

Reflections upon Bata's birth as the king's son in *The Two Brothers*

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[This paper examines how Bata's legitimacy as a royal character is built in the Egyptian story of *The Two Brothers* written in the Papyrus d'Orbiney. Our study will focus on the section that narrates the birth of the main character as the king's son. We will analyze the circumstances that are associated with this episode and his royal path to the Egyptian throne. The study of terms and expressions in association with their socio-historical context of use will shed light on the evocative potential that certain elements and circumstances linked with Bata may have. Our interest is to reflect on how the image of the pharaonic kingship is reinforced and legitimized.]

Keywords: Literature, Kingship, Legitimation, New Kingdom.

1. Introduction

Egyptian kingship was a central institution in ancient Egyptians' lives¹ and influenced in every sphere of this society. As the institution that guaranteed cosmic order,² the transition from one pharaoh to another was a critical moment since it was necessary to accomplish certain requests in order to achieve a successful ending. Although the mechanism for the power transition was not infallibly set, it is possible to recognize some general criteria expressed in monuments and royal inscriptions.³ In fact, these are forcefully expressed under critical or irregular circumstances.

Since kingship is transcendent in ancient Egyptian society, it is interesting to consider the diverse ways in which it is thought. Literary stories are valuable since they can be understood as cultural expressions that enlighten different ways of conceptualizing the world. Our interest is focused on the story of *The Two Brothers*⁴ from the Nineteenth Dynasty of the New Kingdom (ca.

1. D. O'Connor and D. Silverman (eds.), *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*. Leiden 1995, p. XVIII.

2. O'Connor and Silverman, *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, p. XIX.

3. J. Baines, "Kingship, Definition of culture, and legitimation", in O'Connor and Silverman, *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, p. 16.

4. As a renowned story among Egyptologists, there are many translations with some comments, among which it is worth highlighting the ones written in English by M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature. A Book of Readings. Volume II: The New Kingdom*. California 1976, pp. 203-211 and E. Wente, "The Tale of Two Brothers", in W. K. Simpson, *The literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions and Poetry*. New Haven 2003 [1973], pp. 80-90. Some papers analyze specific issues: E. Blumenthal, "Die Erzählung des Papyrus d'Orbiney als Literaturwerk", *ZÄS* 99 (1972) 1-17; J. Assmann, "Das ägyptische Zweibrüdermärchen (Papyrus d'Orbiney). Eine Textanalyse auf drei Ebenen am Leirfanen der Einheitsfrage", *ZÄS* 104 (1977) 1-25; J. Assmann, "Textanalyse auf verschiedenen Ebenen:

1292–1191b. C.).⁵ As its modern title indicates, it tells the story of two brothers –Bata and Inpu– and the accession to the throne of the first one. Our hypothesis is that this story reinforces the images of the pharaonic kingship through the presence of symbols and situations related to it.⁶ On the one hand, we observe the expression of a king’s image that largely coincides with the conventional representations of kingship, exhibiting the future king –Bata– with certain qualities and doing activities typical of the exercise of the office which would turn him into a legitimate candidate for the throne. On the other hand, the path towards reaching the royal dignity creates some tension in the succession traditions. Nonetheless, this most intricate journey does not in any way imply the existence of a way that is contrary to the established modes of accession to the throne. Indeed, the fact that it is only through certain associations that Bata can become a king ratifies the existence of global criteria that makes the institution legitimate and enduring. These tensions, instead of devaluing the prevailing image of the king and his place in society, update certain fundamental principles.

In *The Two Brothers*, a kind of tight articulation between what is accepted as conventional and what is evoked can be noticed. The idea of evocation in literary texts –and the specific ways it assumes through the allusion to the mythical,⁷ to the ritual, and the awarding of different roles to the characters– is the key to putting into dialogue what is usually expressed in certain terms with what is presented and narratively mediated in the story. Such analysis may contribute to the study of the forms of kingship representation during the New Kingdom and the role of literary portrayals of it.

