

Libiamo ne' lieti calici

**Ancient Near Eastern Studies Presented
to Lucio Milano on the Occasion of his 65th
Birthday by Pupils, Colleagues and Friends**

edited by
Paola Corò, Elena Devecchi, Nicla De Zorzi,
and Massimo Maiocchi
with the collaboration of Stefania Ermidoro
and Erica Scarpa

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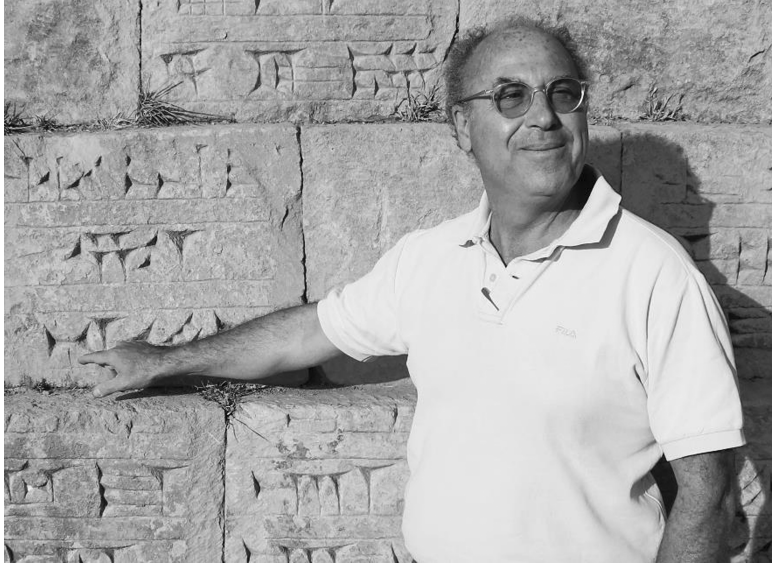
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Lucio at Jerwan (October 2013)

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Foreword

This book celebrates Lucio Milano's many scholarly achievements in the field of Ancient Near Eastern studies. As former pupils of his who have all greatly benefitted from his wide-ranging scholarship, guidance and support, we felt it was time for us to reciprocate by presenting him with this collection of essays from pupils, friends, and colleagues, as a token of our gratitude and affection on the occasion of his 65th birthday. On the other hand, we could also imagine his reaction: "*Oh ragazzi!*... what are we celebrating? It's too early for my retirement!". Our excuse is that in offering the present volume to Lucio at this time, we arbitrarily picked his 65th birthday as one occasion among the many special events that could have been chosen instead. We have no doubt that there will be many other celebrations for our dear friend Lucio in the future.

Although Lucio's Assyriological interests are manifold, we sought to narrow the scope of this volume to topics that over the course of his career have grown particular close to his heart.

Lucio's wide-ranging work and interests reflect his intellectual formation. He studied Classics at "La Sapienza" University in Rome and graduated *summa cum laude* in 1975 with a thesis on "*Viticultura e enologia nell'Asia anteriore antica*", written under the supervision of Mario Liverani. Appointed in 1977 to the Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies ("Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente") in Rome, he continued to work at "La Sapienza" University as "*ricercatore universitario confermato*" (1981–1993) at the Department of History, Archaeology and Anthropology ("Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Archeologiche e Antropologiche dell'Antichità") and as Professor of History of the Ancient Near East (1984–1987) for the post-graduate course in Oriental Studies ("Corso di Specializzazione in Studi Orientali"). In 1993 he moved to "Ca' Foscari" University in Venice as Associated Professor and since 2001 he has held at that university the chair of History of the Ancient Near East as Full Professor.

