



BRILL

Patronage and Other Logics of Social Organization in Ancient Egypt during the IIIrd Millennium BCE

Marcelo Campagno

CONICET / University of Buenos Aires

mcampagno@gmail.com

Abstract

Several years ago, an insightful analysis by Jan Assmann demonstrated the existence of patronage practices in Ancient Egypt during the First Intermediate Period. Does this indicate a change in social structure, as the author suggested, or does it instead denote a change in the way such practices are referred to in the available sources? In order to consider this question, this article examines the evidence of patronage during that period, and then tries to analyze possible precedents, reflecting on the role that patronage could have had from the earliest moments of state structuration in the Nile Valley.

Il y a quelques années, une analyse lucide par Jan Assmann a démontré l'existence de pratiques de patronage dans l'Égypte Ancienne pendant la Première Période Intermédiaire. Ces pratiques indiquent-elles un changement dans la structure sociale, comme l'auteur l'a suggéré, ou dénotent-elles plutôt un changement dans la présentation de ces pratiques dans les sources disponibles? Pour aborder cette question, cet article examine les témoignages du patronage pendant cette période. On s'efforce ensuite d'analyser des précédents possibles et de réfléchir au rôle que le patronage pourrait avoir eu dès les débuts de la structuration de l'État dans la Vallée du Nil.

Keywords

Patronage – kinship – state – First Intermediate Period – Old Kingdom

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Introduction

One of the major problems within historical discourse is defined by the relationship between the past that historical discourse evokes and the traces that this discourse identifies as evidence of a particular past. On the one hand, certain empiricist researchers tend to avoid discussing historical issues unless they have sufficient supporting evidence. On the other hand, researchers with a different theoretical background prefer to consider that “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence,” and therefore they acknowledge the pertinence of thinking about any historical situation, even in the lack of direct records of them. If the issues a researcher is attempting to consider refer to a distant past, sources may be scant, and interpretations based only on available evidence may lead to doubtful conclusions. The history of Ancient Egypt is useful to illustrate this problem. If our goal were to analyze ancient Egyptian social organization, but our analysis could only take into account the existing evidence, it would be easy to conclude that the state was the sole determiner of social structure, provided that existing historical sources mainly refer to the state, both because of the context in which they were produced and the message they used to convey. Obviously the state logic is relevant to an understanding of ancient Egyptian social organization. However, if we look at the problem more closely, we notice that other logics participate in the structuration of that society. Despite the fact that assumptions of this nature often remain in the theoretical realm, they allow us to reorder the available evidence along other lines, which offer more credible explanations about the issues we are trying to understand.

The present study firstly focuses on a specific period of ancient Egyptian history: the so-called First Intermediate Period, which corresponds to the last part of the IIIrd millennium BCE (c. 2200–2050 BCE). During this timeframe, some sources of the period—elite tomb inscriptions in particular—seem to indicate an important change in social organization, especially when compared to earlier evidence. According to an insightful analysis of JAN ASSMANN, it is a change in the social structure, characterized by “the emergence of a new social type: the patron.”¹ ASSMANN’s analysis is remarkable in that it finds several indications of patronage in funerary inscriptions in addition to outlining the broader importance of patronage in the Nile Valley during the late IIIrd millennium BCE. However, what does this information imply? Does it indicate a change in social structure that occurs at that moment, as the author maintains, or does it point to a shift in the way patronage is referred to in

1 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 50.

funerary texts? These questions can be reformulated: Does the first explicit evidence of a change indicate the moment at which that change takes place, or does it instead mark the *terminus post quem* for referring to such event? Depending on the position adopted regarding these decisive questions, studies may reach very different conclusions.