In this paper, we will study the section of the story that narrates the birth of the main character as the king’s son. We will analyze the circumstances that are associated with this episode and his path until reaching the Egyptian throne. We intend to examine how Bata’s legitimacy as a royal character is built. Through the study of terms and expressions in association with their socio-historical context of use, we will shed light on the evocative potential that certain circumstances linked with Bata may have.⁸

zum Problem der Einheit des Papyrus d’Orbiney”, *ZDMG* III 1 (1977) 1-15; and T. Schneider, “Innovation in Literature on Behalf of Politics: The Tale of the Two Brothers, Ugarit, and 19th Dynasty History”, *AeUL* 18 (2008) 315–326. Moreover, there are extensive studies: S. T. Hollis, *The Ancient Egyptian “Tale of Two Brothers”. The oldest fairy tale in the world*. Oakville 2008 [1990]; W. Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern: der Papyrus d’Orbiney und die Königsideologie der Ramessiden*. Freiburg-Göttingen 2003; M. Pehal, *Interpreting Ancient Egyptian Narratives: A Structural Analysis of the Tale of Two Brothers, the Anat Myth, the Osirian Cycle, and the Astarte Papyrus*. Brussels 2010; and B. Mathieu, “Le Conte des Deux Frères (P. D’Orbiney = P. BM EA 10183)”, available in https://www.academia.edu/19840126/Le_Conte_des_Deux_Fr%C3%A8res_P_dOrbiney_P_BM_EA_10183_2015 [Consulted: May 2017].

5. E. Hornung, R. Krauss, and D. A. Warburton, D.A. (eds.), *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*. Leiden-Boston, 2006.

6. M. B. Castro, “Realeza y literatura: imágenes y tensiones. El caso del cuento de Los Dos Hermanos”, *Trabajos y Comunicaciones* 36 (2010) 311-329; “El Cuento de los Dos Hermanos. Interpretación narrativo-simbólica y planos de significación”, in A. Zingarelli and V. Mayocchi (eds.), *Relatos del Antiguo Egipto*, Buenos Aires 2017, pp. 223-250.

7. See M. B. Castro, “Mito y literatura en el Reino Nuevo egipcio: reflexiones sobre el relato de Los Dos Hermanos”, *Antiguo Oriente* 14 (2016) 137-169.

8. The research in this paper is closely connected with the analysis of Bata’s description that the narrator makes at the beginning of the story –a paper I’m currently working on. The methodology applied for understanding the literary representation of the kingship in *The Two Brothers* has proven to be convenient and successful in the development of my Ph.D. thesis (*Perspectives on Egyptian Kingship during the New Kingdom: representations and tensions. Study about the literary story of Papyrus d’Orbiney* –written in Spanish–, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 2015).

2. Bata's birth

Bata's birth in the palace is possible after the transfigurations cycle that he experiences:⁹

wn in st hr msyt w^c n s3-t3y iw tw hr šmt r dd n hm.f^cnh wd3 snb msyt tw n.k w^c n s3 t3y wn in
tw hr in tw.f iw tw hr di.n.f mn^ct hnmwtt iw tw hr nhmw m p3 t3 dr.f iw tw hms hr irt hrw nfriw tw hr
hpr m rnn.f iw hm.f^cnh wd3 snb hr mr tw n.f r ikr sp m t3 wnwf

“Then, she gave birth to a son. Then, they went to say to their Majesty, l.p.h.: ‘A son was given birth for you’. Then, he was brought to him, and a mn^ct-nurse and hnmwtt-nurses were given for him. The king celebrated jubilee in the whole land. Then, the king sat to spend a happy day. Then, he began to raise him. Then, his Majesty, l.p.h., loved him extremely, extremely.” (d’Orb. 18,7-18,10).¹⁰

The importance of having children was stressed by the ancient Egyptians with the intention of guaranteeing the perpetuation of the family.¹¹ For example, the *Instruction of Any* from the New Kingdom reads: “Take a wife while you’re young, that she makes a son for you (...) It is proper to make people”.¹² It seems logical that this desire increased when it regarded a birth in the court sphere since it would guarantee the existence of an heir to the throne. Because kingship was expected to be transmitted from fathers to sons,¹³ the birth of a king’s son was supposed to be a cause for celebration, as we read in the narration of Bata’s birth in *The Two Brothers*. However, no other sources express this.¹⁴ Even in births’ cycles of kings in the Eighteenth Dynasty, it’s not possible to find an image with these features. Helmut Brunner compares this fragment of *The Two Brothers* with the IXth scene of birth’s cycle of Hatshepsut and appoints that the “jubilee in the whole land” is missing there.¹⁵ The myth narrates the divine origin and the raising, but not the relationship between the king and the country. Interestingly enough, the expression of the joy because of the birth of a royal son is represented in a literary text, putting into words emotions that otherwise seem impossible to be expressed. This idea will be further discussed.