Lucio's research focuses on the social, economic, and political history of the third millennium BC, with special focus on Syria and northern Mesopotamia, especially Ebla and Tell Beydar, an area on which he has published extensively. His scholarly publications include several text editions and studies on a wide range of topics, which he explores through a multi-faceted approach, ranging from linguistics to prosopography, to digital tools for the study of the Ancient Near East. He is a leading scholar in the history of palaeonutrition, to which he has contributed articles and congress volumes, as a director of research projects and as a supervisor of doctoral theses. Since the early part of his career he has been heavily involved in archaeology as well, participating as an epigraphist in the expeditions to Ebla, Tell Ashara, Tell Mozan, Tell Leilan and Tell Beydar. In addition, he was active between 1997 and 2010 as director of the "Ca' Fosca-

ri” team at the Syro-European archaeological mission of Tell Beydar. Always ahead of his time, he has worked in digital humanities since the early 1980s, taking part in 1982–1983 in the “Project in the Computer Analysis of the Ebla Texts” initiated by G. Buccellati at the University of California, Los Angeles. Since 2010, he has been the chief editor of the project “Ebla Digital Archives” at “Ca’ Foscari” University.

Lucio has not only been a prolific researcher. Over the years, he has invested an enormous amount of time and energy in activities aiming at the divulgation of knowledge on the Ancient Near East to a wider audience, stimulating at the same time pertinent research. All of the undersigned – and many besides us – have benefitted from his inspirational teaching, from general courses for undergraduates to specialized seminars for doctoral and post-doctoral students. He has succeeded in establishing his own “school” of Ancient Near Eastern studies at “Ca’ Foscari” University. The defining characteristic of our “Venetian school” is not a single theme – far be it from Lucio’s mind to impose a single area of specialization on those who study with him – but is rather its *spiritus rector*’s historical methodology and openness to different approaches to elucidating the multifaceted realities of the Ancient Near East. This attitude is exemplified by Lucio’s endeavours under the auspices of the “Advanced Seminar in the Humanities: Literature and Culture in the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece, Rome and the Near East” at the Venice International University, which he has co-organized since 2005. A volume recently published under his editorship, *Il Vicino Oriente antico dalle origini ad Alessandro Magno* (2012), is on its way to becoming a standard manual for Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian history in Italian universities. Mention must also be made of the journal *Kaskal*, founded in 2003, of which Lucio is co-director, and which has grown into an internationally recognized and increasingly influential forum for the multi-disciplinary study of Ancient Near Eastern cultures.

International recognition for Lucio’s scientific achievements is reflected in his activities, under various titles, at “Ca’ Foscari” University, as well as at universities outside Italy, such as UCLA, Cornell University, and the École Pratique des Hautes Études.

Lucio’s contagious enthusiasm, gentleness, and wit immediately captivate all those who work with him. Only he – as students, colleagues, and friends have learned – could turn brisk walks with him through the Venetian *calli* towards Venice’s railway station into unique opportunities to discuss Assyriology and the vagaries of life. Moreover, his advice is delivered not only in this peripatetic form, but also in the many toasts offered during the numerous informal dinner parties held at his home for welcoming visiting scholars, or for celebrating shared successes.

All this is clearly reflected, we believe, in the contributions to this volume, which stand as a token of appreciation, certainly of Lucio Milano as an out-

standing scholar, but also, and perhaps more significantly, of Lucio as a *Mensch*.

Thus, once more, let us stand and raise our glasses to celebrate Lucio's 65th birthday. *Salute!*

Venice, Turin, Vienna

March 30th, 2016

Paola Corò

Elena Devecchi

Nicla De Zorzi

Massimo Maiocchi

The King's Food

A Note on the Royal Meal and Legitimation*

Emanuele M. Ciampini

Food as a cultural aspect of ancient Near Eastern civilisations is a prime focus of Prof. Lucio Milano's research. On the occasion of a volume in his honour, I would like to present some suggestions on the relation between food and kingship in ancient Egypt.

Kingship is certainly one of the most studied aspects of Egyptian civilisation. Several elements of the royal institution have been extensively analysed by modern scholars, in order to achieve a better understanding of the role of the king within the cosmos. As a result, a complex image of Egyptian power has emerged, framing the super-human nature of the pharaoh as a dogma at the core of this institution, which develops together with the growth of the state. Nevertheless, some patterns of the "royal doctrine" seem to be still awaiting a full reconstruction: among them, are the physical attributes for the realization of the royal *status*, in connection with the rituals of confirmation and legitimisation of the king.

