

THESES OF PH. D. DISSERTATION

BALÁZS J. IRSAY-NAGY

DIE KRÖNUNG IN ÄGYPTEN

EINE UNTERSUCHUNG ÜBER DIE FRAGE DER RITUELLEN  
AUSGESTALTUNG DER THRONBESTEIGUNG IM ALTEN  
ÄGYPTEN NACH DEN ZEUGNISSEN DES ALTEN REICHES

Doctoral School of History,  
Doctoral Program of Egyptology

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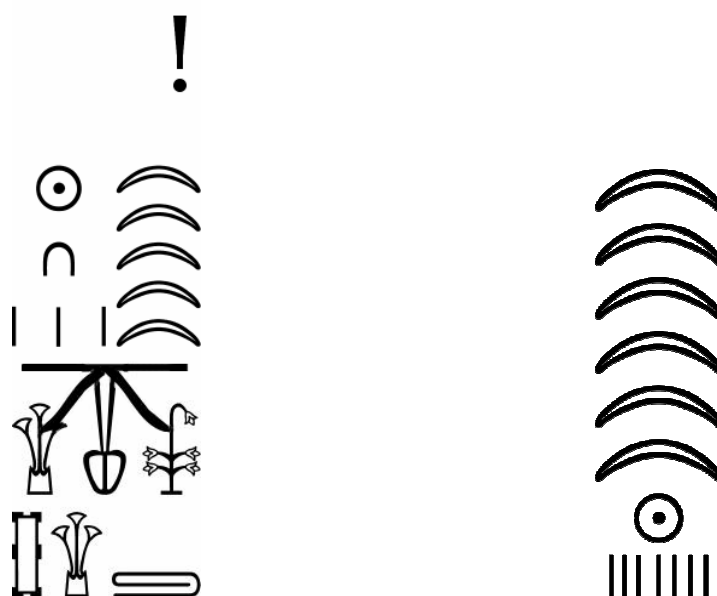
The enthronement of the kings of Ancient Egypt has always been imagined in the literature as similar to a coronation like the ones known from (Western) Europe. It should be stressed, however, that the ceremony of coronation in Western Europe evolved as the result of a long process, and in its final form, as it appeared in Hungary as well, it is a peculiarly and specifically local phenomenon. The Hellenistic kings bound their diadems themselves at the inception of their rule, as until Diocletian the Roman emperors used to don the purple at their proclamation themselves. A ceremony, at which the insignia are presented to the ruler, did not exist, e. g., in the Caliphate of the Umayyads and the Abbasids, or in China of the Ming era.

It is clear from an overview of the Egyptological literature that the authors concerned with this topic took the Western European (in most cases English or French) royal coronation as an ideal model, and their methodology has been an attempt to match those sources that would fit the expected coronation most of all. It can be observed in the studies written since 1900 that the authors, with a few exceptions, refer to only two sources over and over again, Queen Hatshepsut's Deir el-Bahri relief cycle (the *Légende de la jeunesse*) and King Horemheb's inscription on his statue in Turin (both Eighteenth Dynasty). However, both were composed in the context of extraordinary events: Hatshepsut came to the throne by-passing the normal order of succession, and Horemheb descended from a non-royal family.

The point of departure of this study is that the existence of a coronation of a Western European type is less probable in Ancient Egypt. To answer this question all sources reporting changes of reign in Egypt must be surveyed; as a first step the dissertation analyses the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom sources.

The most important type of source from these periods are the annals recording royal deeds, mostly ritual deeds, that have come to us in several copies. In addition to the well-known Palermo Stone further fragments are to be found in Cairo and London, from which only the so-called Main Cairo Fragment includes years with change of reign.

The earliest surviving change of reign occurs in the year that is (First Dynasty's second) King Aha's final, and at the same time King Djer's first regnal year (Palermo Stone, ro. 2:2 and 2:3):



The dissertation argues that in the time period belonging already to the reign of Djer the Stone marks five months, instead of the four read earlier.