9. Bata’s resurrection is in the form of a “great bull with every beautiful color” which enters into the palace. The sacrifice of the animal –asked by his previous wife who was now the pharaoh’s “Great Noble Lady”– results into two blood drops from which two perseas grow up. Their cutting-down –asked once again by the woman– makes that a splinter was swallowed by her, who then gets pregnant of Bata.

10. From this point, this is my translation from Gardiner’s edition of Papyrus d’Orbiney (*Late Egyptian Stories*. Brussels 1932, pp. 9-30).

11. G. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*. London 1993, p. 75.

12. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, p. 136.

13. E. Hornung, “The pharaoh”, in S. Donadoni, *The Egyptians*. Chicago-London 1997 [1990], p. 297. This is according to the *Contending of Horus and Seth*, which narrates the way in which the god Horus –despite of Seth’s actions against him– achieves to keep the inheritance of his father Osiris: the Egyptian throne. Analysis of this text can be found early in J. Spiegel, *Die Erzählung vom Streite des Horus und Seth in Pap. Beatty I als Literaturwerk*. Glückstadt 1937; then in M. Broze, *Mythe et roman en Egypte ancienne. Les aventures d’Horus et Seth dans le Papyrus Chester Beatty I*. Leuven 1996; U. Verhoeven, “Ein historischer ‘Sitz im Leben’ für die Erzählung von Horus und Sets des Papyrus Chester Beatty I”, in M. Schade-Busch (ed.), *Wege Öffnen. Festschrift für Rolf Gundlach zum 65. Geburtstag*. Wiesbaden 1996, pp. 347-363; and M. Campagno, *Una lectura de la contienda entre Horus y Seth*. Buenos Aires 2004.

14. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p. 88.

15. H. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs. Studien zur Überlieferung eines altägyptischen Mythos*. Wiesbaden 1964, p. 206.

Knowledge on the *mn^ct* and *hnmwtt* nurses assigned to Bata as the king's son is more extended. The custom of having nurses for a newborn was well rooted in ancient Egypt: Catherine Roehrig recovers the reference in the *Pyramid Texts* of Nephthys' designation as the king's nurse.¹⁶ Although this occurs in the religious-funerary space, this figure is also visible in everyday life representations. The first representation of a *mn^ct* nurse comes from the princess Idut tomb in Saqqara, dated between the end of the Fifth Dynasty and the beginning of the Sixth Dynasty.¹⁷ In some tombs from the Middle Kingdom, *mn^ct* nurses are represented in association with the individuals who they nursed.¹⁸ During the New Kingdom, references to *mn^ct* nurses are almost exclusively royal ones, being the royal attribute to this work formalized during the Eighteenth Dynasty with the title *mn^ct nsw*.¹⁹

The name for the nurse as *mn^ct* comes from the Egyptian verb *mn^c*, which means “nurse, suckle”, and it is written with the determinative sign for breast (𓄿 D27 from Gardiner)²⁰ and the one with a woman nursing a child (𓄿 B5 from Gardiner).²¹ This figure is also associated with activities as *rnn* –“nurse, rear”– and *šd* –“draw forth, rescue, educate”–, being part of the wider sphere of “education”.²² Those nurses who performed in the palace were supposed to be high officers' wives. There is a discussion on the implications of their position: while Brunner²³ and Robins²⁴ consider that their good work could help them in their paths and they could provide more opportunities for their own sons' paths as well, Roehrig does not share these conclusions.²⁵ According to her research, she does not consider that a causal link between the nurse's position and her husband or sons could exist.