Some Theoretical Proposals

ASSMANN'S observation about a change that results in patronage practices in the First Intermediate Period seems to rely on three separate issues. First, on the availability of sources from that time and from later periods (mainly funerary autobiographies, instructions, and tales) that point to a type of social subordination characterized by a patron's authority and client's loyalty in exchange for some kind of aid or protection. Second, on the absence of texts from earlier periods in which this type of relationship can be recognized *with the same degree of precision*. And third, on the fact that a political crisis at the end of the Old Kingdom—with the central state's loss of power and the emergence of regional autonomies—provides at first glance an appropriate context for the emergence of new social ties. Thus, the proposal of an emerging logic of patronage in the First Intermediate Period implies that patron-client links were not present in previous times. How then could one characterize Egyptian social structuration prior to the crisis at the end of the Old Kingdom? Perhaps as a purely state defined organization, as one could infer from the state specific nature of the most visible sources of this time mentioned above? This seems to be the opinion of ASSMANN. Considering that the emergence of ties defined by patronage means a change in the social structure, thereby incorporating an "intermediate layer between the individual family and the state," the author notes:

Such intermediate forms had certainly existed in prehistory in the shape of clans, for, before the development of the stratified society in late prehistory, Egyptian society was undoubtedly "segmental"—organized horizontally into clans, not vertically into rulers and subjects. These prehistoric clan structures were, however, systematically dismantled in the Old Kingdom. The king ruled, with the help of his officials, over an undifferentiated mass. The (extremely fragmentary) sources for the Old Kingdom of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties contain no reference whatever to estates or classes, tribes, clans and families, local princes,

or magnates, or to centers or concentrations of power. The king and his clique exercised absolute rule over an inchoate mass of subjects.²

ASSMANN's opinion is rather curious. On the one hand, it is attractive to the degree that it takes into account the importance of kinship organizations (his "clan structures") in pre-state social structuration, and the emergence of a different social logic (his "vertical" organization) once the state emerges. But on the other hand, by concluding that kinship is totally replaced by the state, the author assumes the existence of an absolute state rule, apparently because the sources he considers do not refer to other types of social organization; notably, he does not apply this empirical rigor to prehistoric times, an era that he would be unable to comment on if he relied solely on an empiricist interpretation. Thus, in moving between a prehistoric era that is outlined in general theoretical terms and a state era that is characterized only according to the sources at hand, ASSMANN concludes by suggesting an image of a king and his entourage exercising absolute power over hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of peasants scattered across a vast territory, without any local organization, all reduced to an undifferentiated mass. This image is too unlikely to be accepted without criticism.³

In order to propose a more plausible scenario to think about Egyptian social organization during the IIIrd millennium BCE, I would like to reexamine ASSMANN's interpretation by proposing three revisions.⁴ The first revision aims to reformulate the author's idea of the state as an "absolute power" exercised by the king and his entourage, in terms of a social logic based on the legitimate monopoly of coercion in the hands of a small dominant group. It is certainly not a minor reformulation: it implies thinking of the state no longer as a set of monolithic institutions but as a set of practices ruled by a single logic. Accordingly, the decisive characteristic of the state is not the despotic will of the monarch, but the set of practices whose existence depends on that

2 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 50.

3 Assmann's opinion is certainly not a *rara avis* within Egyptology but a perception shared by a group of researchers. For example, see Franke ("First Intermediate Period," 531), who believes that during the First Intermediate Period, "social networks were developed beyond the nuclear family and the relationship of master and servant, the followers tied to local patrons by reciprocal bonds of security for fidelity, economic dependency, and the ideological ideal of the good shepherd. The First Intermediate Period was, therefore, not a period of decline but one of challenge." For a different perspective, see Kóhtay. "Houses and Households," 349–50.

4 These proposals have been mainly suggested in Campagno, *De los jefes-parientes a los reyes-dioses*, "De los modos de organización social," and "Parentesco, patronazgo y Estado."

legitimate monopoly of coercion, which covers a broad spectrum in which policy-making by kings (inasmuch as it depends on their coercive capacity) is certainly included, but also all practices associated with the extraction of tribute, which allows for the reproduction of the dominant social group.

The second revision to ASSMANN's model refers to the place given to practices of kinship therein. Rather than consider that kinship provides only "prehistoric" forms of horizontal organization, destined to be suppressed by the state, I propose that kinship be seen as decisive in general social structuration, not only in non-state societies, but also as one of the central axes shaping conditions of existence in ancient state societies. Such a perspective is particularly relevant to the consideration of social experience in the Nile Valley, both before and after the emergence of the state. Although the evidence is not as clear as the aforementioned empiricist researchers would like, Predynastic funerary practices allow us to infer the organizing capacity of kinship ties in village communities, and the same kind of inferences can be made in state times, suggesting that kinship is the central criterion for the internal structuring of peasant villages. The importance of kinship in ancient Egypt during state times is especially apparent in the way it conditions the internal organization of elites and influences the realm of cosmic representations, where it is one of the basic criteria for the expression of relationships among the gods, including the king.

