichtheim 1976: 224–30), set at the end of the 20th Dynasty, bears eloquent witness to the changed situation.

Formally, however, Egypt adhered to its time-honoured ideology of kingship until the end of pharaonic history, and beyond.

NOTES

- 1 There, reference is made to humans as the 'living images' of the king, implying, in turn, his likeness with the gods according to the Egyptian belief that men are images of the creator-god (e.g. Parkinson 1997: 206 M 1.9). The largely anthropomorphic representations of Egyptian gods – if often sporting animal heads – underscore this outward similarity.
- 2 Potentially as early as Aha, to judge from an ivory label from the tomb of queen Neithotep (the mother of Aha?). See, e.g., Spencer 1993: 63 fig. 42; discussion in Wilkinson 1999: 203–4.