**JTroche: Török (1999) On the Foundations of Kingship Ideology in the Empire of Kush**

Törökopens bydiscussing thescholarlytendency to hold onto outdated interpretations of things like kingship. This is Morkot’s main criticism. While we do not fully understand pre-Kushite kingship, we can observe distinctive non-Egyptian elements. Kushite kingship was traditionally, and narrowly, seen as sharing Egyptian ideology, with its differences “explained as consequences of a process of intellectual decline caused by increasing isolation” (273). Scholars tend to approach the material in two ways: from the Egyptian perspective, largely ignoring the differences found, or those scholars of Kush looking at the indigenous aspects. But, Törökcomments, there has yet to be a comprehensive analysis of the textual and iconographic evidence. Törökcomplements Morkot’s analysis and offers his own to further the discussion.

Succession is ideologically founded and key to understanding how the institution of kingship is imagined. In Egypt this symbolically continual line of succession began with the gods and continued through those who held the throne. In Kushite ideology continuity was similarly emphasized as descending from Alara. The precise lines of succession are not entirely understood though. Three main theories exist: matrilineal, patrilineal, and collateral. In reality succession was probably mixed and based to some degree on an election amongst potential royal candidates like princes (274-6). Some Classical authors describe the election of a Kushite king. Royal texts, rather, describe the appointment of the king by the god Amun. Török describes this as a “dramatically construed and described *demonstration of legitimacy*” (277, italics by author). This ritual Török argues originates in New Kingdom Theban practices with influence of the Third Intermediate Period’s theology of will (277).

Another tool of legitimacy was the role of king as divine son, or what Török calls ‘divine sonship.’ This also can have its origins traced back to the Egyptian New Kingdom, the ritual endowment of the royal ka and the Kushite story of Piye’s encounter with Re at Heliopolois. A point of debate has been the role of women in legitimizing Kushite kingship. Indeed, a potential mode of succession has been identified as matrilineal. However, Török seems to argue that “legitimacy is not conveyed by female ancestors – the matrilinear aspect occurs as a complementary feature alongside” divine sonship and patrilinear succession. Notably, Khensa was believed to be predestined to be the mother of the rightful king and as such the legitimate line of succession. Török, though, proposes a different interpretation of this evidence, suggesting that Piye, who was married to Khensa, was indeed predestined to father the rightful line. I was surprised to read this interpretation, as most other scholars I have read seem to fall more favorably on the central role of women in royal Kushite succession.

In general, I found this chapter to be a good investigation into controversial and complex matters related to the nature of Kushite royal succession and kingship more broadly. What Török begins his discussion with is the issue with a lack of a comprehensive analysis of Kushite kingship. What I found slightly problematic in this short response by Török is his general lack of explicit discussion of the indigenous aspects of Kushite kingship. While he does indeed look towards Kushite texts and archaeology, he seems to consistently try to identify backwards the Egyptian origin for many of the rituals, practices and ideological concepts. Even if these were to be true, I would appreciate a more informed discussion of the motivations for this transmission and the modes of transmission.