Egyptian kingship is the result of the convergence of several traditions, first emerging in archaic chiefdoms.¹ The development of the ruler's iconography plays a fundamental role in the ideological "construction" of these initial phases of kingship: representations of the king in the shape of falcon, lion, or bull are the clearest evidence of his super-human attributes. In such images, the culture of ancient Egypt offers a dynamic representation of its central authority, whose powerful act is believed to truly create reality.² The motives found in archaic royal iconography are reflected in the names of the first rulers as well: J. Assmann has stressed the aggressive nuance of such names, perfectly fitting the visual representations of archaic documents.³

These royal icons often appear in conflict scenes: the well-known model of the "king smiting the enemy"⁴ becomes a productive element of ideological representations, conveying the idea of an active role of the ruler in the eternal conflict between order and chaos. Since its origins, the Egyptian state celebrated the meaningful victory of the king against his enemies. The winning ruler is often depicted

* I wish to thank Dr. Massimo Maiocchi for revising the English version of this article.

¹ Kemp 1991, 31–35.

² According to Wenke (2009, 183), the two crowns represent the *status* of the archaic king; these formal elements are the result of historical developments (South vs. North), stressing also the double nature of royal power: narrative vs. ritualistic.

³ Assmann 1996, 51–52. For the use of the theriomorphic icons in the definition of the dynamic nature of the kingship: Ciampini 2011–2012, 107–110.

⁴ This royal icon is analysed by Swan Hall 1986.

in the act of destroying his opponent, whose destiny is complete annihilation. Thus, the enemy plays a passive role within the scene: his physical presence is his unique significance. This consideration may explain why he may also become part of a royal meal. One of the best examples of this practice is found in the main scene of the “Battlefield Palette” (Late Pre-Dynastic Period, probably from Abydos: British Museum 20791+Ashmolean Museum 1892-1171), where the lion (= king) is devouring the body of his enemy. This theriomorphic representation is noteworthy for a twofold reason: 1) the king is smiting the chaotic element (= enemy) by means of an “anthropophagical” act; 2) at the same time, the meal celebrates the powerful king, as provider of order.

A celebration of the theriomorphic aspects of the king may also be found in the allegoric interpretation of the royal throne, described in the “Pyramid Texts”:

He (= king) appears in the sky together with the Imperishable Stars; his sister is Sirius, and his guide is the Morning Star. They bring his arm to the Field of the Offerings. He sits on this heavenly throne (*ḥndw ipf bi3i*), whose front (*ḥrw*) is Maheš (*m3-ḥs3*),⁵ and whose legs (*rdw*) are the clogs of the Great Bull (*sm3-wr*).⁶

The physical and semantic elements of the throne – the front and the legs – are explicitly identified with two theriomorphic features of the king. This fact stresses the aggressive and powerful nature of divine kingship.

The destruction of the enemy is not only the concrete mark of the triumphing order, but also the archetype of any act confirming the positive outcome of the ritual performance. According to this interpretation, the royal meal in the “Battlefield Palette” conveys the idea of sacrifice, to be performed in the temple. Under this point of view, the enemy can be regarded to as a sacrificial victim.⁷ Thus, we find in this dynamic the result of several cultural interpretations of the ritual: the destruction of chaos, the order’s victory, but also an increase in power for the actor of the ritual killing.⁸

According to archaic ideology, the king can feed on the physical substance of his enemy; this idea, clearly exemplified by the iconic representation of the king in terms of a lion, is also found in the later doctrine of kingship, centred on its physical attributes. From this point of view, the “Pyramid Texts” offer evidence for a fundamental step in the evolution of the concept of kingship. The use of meta-language to represent kingship in these texts is well-known. Here, I would

⁵ *I.e.* the “the Furious Lion”.

⁶ *Pyr.* 1123.c–1127.c; cf. Kuhlmann 1977, 9. For the interpretation of this scene, see also Simonet 1994, 184.