In the case of the next to phrases (*sm3 Šm<sup>c</sup>w Mhw* and *phr h3 jnb*, traditionally translated as “The Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt” and “Circling the Wall”) the aim is clarify their exact meaning, with the following results:

1. The unification of the land, as a historical event

Archaeological research in the past few decades has shown that the event reconstructed earlier – the unification of Upper Egypt (the Nile Valley) and Lower Egypt (the Nile Delta) by Menes – could not have happened. There are though two distinct Neolithic cultures that had evolved during the 4th millennium BC in these two areas: the Naqada culture in the South and the Buto-Maadi culture in the Delta. However, the latter begins to lose its distinct material culture from the Naqada IIC period, long before the beginning of the First Dynasty (Naqada IIIC1 period), in a process of acculturation, and it becomes “Naqadanised”. For this very reason several researchers (Werner Kaiser, Günter Dreyer) interpreted the unification not as a moment in history, but as a long process that lasted several centuries.

A few years ago Joris van Wetering suggested a new approach: the unification did not mean the union of two cultures, but rather the union of the two kingdoms that evolved within the southern Naqada culture, Thinis and Hierakonpolis. Using this approach as a point of departure, the present dissertation argues for a model of three participants: the union of Buto in the Delta and the two southern kingdoms that took place within one reign meant that unification, through which dynastic Egypt was forged.

The basis of this model is an analysis of all sources from the period of the unification: the written testimonials from the royal tombs at Abydos, the occurrences of royal names at other sites, and the finds from the “Main Deposit” at Hierakonpolis. An important source is Gebel Tjauti rock drawing No. 1, for which the dissertation proposes a new interpretation: it is the pictorial record of the cooperation of Thinis and Hierakonpolis during the Naqada IIIA1 period.

## 2. The unification of the land as ritual?

The dissertation relies in this area of research on the results of an excellent study (GOEDICKE 1985), which, following an investigation into the textual occurrences of this expression, reaches the conclusion that the texts mention it always as a political concept, and they never refer to any ritual with the same name. Based on these results it is quite improbable that the “unification of Upper and Lower Egypt” would have signified a ceremony: the meaning of the expression is the inception of rule itself. According to all sources, political unification during the time of Narmer was an event linked strongly to the person of the king, and as a consequence the beginning of each new reign meant linking the reality of the unification to a new person.

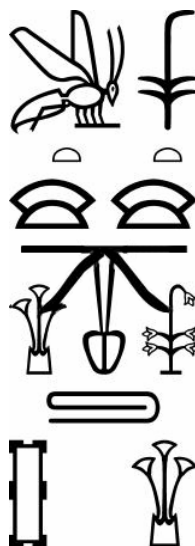
## 3. “Circling the wall”

Using a grammatical-lexical analysis the dissertation shows that the above translation is incorrect; it proposes the meaning “round-trip behind the wall” instead. The same expression is used to denote one element of the Sokar festival, the funeral procession of the god, known since the Old Kingdom, but first described in detail in New

Kingdom sources. Since at the begin of Djer's reign the date of the Sokar festival has already passed, the dissertation suggests to interpret the expression as the funeral of the royal predecessor. A king's burial must have been an extraordinary event, and it would be rather surprising, if the annals would not refer to it at all. At the same time, the expression is euphemistic, which is to be expected from the appellation of a ritual connected with many taboos.

According to the surviving entries of the following inceptions of reign in the annals (First Dynasty: Semerkhet and Qaa; Second Dynasty: Peribsen; Third Dynasty: Djoser and Sekhemkhet; Fourth Dynasty: Shepseskaf; Fifth Dynasty: Neferirkare; Sixth Dynasty: Teti) the king has commenced his rule exactly on the day after the predecessor's death.

Most year entries contain an additional phrase as the first element (e. g., Palermo Stone, ro. 5:8, Djoser):



*h<sup>c</sup>j(.t) nsw h<sup>c</sup>j(.t) bjt*, traditionally translated as “appearance of the king of Upper Egypt, appearance of the king of Lower Egypt”, though the two titles have no geographical connotations, and rather denote two



identified as the funeral procession, and so it should denote a ceremony connected to the dead king as well.

There is only one report in a non-royal source about the inception of a reign: vizier Kagemni uses the phrase “entered the residence” (*Urk.* I:194).

Following an overview of all relevant sources the conclusion of the dissertation is that opposed to Medieval Europe on one hand, and in accordance with the Hellenistic kingdoms, the medieval Caliphate and the Ming Chinese Empire on the other, the coronation as an institution of legitimisation was unknown in Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Egypt.

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