The third revision to ASSMANN's characterization of Egyptian society in the IIIrd millennium BCE is, strictly speaking, a note of caution. Cross-cultural comparative analyses of main social dynamics between ancient societies allow us to identify different forms of personal subordination, which thrive alongside state and kinship ties without being confused with them. These practices—which, in general terms, may be called patronage—are based on a principle of "asymmetrical reciprocity," which implies a form of subordination that is not based on the monopoly of coercion in the hands of the patron but rather on bonds of authority and loyalty. These relations can proliferate in state societies, inasmuch as the same individuals can be simultaneously linked to both state and patronage logics (for example, an individual who gains control over a territory as the result of his being part of a state elite, but who then exercises patronage prerogatives over the population living in that territory). Evidence of these kinds of practices is not always easy to find; however, it would not be strategic to suppose its non-existence simply because the sources of a particular time period do not explicitly refer to them.

Now, even after these revisions, a question remains. If evidence from the First Intermediate Period points to the existence of patronage practices in ways that are not similarly identifiable in earlier periods, does this indicate a

change in social structure, or does it instead denote a change in the way such practices are referred to in the available sources? In order to think about this question, first, I will examine the evidence regarding patronage practices during the First Intermediate Period. Second, I will try to analyze whether these practices can be linked to a particular, perhaps more opaque, precedent from previous times. Finally, I will propose a return to the theoretical realm and to a *longue durée* historical perspective, to reflect on the role that patronage practices could have had from the earliest moments of state organization in the Nile Valley.

Patronage in the First Intermediate Period

ASSMANN'S observations about references to patronage in the First Intermediate Period sources are undoubtedly accurate. Indeed, the evidence from that period—as with the evidence from later periods—allows us to identify a relationship of subordination that is different from the relations ruled by the state logic.⁵ Funerary autobiographies of high officials of the period provide the best evidence for asymmetrical relationships between those who can be described as patrons and clients.⁶ Such relationships are characterized primarily by a patron's protection and client's loyalty. The *Autobiography of Ankhtifi* of Mo'alla,⁷ nomarch of Hierakonpolis in early 9th Dynasty, explicitly reflects these protection practices that make the patron an evident "benefactor":

I gave bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked, ointment to the unanointed, sandals to the barefoot; I gave woman to him who had not. I kept alive (the cities of) Hefat and Hormer [...] I did not allow that anyone died of hunger

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- 5 The existence of relations of patronage/clientelism in Ancient Egypt has recently received significant attention: see Eyre, "How Relevant was Personal Status" and "Patronage, Power, and Corruption"; Franke, "Fürsorge und Patronat"; Moreno García, "La dépendance rurale," "Élites et états tributaires," "The 'Other' Administration," and "Limits of pharaonic administration"; Warden, *Pottery and Economy*, 20–28, 250.
- 6 On the asymmetry that characterizes patronage relationships, see Boissevain, "Patronage in Sicily," 18; Powell, "Peasant Society," 412; Gellner and Waterbury, *Patrons and Clients*, 4; Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients, and Friends*, 251–63; Campagno, "Tres formas de existencia política," 348–49. For ancient contexts, see Wallace-Hadrill, *Patronage in Ancient Society*; Westbrook, "Patronage in the Ancient Near East"; Pfoh, "Some Remarks on Patronage."
- 7 Vandier, *Mo'alla*. See Schenkel, *MHT*, 45–57; Lichtheim, *AEL*, 85–86; *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies*, 24–26. For an analysis of patronage in the *Autobiography of Ankhtifi*, see Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 94–105; see also Campagno, "Lo patronal, lo estatal y lo parental."

in this nome [...] I rescued the weak (m3r) from the powerful (wsr), I heard the word of the widow.

Something similar is said by Henqu, head of the 12th Nome during the 8th Dynasty, in his tomb at Deir el-Gabravi:⁸

[I am] who released your children from the ropes, your (work of) traction in the canal. (Now) you grow old in the hall of the officials. [...] I gave bread to all the hungry of the nome of Dw:f, I gave clothes to the naked [...] I never deprived a man of his possessions so that he had to complain to the local god about it.