⁷ In the temple, the chaotic character of the victim emerges in the context of the holocaust; for the nature of the Egyptian sacrifice and its semantic difference with the Judaic tradition, see Moro 2013 (esp. 164–165).

⁸ Ikram 1995, 42, with previous bibliography.

like to point out two passages, in which food is used to celebrate the ideological and cosmic aspects of kingship. In this regard, a noteworthy piece of evidence can be found in a renown section, where the union of the two crowns is depicted as an “ideological meal”:

The White (Crown) appeared, it swallowed the Great (Crown)! The tongue of the White (Crown) swallowed the Great (Crown), and the tongue was not seen.⁹

The ritual context of the passage – a spell against snakes – takes a further political connotation, as the snake of the magic spell turns into the dynastic goddess of the Lower Egypt (Udjo), here represented by the (Northern) Great Crown itself. The ideological meal of the Southern Crown represents the cultural elaboration of that historical process, as analysed in great detail by J. Assmann.¹⁰ Thus, the Double Crown as a symbol of the royal *status* is explained in the text as the physical assimilation of the North by the South.

The spell, which probably offers the richest evidence for the process of semantic assimilation, is the famous “Cannibal Hymn”. This long composition has as its core the idea of the king as the heir of the cosmic deities;¹¹ such a concept gives a particular nuance to the acts described in the text, which are part of a *post mortem* royal celebration. The status of gods’ legitimate heir is elaborated in terms of a physical assimilation as well. The text describes this process as a meal (see the description of the king “who lives on his fathers, who feeds on his mothers”).¹² In this “anthropophagical” description of royal power, we can also recognise an embryonic step in the development of the concept of royal “corporation”.¹³ After his death, the king transfigures in fact in a deity, whose *status* is granted by means of his divine substance: the meat of the gods, *i.e.* his ancestors.

The divine food creates a linear relation between the gods (fathers/mothers) and the king (son and heir); thus, the past becomes part of the present by means of physical assimilation.

Contrary to modern perception of cannibalism as a barbaric act, ancient scribes conceived this practice as a mean for a human being to turn into a higher entity.

⁹ Pyr. 243.a–b.

¹⁰ Assmann 1996, 41–46.

¹¹ Eyre 2002, esp. 142–147.

¹² Pyr. 394.b.

¹³ The “corporation” aims to represent the abstract/collective nature of power, which is at the core of kingship; this abstract nature is represented as a divine substance embodied, at least in some periods, in the shape of an independent “double” king (see for instance the birth of the king and his royal *ka* in the New Kingdom “Myth of the Divine Birth”: Brunner 1964). It seems to be an elaboration of older traditions, that ensured the divine kingship of the ruling pharaoh through the physical assimilation of the royal substance, embodied by the ancestors. For the nature of the “corporation” in European ideology see Kantorowicz 1989: 268–442.

We can therefore frame this form of (ritual) cannibalism in ancient Egypt as an execration act, by means of which chaos is annihilated.¹⁴ The consumption of divine food provides legitimisation for the present ruler, who is able to achieve the same nature of his ancestors through the natural act of consuming a meal.¹⁵ In this process, the king absorbs the true substance of a deity, as stated in another passage of the same text:

Unis is the Bull of the Sky, furious in his heart, who lives on the manifestation (*hpr*) of every god.¹⁶

The passage is noteworthy because of the use of *hpr*, a term which properly identifies the dynamic power of any being in the cosmos: the king merges with the essence of the deity, himself becoming a god.

Other similar contexts describe the royal manifestation in its full magical nature; thus, we read:

Unis is one who eats their magic (*hk3w*), who swallows their magical power (*3hw*).¹⁷

Here, the physical assimilation concerns two different aspects of magic: *hk3w* identifies the disembodied magical power and is connected with the root *wnm* “to chew”, as opposed to *3hw*, which is better understood as an internal feature, referred to by the root *ʿm* “to swallow”.¹⁸ Though physical assimilation, the king also absorbs the nature of the two crowns, as stated in another passage from the “Pyramid Texts”:

He (= king) has swallowed the Red Crown, he has chewed the Green Crown.¹⁹

We find here the same lexicographical distinction between *wnm* and *ʿm*: the first is connected with the Red Crown, which can here reflect the power of the king; the other refers to the regenerative nature of the Green Crown in its own body.²⁰

Both descriptions of the royal *status* (outer manifestation of the power vs. inner

¹⁴ For some interesting suggestions on the nature of cannibalism as part of a cultural semantics see Eyre 2002, 153–174.