On the *hnmwtt* also mentioned in *The Two Brothers*, it is usually considered as another term to refer to nurses in ancient Egypt. There are also several possible determinative signs to add to the word: as the woman (𓄿 B1 from Gardiner)²⁶ is the most common and suggest female occupation, the nose-eye-cheek (𓄿 D19 from Gardiner)²⁷ used in *The Two Brothers* is not regularly

16. C. H. Roehrig, *The Eighteenth Dynasty titles royal nurse (mn^ct nswt), royal tutor (mn^c nswt), and foster brother/sister of the Lord of the Two Lands (sn/snt mn^c n nb tšwy)*. Berkeley 1990, p. 314.

17. S. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto: una aproximación léxica y cultural*. Ph.D. Thesis, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona 2017, p. 15. Available in <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/176189> [Consulted: September 25th, 2020].

18. Roehrig, *The Eighteenth Dynasty titles royal nurse...*, p. 316; Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto...*, pp. 130-144. In her Ph.D. thesis, Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero exhaustively studies *mn^ct* nurses from a social point of view. The author considers their position inside the family groups, kinship relationships based on lactation and the magical power of the practice.

19. Roehrig, *The Eighteenth Dynasty titles royal nurse...*, p. 315; also H. Brunner, “Der ‘Gottesvater’ als Erzieher des Kronprinzen”, *ZÄS* 86 1 (1961) 90-100; and B. Bryan, “The Title Foster Brother of the King”, *JJSEA* 9 (1979) 117-123.

20. A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar. Being an introduction to the study of hieroglyphs*. Oxford 2007 [1927], p. 453.

21. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 448. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto...*, pp. 122-127, also documents 𓄿 B1. Her lexical analysis includes consideration of possible combinations between signs and the occurrences registered.

22. H. Brunner, “Erzieher”, in W. Helck and E. Otto (eds.) *Lexicon der Ägyptologie. Band II*. Wiesbaden 1977, col. 20.

23. Brunner, “Erzieher”, col. 20.

24. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p. 89.

25. Roehrig, *The Eighteenth Dynasty titles royal nurse...*, p. 318.

26. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 448.

27. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 452.

documented.²⁸ According to the several meanings assigned to this last determinative, it is possible to understand that the term is associated with food ingestion, particularly milk.²⁹

The research conducted by Sara Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero collects numerous references to nourishment and nutrition from documents from the Old and the Middle Kingdom. Additionally, the author points out a particular link between the *hnmwtt* and the birth, children, and throne legitimation.³⁰ This idea has already been proposed by Susan Hollis, who emphasizes the relationship with solar rebirth from alike expressions in the *Book of Gates*.³¹ Furthermore, Wolfgang Wettengel has noted that both kinds of nurses *mn^ct* and *hnmwtt* are only assigned for the birth of an heir to the throne.³²

The fact that Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero recovers what is told in *The Two Brothers* as evidence to sustain such association is significant for the present study. Moreover, she introduces other texts that contribute to the argument: Papyrus Turin 54003 in which the dispute between Horus and Seth is narrated and a *hnmwt* is in charge of making the throne, and Ostrakon CGC5700 in which a coronation hymn for Rameses IV is written and *hnmwtt* appear in joy and related to birth and accession to the throne.³³ It is difficult to precise which were *hnmwtt* functions: they range from being temple assistants in charge of the offerings for the king or the deceased to general associations with food –such as providing the milk for children and bread for adults.³⁴ Despite this, evocations to birth and the kingship sphere are potent and meaningful to understand the introduction of these women after Bata's birth in the palace.

The most important aspect of the nursing practice is the belief that certain qualities could be transmitted to the child through breastfeeding, as well as establishing a closer relationship.³⁵ When goddesses nursing the future king are represented, it becomes evident that what is passed on is the divine essence, required for the legitimation of the person in the office.³⁶ Jean Leclant has thoroughly studied the nursing relevance as a rite of passage in three moments in a king's life: his birth, his birth as a king –this is, the coronation–, and after his death.³⁷ During the New Kingdom the nursing ritual associated with kingship becomes particularly crucial.³⁸

The birth's narration is completed with the description of the pharaoh's feelings about the arrival of his newborn child. The “jubilee in the whole land” is mentioned as a manner to celebrate the welcome to the son throughout the country. This celebration is realized when “the king sat to

28. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto...*, p. 209.

29. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto...*, p. 211.

30. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto...*, p. 219.

31. Hollis, *The Ancient Egyptian “Tale of Two Brothers”*, p. 183.

32. Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*, p. 182.

33. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto...*, pp. 219-220.

34. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto...*, p. 224.

35. Roehrig, *The Eighteenth Dynasty titles royal nurse...*, p. 315.

36. H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods. A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature*. Chicago-London 1978 [1948], p. 74, points out for example, in the representation of Hatshepsut's birth, that the nursing from the goddesses gives her good fortune, health, joy and many years for ruling.

37. J. Leclant, “Le Rôle du lait et de l'allaitement d'après les Textes des Pyramides”, *JNES* 10 2 (1951) 123-127. Regarding funerary contexts, F. L. Borrego Gallardo, *Las escenas de amamantamiento en los complejos funerarios regios del Reino Antiguo. Una aproximación semiológica*. Cuenca, 2010, has examined the royal funerary complexes from the Old Kingdom. The author identified the elements and characters of the royal nursing scenes from a semiotic perspective, considering their location, orientation, and existing relationships.

38. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto...*, pp. 68-106.

spend a happy day”.³⁹ Mette Gregersen has drawn attention to the conjunction between the expression *iri hrw nfr* with the verb *hms* which translates into sitting to spend a happy day.⁴⁰ This could refer to a banquet.⁴¹

Then, it is expressed that the king “began to raise him”. The translation of this passage has been challenging concerning the expression *hpr m rnn.f*. Hollis has thoroughly studied this issue.⁴² From Brunner-Traut’s translation and her identification of the verb *rnn* with the determinative sign of a woman nursing (𓆎B5 from Gardiner)⁴³ the suggested translation is “to nurse, to rear”,⁴⁴ “to take care”,⁴⁵ or “to bring up, to nurse”.⁴⁶ Brunner-Traut extends the meaning to the idea of “to hold, to put on the lap”⁴⁷ as an act of recognition which is followed by the official nomination as the king. Hence, Hollis considers that *hpr* is the main verb and *m rnn* functions as a predicate. Therefore, the meaning would be that the king starts to be the one that takes care, raises, and nurses the child.⁴⁸ This conclusion comes together with the iconographical identification of the scene in the births’ cycles from the New Kingdom. While Brunner-Traut assimilates the expression to the act of recognition by the king, Brunner makes an explicit comparison between this passage of *The Two Brothers* and the scenes in which the king is represented with his newborn child on the lap.⁴⁹ In the previous scene,⁵⁰ in which the newborn was being delivered, the image is accompanied with the inscription *rnn.sw* and *mr.sw* “nursing him” and “loving him”, similar to the sequence that we translated in *The Two Brothers*.⁵¹ From this, Hollis acknowledges that the scribe of the story is aware of this and draws a parallel with the monuments.⁵²

It is also worth noting that as a manner to legitimate the king there are expressions that include the verb *rnn* as recognition gestures. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero quotes an inscription from Et-Tôd in which is read: “I raise (*rnn*) you to be the king of the [Two] Land[s] (and) to hold the crowns”.⁵³ In the New Kingdom, Hatshepsut is told: “I am your mother (...) who raises you on Horus throne for you to reign over the Valley and the Delta”.⁵⁴

So far, we observe the narration of Bata’s birth framed into the Egyptian tradition regarding the birth of a king’s son. This custom is reinforced during the New Kingdom, especially during the

39. For a study of this expression in late Egyptian stories see M. B. Castro, “El *hrw nfr* en la literatura ramésida: algunas notas para su interpretación”, *TdE* 11 (2020) 81-91.

40. M. Gregersen, “Spend an Optimal day (*iri hrw nfr*)”, in R. Nyord y K. Ryholt (eds.), *Lotus and Laurel. Studies on Egyptian Language and Religion (in Honour of Paul John Frandsen)*. Copenhagen 2015: 82.

41. According to D. Lorton, “The expression *iri hrw nfr*”, *JARCE* 12 (1975) 30 note 24, this is proof for distinguishing *iri hrw nfr* as carrying out a banquet with exceptional food from regular food provision, which is also attested in *The Two Brothers* when it is told how Bata placed food in front of (*w3h m b3h*) Inpu (d’Orb. 1,6).

42. Hollis, *The Ancient Egyptian “Tale of Two Brothers”*, pp. 180-183.

43. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 448.

44. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 578.

45. A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache II*. Berlin 1971, p. 436.

46. R. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*. Oxford 1991 [1981], p. 150.

47. E. Brunner-Traut, *Altägyptische Märchen*. Düsseldorf-Köln 1979, p. 39. Mathieu, “Le Conte des Deux Frères”, p. 19, links this meaning with the statuary and iconography that depict this pose.

48. Hollis, *The Ancient Egyptian “Tale of Two Brothers”*, pp. 180-183.

49. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs*, pp. 203-206, plate X.

50. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs*, pp. 203-206, plate XI.

51. Hollis, *The Ancient Egyptian “Tale of Two Brothers”*, p. 182, also analyses how this verb is used in the Pyramid Texts.

52. Hollis, *The Ancient Egyptian “Tale of Two Brothers”*, p. 182.

53. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto...*, p. 65.

54. Rodríguez-Berzosa Gómez-Landero, *La Lactancia en el antiguo Egipto...*, p. 76.

Eighteenth Dynasty, when the representations on temple walls increase,⁵⁵ assuming a stereotyped style.

Literature also echoes from this kind of mythical narrations on royal births. The most complete example is present in the last part of the *Westcar Papyrus*.⁵⁶ *The Two Brothers* could participate in its own way in this kind of expressions.⁵⁷ The story, written during the Nineteenth Dynasty after the monumental formalizations of divine births of the kings, shows a narration on the same topic, although a little far from such conventions. The celebration and the jubilee expressions, as we mentioned, are not part of the standard version. However, it is interesting to acknowledge the possibilities of interaction of different modes of representation, which finally contribute to the strengthening and visualization of the central position of kingship at different levels. What becomes relevant at this point in the narration is the presentation of Bata being (re) born as the king's son, and therefore, becoming the legitimate heir to the throne. This condition will be consolidated in what follows.

3. *Bata's path*

The description of Bata's life in the palace continues with the account of some sort of "official path" to the throne:

*iw tw hr dh3d.f s3-nsu n k3š hr ir mht hrw knw hr s3 nn wn in hm.f nḥ wd3 snb hr di tw.f iry-pḥ
n p3 t3 dr*

"Then, he [the King] proclaimed him [Bata] Royal Son of Kush. Many days after this happened, his Majesty, l.p.h., made him the hereditary prince of the whole land." (d'Orb. 19,1-19,2).

If we continue with the analysis in the line of royal births cycles, we will find that the appointment as *s3-nsu n kst* "Royal Son of Kush" is not a legitimating moment,⁵⁸ since it is not reported as part of the process. In fact, this title is strictly administrative and designates the overseers of the lands of the South between the Dynasties Eighteen to Twenty.⁵⁹ Until Amenhotep III's reign, *s3-nsu* was just used, then the epithet *n k3š* was added to refer it to Kush.⁶⁰

Whether the two first officers who bear this title –*tti* and *dhwtj*– were in fact king's sons⁶¹ has been a topic of discussion. Still, indeed, the blood link was not required to perform the function

55. There are two complete cycles known: the one from Queen Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahri, and the one from Amenhotep III in the Luxor Temple. Besides, there are some other fragments (B. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt. Anatomy of a Civilization*. London-New York 2018, p. 260).

56. L. Salem, "Mito y literatura egipcia. Acerca de un mito de origen en los dos últimos cuentos del Papiro Westcar", in *Actas de las XII Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia. Departamento de Historia, Facultad de Humanidades y Centro Regional Universitario Bariloche. Universidad Nacional del Comahue*. Bariloche 2009.

57. Otherwise, the connections with the Osirian cycle have also been referred by Pehal, *Interpreting Ancient Egyptian Narratives...*

58. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs*, p. 206.

59. B. Schmitz, *Untersuchungen zum Titel s3-nḥ swt "Königssohn"*. Bonn 1976, pp. 267-ff; L. Habachi, "Königssohn von Kusch", in Helck and Otto, *Lexicon der Ägyptologie. Band III*, col. 630.