Such protection offered by the patron to the client requires in return the latter's loyalty. In this sense, Ankhtifi refers to the troops that assist him in military actions as *d3mw n mh-ib*, "reliable troops" (lit., "troops of full heart"). And he is explicit as regards those who do not show loyalty in return for the benefits they receive:

As for each one on whom I place my hand, nothing (bad) happened to him, due to the secrecy of my heart and the excellence of my plans; but as for any ignorant (hm) and any wretch (hwrw) who was against me, he received in accordance with what he gave [...] He who listened to my counsel, nothing (bad) happened to him; he who heeded me, praised god; but he who heeded me not, said: Woe!

A similar type of reaction to the client's disloyalty can be inferred from a passage of *The Eloquent Peasant*, a slightly later text.⁹ In this tale, after the peasant Khunanup is violently dispossessed of his goods by a certain Nemtynakht, the incident reaches the ears of High Steward Rensi's councilors, who consider that:

Surely it is a peasant of his, who has gone to someone else. Look, that is what they do to their peasants who goes to others apart from them.

8 *Urk. I*, 76–79; Davies, *Deir el-Gabravi*, pl. 23–26. See Schenkel, *MHT*, 41; Daneri, *Las Dinastías VII–VIII*, 147; Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 366–68.

9 The tale is currently dated to the Middle Kingdom, towards the end of 12th Dynasty. See Vogelsang and Gardiner, *Klagen des Bauern*, pl. 1–24; Lichtheim, *AEL*, 169–84; Parkinson, *Eloquent Peasant*; and the articles gathered in Gnirs, *Reading the Eloquent Peasant*.

Although the assumption made by the councilors in this story was wrong, it seems clear, as indicated by CHRISTOPHER EYRE, that “Nemtynakht’s actions were interpreted [by the councilors] as the violence used to maintain local hierarchy and patron-client relationships.”¹⁰ Indeed, there is room to suppose that the phrasing “go to others” can indicate a transfer of a client’s loyalty from one patron to another, as, in fact, is possible within the framework of patronage practices.

In any case, this exchange that characterizes links between patrons and clients in terms of protection and loyalty implies some autonomy on both sides, which stands in contrast with what would be permitted within a framework ruled entirely by the state logic. The funerary inscriptions of those who act as patrons normally emphasize the patron’s capacity to act in their own interest, and not as mere executors of the will of higher authorities. Many texts of the First Intermediate Period offer a positive description of a certain social category, the *nedjes*, highlighting precisely the *nedjes*’ autonomy to act. This is evident, for example, in the funerary stela of Heqaib from Abydos (Stela BM 1671):¹¹

I am an excellent nedjes, who speaks for his (own) mouth and acts by his (own) arm.

In a similar sense, the *Autobiography of Ankhtifi*, again, illustrates the degree of autonomy that the nomarch constantly boasts about:

I am the beginning and the end of the people; one who finds what to say when it was needed, at the head of the land, because of my deep determination; with skillful mouth and stout heart on the day of unity of the nomes. I am a hero (tꜣy) without peer.

While patronage practices imply a situation in which the client depends on the patron, it seems the client still has some freedom in the way he reciprocates. Although this is not clearly appreciated in the autobiographies of the period, there is some evidence supporting the idea of limited client autonomy. The previously mentioned interpretation of the councilors in *The Eloquent Peasant* suggests some possibility of transferring client loyalties to different patrons. Additionally, in the *Teachings of Ptahhotep*, a text that is generally dated to

10 Eyre, “How Relevant was Personal Status,” 180.

11 Polotsky, “Stela of Heka-Yeb.”

the subsequent Middle Kingdom but that could also be related to the First Intermediate Period,¹² one of the maxims indicates:

*If you are humble (*hsj*), follow a man of excellence (*jqr*) and your situation before the god will be good.*

The maxim seems to imply an ability to choose whether or not to “follow” (*šms*) someone more powerful. Regardless of the constraints that could force such a decision in each specific situation, the practice of patronage is not based on the legitimate monopoly of coercion in the hands of the patron, and therefore requires a degree of consent by the client to give his own loyalty.