¹⁵ Bonhême 1993, 52–53 explores some connections between this doctrine and African traditions focused on royal *status*.

¹⁶ *Pyr.* 397.a.

¹⁷ *Pyr.* 403.a.

¹⁸ The double nature of the magic is analysed by Borghouts 1987; on the “vocabulary of magic”, see Ritner 2008⁴, 3–72.

¹⁹ *Pyr.* 410.a.

²⁰ For this distinction, see Bonhême 1993, 47–48.

divine nature) are modelled after the concept of god as creator. According to Egyptian theology, his power manifests itself by means of two acts: the intention of the heart, and the realization by speech. One of the clearest pieces of evidence for this idea is found in the so-called “Memphite Theology” of the Shabaka Stone: in this text, Ptah creates the cosmos by means of his heart (inner) and his tongue (outer). The former power directly depends on the deep nature of the creator god; the latter represents his dynamic and performative strength.²¹

The combination of the two powers (inner/outer) is also incorporated in the phraseology of the royal inscriptions, at least from the 12th dynasty onward. In this regard, a passage from the Semna stele of Sesostri III describes the king as follows:

I am a king who speaks and acts: what my heart conceives becomes effective by means of my hand.²²

Such elaborations of a coherent doctrine about kingship might be seen as the background for the development of later ideology of divine royal power, as we can see, for instance, in the complex construction of the royal *ka* in the temple of Luxor,²³ where some specific royal rituals developed in connection with the abstract concept of the divine kingship. The crucial moments of the cyclical life of the cosmos – most notably the beginning of the year – are later associated with rituals meant to confirm the presence in the king's body of those elements that can legitimate his *status*. A Late Period manuscript (Papyrus Brooklyn Museum 47.218.50, IV–III cent. BC) collects several ceremonies performed during the New Year's Festival;²⁴ the text probably dates back to an earlier period – at least the Ramesside era – and is organised in a coherent frame. Within the ritual performance, we find a noteworthy scene, in which the king eats a loaf of bread, reproducing the hieroglyph for “(royal) office” (*i3wt*):²⁵

i3wt-sign drawn on the hand with myrrh mixed together with saliva.²⁶ The *i3wt*-emblem is made with fresh eatable bread (*t w3d wnm*), and it will be given to no

²¹ For the text of the Shabaka Stone, see now el-Hawary 2010.

²² Stele Berlin 1157, l. 5–6: Sethe 1928, 83 (23–24). There is a striking correspondence between the phraseology in this passage and the statements in some autobiographies, depicting officials as personification of royal power, presented in its dual nature speech/action. An example of this correspondence is found in a passage of the autobiography of Sabni from his tomb at Qubbet el-Hawa (6th dynasty), where he introduces himself as: “*herald of the Horus words* to his followers, *throw-stick of Horus* in the foreign counties”: main inscriptions, l. 1, Habachi 1981, 21, fig. 5.

²³ For the Theban doctrine of the royal *ka*, see the classic study by Bell 1985.

²⁴ Goyon 1972 (text) and 1974 (plates).

²⁵ This broad term refers to an office, either of administrative or priestly nature: *Wb.* I: 29 (7–11).