60. Habachi, "Königssohn von Kusch", col. 630.

61. Habachi, "Königssohn von Kusch", col. 630. This author registers the officers who performed this function. Many years before, G. Reisner, "The Viceroys of Ethiopia", *JEA* 6 (1919) 28-55; 73-88, did a similar job.

afterwards. Therefore, it is possible to wonder why this title is included in the account of Bata's life as king's son. Wettengel considers asking for the historical facts from the period in which the text was written relevant.⁶² Following this, he suggests that this story legitimates the Viceroy of Nubia takeover at the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty.⁶³ Actually, during Seti II's reign, such an individual would exist. He was called Amenmessu and under the name Messy it could have been Viceroy of Kush who then competed with Seti II for the control of Nubia during the years 2 and 4 of his reign.⁶⁴ Yet, he would be the only person who joined together the title *s3-nsw n kst* with his blood link with kingship, being a royal prince.⁶⁵ However, since the chronology of the period is still under discussion, we cannot relate the narration in *The Two Brothers* with some real fact at the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty. What is more, our comprehension of literary texts as cultural expressions of society opposes the mirror interpretations and inhibits such an approach.⁶⁶

Eventually, the position taken by Hollis dismisses this speculation.⁶⁷ Wettengel himself does the same,⁶⁸ and also recognizes specific literary forms to be used as propaganda, such as chaos descriptions, abandonment by gods, diseases, and the apparition of a new king. Nonetheless, we consider that –far from understanding *The Two Brothers* in terms of propaganda,⁶⁹ it is possible to interpret it in relation to kingship and its ways of expression, perhaps, in alternative forms far from official descriptions. In this way, we understand that the appointment as Royal Son of Kush could be explained in terms of conferring on Bata an administrative career, which can potentially add legitimacy in experience to occupy a higher position.

After the designation as Royal Son of Kush, the pharaoh names Bata *iry-pat* “hereditary prince, crown prince”. This makes the connection of the character with kingship clearer, and the fact that Bata will reach the throne after his father's death is confirmed. We observe that the title is associated with the king's son during the New Kingdom and it is exclusively assigned to the one who is identified as the heir to the throne.⁷⁰

According to Dodson, during the Nineteenth Dynasty, the order in the line of succession was reinforced through the nomination made by the reigning king.⁷¹ Although the coregency in this period is under discussion, it is evident that the formal appointment by the pharaoh was a condition for the legitimate access to the throne. At this point, we notice that *The Two Brothers* could be understood framed in this trend, being Bata's designation as *iry-p^ct* the last sign for his legitimation

62. This is an issue also addressed by other Egyptologists since the connection of the Papyrus to the prince Seti-Merneptah. See A. Spalinger, “Transformations in Egyptian Folktales: The Royal Influence”, *RdÉ* 58 (2007), especially pp. 144-147.

63. Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*, p. 182.

64. For a detailed discussion on this period, see A. Dodson, *Poisoned Legacy. The Fall of the Nineteenth Egyptian Dynasty*. Cairo 2010: 31-ff; “Messuy, Amada and Amenmesse”, *JARCE* 34 (1997) 41-48. A completely different position is in F. Yurco, “Was Amenmesse the Viceroy of Kush, Messuwy?”, *JARCE* 34 (1997) 49-56.

65. Dodson, *Poisoned Legacy*, p. 42.

66. Analysis of Egyptian literature implies reflecting on intertextuality and literary genres features. About historical fiction see C. Manassa, *Imagining the Past: Historical Fiction in New Kingdom Egypt*. Oxford-New York 2013.

67. Hollis, *The Ancient Egyptian “Tale of Two Brothers”*, p. 184.

68. Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*, pp. 183-184.

69. Neither for Amenmessu nor any king or individual. It is convenient to note that Wettengel finally concludes that *The Two Brothers* is a founding text that explains the divine origin of the Ramesside dynasty (Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*, p. 269).

70. P. Kaplony, “Iripat”, in Helck and Otto, *Lexicon der Ägyptologie. Band III*, col. 177; A. Dodson and D. Hilton, *The complete royal families of Ancient Egypt*. London 2010 [2004], p. 33.

71. Dodson, *Poisoned Legacy*, p. 88.

in the Egyptian throne. What is more, this circumstance allows us to reflect upon the relation between the literary text as a whole and the “official” discourse reminiscence, since their interaction is more or less direct in different stages during the plot’s development. Although we are able to find a symbolic identification with kingship⁷² in other sections of the story, it is clearer at this point the recalling of some kind of set mechanism for ascending to the throne. This condition allows us to think about different forms of representing the kingship’s image.