²⁶ *Lit.*: “with licked myrrh”.

one else!²⁷ To be said when the bread (in the shape of a) *i3wt*-emblem will be given to him: the *i3wt*-emblem of Horus belongs to him – four times;²⁸ his royal power belongs to him, etc. He is confirmed by means of this, he eats this! The *i3wt*-emblem of the king, life, power, health belongs to him – four times; his royal power belongs to him, etc. He is confirmed by means of this, he eats this.²⁹

Several details of this text are of fundamental importance for the reconstruction of the royal doctrine. The core of the ritual performance is the legitimisation of the ruler, who receives the physical marks of his power in between the end of the year and the beginning of the next one. Three points related to these marks deserve further attention. These are:

- 1) the performative nature of the *i3wt*-icon (the drawing on the hand of the king, and the eatable bread) in the process of legitimisation of the ruling king;
- 2) the confirmation of royal power, expressed by the term *smn*;
- 3) the nature of the eatable substance.

1. The performative nature of the *i3wt*-emblem

At the core of the ceremony described in the text is the concept of *i3wt*: its double presence (drawing and bread) stresses the same juxtaposition we recognised in the nature of the two crowns (White Crown-narrative/Red Crown-ritualistic), and in the terminology of magic (*hk3w/3hw*). The *i3wt*-sign drawn on the king's hand means the transmission of the office, and the dynamic power represented by the sign itself: thus, the hieroglyphic sign plays a fundamental role in the transformation of the royal person in performative perspective. The hand may indeed carry two semantic nuances: the act of receiving the royal office, and the royal capacity of acting in the cosmos. The first meaning precisely correspond to the use of the hand sign in the writing of the root *šp* “to receive”;³⁰ the second meaning fits in with royal agency, as expressed for instance in the text of Sesostri III from Semna (see below and note 22). The drawing on the king's hand is described as an “*i3wt*-sign drawn with licked myrrh”; here we find another physical element in the construction of the ritual performance: the act of licking. In magical context,

²⁷ This implies that bread is a meal reserved for the king.

²⁸ This is a reference to the four points of the compass, signifying the cosmic level of the performance.

²⁹ Papyrus Brooklyn 41.218.50, XVI.6–7.

³⁰ *Wb.* IV: 590 (Graeco-Roman period). This concept is further elaborated in royal phraseology concerned with the transfer of power, see for instance the “Pamphili Obelisk” in Rome, where the text states: “He (= Domitian) receives (*šp*) the kingship (*nsyt*) from his father Vespasian the god, and from his older brother Titus the god”: Ciampini 2004, 162–165.

this act conveys also the idea of transmission of a quality or essence;³¹ such an interpretation fits in very well with the royal ritual at the beginning of the New Year, when the king is required to have his power and his kingship confirmed.

2. The confirmation of royal power, expressed by the term *smn*

The ritual acts connected with the *i3wt*-sign are performed in order to confirm the royal office. Interestingly, the text uses in this regard the root *smn*, which also has a legal nuance;³² usually, this root stresses the coronation of the pharaoh,³³ but it is also used to describe the legitimate heir of the dead king. This nuance in the root becomes a fundamental element in the phraseology of the New Kingdom royal inscriptions; we may mention here just two examples of this practice. In the temple of Buhen, Thutmosis III (18th dynasty) states:

He (= Amun) has confirmed (*smn*) his (= Thutmosis) crowns as king of Upper and Lower Egypt, on the throne of Horus of livings.³⁴

In the 19th dynasty, an inscription from the temple of Gurna records the speech of the dead king Sethi I, greeting the Amun's bark upon its arrival, during a procession:

May you (=Amun) confirm (*smn*) my heir (= Ramesses II), because he sits on my throne; he, the Lord of the Two Lands Usermaatre-Setepenre. He was in front of me⁽¹⁾ as the "son-I-love" (*s3 mr.i*),³⁵ and I know he is the seed that came out of me. May you give him the everlasting, so that he could let my name survive, according to the order that came out of your (= Amun) mouth.³⁶

The two passages celebrate the ruling king (Thutmosis III and the heir of Sethi I, *i.e.* Ramesses II) by means of the physical marks of kingship (crowns, throne), but another element is worth stressing here: dynastic lineage. The god Amun grants the connection between Sethi and Ramesses – *i.e.* the past and the present – in the wider frame of the family.³⁷ This connection seems to be one of the most important features of Ramesside ideology, as found in other documents as well, such as the Kings List in the temple of Abydos, or the Stela of 400 Years. Both documents focus on the nature of dynastic transmission, and its reception by the

³¹ The act of licking has here a therapeutic purpose: Ritner 2008⁴, 93–94.

³² Goyon 1972, 111 (255).

³³ For the concept of coronation as connected with *smn*, see *Wb.* IV: 132 (11–18).

³⁴ Caminos 1974, I, 49, pl. 61 (4).

³⁵ Clear reference to the liturgical role of the son/heir in funerary rituals.

³⁶ *KRI* II: 637 (12–14).

³⁷ Cf. also the passage describing Ramesses as "the seed came out of me (= Sethi I)".

legitimate heir. We find here an original doctrine of kingship, in which particular focus is put on the concept of dynasty as spring of power.³⁸

3. The nature of the eatable substance

This last point is particularly relevant here because of the possible connection with other ritual traditions. At the core of the above-mentioned ceremony is the *i3wt*-bread, eaten by the king, conveying the idea of royal legitimation by consumption of a “living” substance. This ritual food, made of flour, may connect the king with the cyclic process of birth-growing-death. Corn certainly plays a major role here, as also attested in other Late Period rituals, often connected with kingship. The presence of an eatable element in the ritual for royal confirmation must be explained in terms of the properties of the plant: to eat the *i3wt*-bread means to assimilate the nature expressed by the living material. Probably, the model for this ceremonial meal lies in the tradition we already recognised in the Pyramid Texts, showing the king feeding on the substance of the gods.³⁹ The formal aspect of bread – *i.e.* its *i3wt*-shape – also contributes to the fulfilment of the goals of the ritual action: the performative power of its visual form allows the transformation of a physical object in the effective substance of kingship. We may here wonder, whether in the *i3wt*-bread we can recognize a model of that performative sign, called by the Egyptian culture *tit*.⁴⁰

The ceremonial bread transforms the royal substance. We deal here with an alchemic transformation – *i.e.* a transubstantiation – of the king’s body. The process is conceived as occurring at physical level. The terminology attached to the act of assimilation itself, *i.e.* *wnm* (see discussion below), stresses the dual nature of “office”/bread: it is an external element, which is assimilated during a physical meal.⁴¹ The innovation in the royal ritual of the Brooklyn Papyrus lies in the performative nature of the *i3wt*-bread, whose inanimate nature is transformed in a living and effective being, *i.e.* the king.

The meal is finished: the king has performed his ritual act, and now he properly embodies divine kingship. The bread is a physical evocation of that embodiment, identifying royal power. Now the king’s body is something new, which foresees his transformations *post mortem* in a deity. Late Period speculations often put the

³⁸ Ciampini 2014.

³⁹ For the tradition concerning the assimilation by the king of those precious materials, which grant the divine substance, cf. Hornung 1982, 153–154.

⁴⁰ The *tit*-sign is more than a mere graphic mark. For an interpretation in terms of an element of creative power, see Ciampini 2011–2012, 135–138.

⁴¹ Bonhême 1993, 49. We note that the ritual performance here reminds of the archaic royal meal of the Pyramid Texts, where food appears in the form of the bodies of the divine ancestors, or the crowns, see *infra*.

transformed royal substance on focus, as reflected by the Khoiak celebration, described in the textual collection from the temple of Dendera (first century BC). This long text inscribed in the first Osirian chapel (East) on the roof of the Hathor temple collects at least seven different ritual books, focused on the theme of regeneration and protection of Osiris.⁴² The idea of cosmic renewal is hinted at in the representation of the corn-Osiris – a concept which is in turn closely associated with kingship (see for instance the explicit reference to the White Crown of the corn-Osiris).⁴³

The regenerative power of god is identified with corn itself, which is yearly renewed during the month of Khoiak. The same scene provides insights on two main cultic features, also present in royal rituals: the confirmation of power, and the funerary dimension.⁴⁴ Both aspects are subsumed by corn, in the form of bread for the royal ceremony at the beginning of the year.