On the other hand, we consider that Bata’s “official career” introduces the character into the palace life. Since our hypothesis tries to visualize some staging in which the character is progressively located in a legitimate position to reach the throne, his birth in the palace and his raising there as a royal son, completely removes him from the initial rural world, and incorporates him explicitly in the royal sphere. In this way, it is accomplished what is normally expected.

Moreover, this career description may also be understood in a context where is registered an increase in the representation of king’s sons; or rather the depiction of princes in the iconographical pharaoh’s representations, who was previously represented alone.⁷³ During the Amarna period, the family had assumed a more visible and different role in royal iconography. In any case, a significant change during the Nineteenth Dynasty is produced in the “great processions of royal children”⁷⁴ with their inclusion in battle scenes.⁷⁵ Although this staging belongs to the iconographical sphere, we understand that the literary description of a son’s participation in kingship activities can also be a part of this new style.

4. Conclusions

In this brief article, we analyzed the last part of *The Two Brothers* in order to study the circumstances that occur during and after Bata’s birth as king’s son in the palace. Moreover, we have followed his path to reach the Egyptian throne. Taking all this into consideration, we have concluded that the story could be framed into certain trends of the New Kingdom in general and the Nineteenth Dynasty in particular. At the same time, it alludes to more general and extended kingship practices in time.

Throughout this paper, we have confirmed our story interpretation and comprehension in the context of Egyptian kingship, and observed images more or less directly related to the institution through different moments in the story. This study clarifies the specificity of literary texts that interact with other discourses through allusions and tensions. It also allows us to ratify the centrality of kingship in Egyptian society.

72. See for example M. B. Castro, “Reflexiones sobre el simbolismo del ganado en el cuento egipcio Los Dos Hermanos”, in de L. M. Araújo and J. das Candeias Sales, *Novos Trabalhos de Egiptologia Ibérica I*. Lisboa 2012, pp. 261-277.

73. Dodson, *Poisoned Legacy*, p. 6.

74. For example, in the hypostyle hall of the Rameseum where are depicted Rameses II’s sons (Dodson, *Poisoned Legacy*, p. 6; fig. 5a and 5b).

75. Also, of Rameses II in Beit el-Wali (Dodson, *Poisoned Legacy*, p. 4; fig. 3). See also W. Murnane, “The Kingship of the Nineteenth Dynasty: a study in the resilience of an institution”, in O’Connor and Silverman, *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, p. 203; and J. van Dijk, “The Amarna Period and Later New Kingdom”, in I. Shaw, *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*. New York 2000, p. 289. It is discussed which the aim of these representations was. In Murnane’s words (“The Kingship of the Nineteenth Dynasty”, p. 205), even when the visibility is easy to set, it is difficult to say which their specific political role was if there was any. According to van Dijk (“The Amarna Period and Later New Kingdom”, p. 289), this fact could be related to the legitimation of the complete royal family.

It has been our purpose to analyze how Bata is built as a royal character and how he is legitimated to stand as the king at the end of the story. We understand that there is a “grooming process”⁷⁶ on Bata conditions, which are at first disadvantageous –if not exclusive– to access the Egyptian throne: social extraction (he is a peasant) and minority status (he is not first-born). The fact that the protagonist ends up becoming a pharaoh is not a random circumstance or a license enabled by fictional narrative. It is because other conditions are gradually but steadily presented throughout the story that seek to invest the character sequentially.

Finally, we emphasize the fact that these qualities are embedded in a rather sinuous and intricate path. Eventually, there is an instance in which this journey is redirected towards the palace scenario, where Bata can effectively develop a royal path that enables him in a conventionally legitimate way to ascend the throne. The analysis of the (re) birth as a son of the king and the fulfillment of a palatine trajectory allowed the analysis of this part of the “grooming process”, which shapes Bata’s legitimacy and guarantees his appropriateness to become the pharaoh.

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76. We retrieve the concept used by Murnane in his analysis of the Nineteenth Dynasty (“The Kingship of the Nineteenth Dynasty”, p. 196).

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