In ceremonial context, the regenerative power of corn is well represented in a scene from a chapel in the Osirian complex at Dendera: from the phallus of the laying Osiris, a divine falcon and a *nh*-sign emerge.⁴⁵ The divine falcon is labelled as “the golden falcon” (*bik n nbw*), to be identified with Horus, son and heir of Osiris. This scene of transmission of power also features the *nh*-sign, which reminds of the expression *prt-nh* “corn” (lit.: “the exit of life”), known from the Khoiak inscriptions at Dendera.⁴⁶ The physical emergence of Horus from his father's body is here represented with the outmost clarity. In turn, this fits in with an ancient model, described in the Book of Earth (New Kingdom). In this composition, we find another representation of the birth of Horus from the body of Osiris: from the laying divine body placed in an oval shape (= Netherworld), a falcon-headed deity emerges, supported by regenerative power of the solar disk.⁴⁷

The crucial term in the Dendera representation is *nbw*, which refers to both “gold” and “corn”.⁴⁸ In connection with kingship, the term is also found in the

⁴² *Editio princeps* of the inscriptions in Chassinat 1966–1968; on the Osirian chapels in the temple of Dendera: Cauville 1997b.

⁴³ The corn-Osiris is referred to also in the following passage: “To make (it) in the shape of a mummy, crowned with the White Crown (*hdt*)”: Chassinat 1966–1968, 205 (col. 20), cf. 766 (col. 112). A royal representation of Osiris, whose *nsw-bit* name is written in the cartouche, opens the Book VII of the ritual: Chassinat 1966–1968, 779 (coll. 133–134).

⁴⁴ Ciampini 2009.

⁴⁵ Chapel west, 3: Cauville 1997a, I, 423; II, pl. 257.

⁴⁶ Chassinat 1966–1968, 162 (col. 4).

⁴⁷ From the tomb of Ramesses VI; discussion of the scene in Roberson 2012, 172–173.

⁴⁸ See the *hwt-nbw*, “temple of the corn”, homophonous of the “temple of gold”, identifying the Osirian chapels at Dendera: Cauville 1997, III: 345–346.

royal name *bik n nbw*, the “golden (or: heavenly) falcon”.⁴⁹ Both meanings further characterize kingship, as having a mineral precious aspect, as well as an eatable character. Exploiting this lexicographical connection, the king becomes part of the royal incarnation process, *i.e.* he becomes the personification of the abstract concept of divine power. Such abstract concept is rendered by hieroglyphic signs having material referents (gold, corn), which are absorbed by the king. In addition, the royal “corporation” is also represented by specific elements (the throne, the sceptres, the crowns), which play an important role during the ceremonies of coronation.

The *ibwt*-emblem eaten during the New Year ritual is part of this complex system of legitimisation: after the meal, the king becomes the perfect personification of the divine kingship. A parallel situation is described in the annals of the high-ranking priests of the Third Intermediate Period at Karnak. During the ceremony of the introduction to the Holy of the Holies in Amun’s temple, some priests receive in fact objects marking their social status, such as for instance the Maat-amulet which identifies the priest as vizier. One of these texts states:

A high office (*ibwt wrt*) took place in my body, and it will be not removed; its pure amulet [...].⁵⁰

The priest in Karnak transforms in a physical presence of that sacred office (or corporation, in the words of Kantorowicz, see above, note 13), which allows him to reach Amun’s image in the shrine.

The evidence gathered so far points to a complex articulation of the concept of *status*, as defined on both royal and priestly domains. Such concept is intimately linked to the idea of assimilation. Through the process of assimilation, a physical person is turned in to the material expression of his or her office – an abstract concept that would otherwise remain without referent. As for the king, the process involves the consumption of a meal, whose performative power allows the transformation of his body in the substance of kingship.

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⁴⁹ Von Beckerath 1999, 17–21.

⁵⁰ Inscription of Panetiefankh, 5: Kruchten 1989, 36–38; the end of the text is missing. The “pure amulet” mentioned in the text represents the goddess Maat.

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