In addition to these references, two other lines of evidence provide further information about the existence of patronage practices in the First Intermediate Period. On the one hand, it has been emphasized that, during this period, there is an increase in the use of toponyms composed by the term *pr*, “house,” followed by the name of the house’s lord, as in the case of the *pr Hww*, the “House of Khuu,” that Ankhtifi mentions in his inscriptions to refer to the nome of Edfu. According to JUAN CARLOS MORENO GARCÍA, the fact

that such toponyms are more frequent during the crisis of the unitary monarchy reveals the existence of organizing realities with effects on society and territory which, although rarely evoked in official sources, seem to constitute powerful nuclei of social and territorial structuration with which the monarchy had to negotiate.¹³

Now, as ASSMANN has noted, Khuu does not seem to be Edfu’s nomarch during Ankhtifi’s times but rather the founder of the ruling family in that nome.¹⁴ The perception of the nome in terms of a family house suggests the importance of both kinship and patronage, inasmuch as the “house” can be understood in terms of a *household*, that is, a kind of social organization composed not only of relatives but also of dependent members linked to the core group through ties of clientelism.¹⁵

12 On the dating of the *Teachings of Ptahhotep*, see Vernus, “Le discours politique,” 152. With regard to the text, see Jéquier, *Papyrus Prisse*; Žába, *Maximes de Ptahhotep*; Lichtheim, *AEL*, 61–80. Vernus’ analysis highlights the issue of clientelism (p. 142).

13 Moreno García, “Primer Período Intermedio,” 199 (my translation).

14 Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 443.

15 On households as organizations that include non-kin dependants, see Maisels, “Models of Social Evolution,” 334, 354 and *Emergence of Civilization*, 166.

On the other hand, a recent observation by LUDWIG MORENZ is worth noting, which brings us back to the context of Ankhtifi, but from the point of view of the organization of funerary space. The author observes that there is a series of tomb shafts in the vicinity of the burials of the nomarch and some of their relatives, which could be associated with his *d3mw*, his “reliable troops,” placed in a proximity that might reflect the relationship between a patron and his followers. In MORENZ’s words,

we do not know who was buried in these tomb shafts, but from various places we know that attendants were buried at the feet of his lord—*hr rd.wj nb=f*. Thus it is a plausible option to assume these *d3mw* to have been buried in front of Ankhtifi and his sons.¹⁶

If this were the case, we could interpret this funerary pattern as another trace pointing to the importance of patronage practices in the Nile Valley during the First Intermediate Period.¹⁷

Patronage in the Old Kingdom

All these references testify to the existence of patronage practices during the First Intermediate Period. But do they indicate something completely *new* at that time? In this regard, the autobiographies of Old Kingdom officials—which serve as a direct precedent for the autobiographies in the First Intermediate Period—provide some significant hints. First of all, statements of officials who claim to have acted during their lives as “benefactors,” much in the way Ankhtifi did later on, are plentiful. Expressions such as “to have given bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked” are among the most frequent in the Old Kingdom autobiographies, both in the necropolis of the Memphite court and in the elite cemeteries of Upper Egypt. Thus, the following examples:

16 Morenz, “Power and Status,” 190. See Godenho (*Manifestations of Culture*, 161–66), who suggests that Ankhtifi’s tomb is the “nucleus” of his necropolis, “the rest of the cemetery being entirely organised around it” (p. 143), and thus reflecting a pattern compatible with the social hierarchy of a household (p. 170, 173–74).

17 On this regard, see Willems, “First Intermediate Period,” 83. See also Moreno García, “La gestion sociale de la mémoire,” 229.

It was me who gave clothes, bread and beer to anyone who was naked and hungry there (Nekhebu of Giza, 6th Dynasty).¹⁸

I gave bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked. I ferried to land him who had no boat (Kaiaper of Saqqara, 6th Dynasty).¹⁹

I gave bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked. I ferried to land him who had no boat (Herkhuf of Qubbet el-Hawa, 6th Dynasty).²⁰

It is true these Old Kingdom phrases appear very formulaic, especially when compared with the references to the benefactor status of officials in inscriptions from the First Intermediate Period.²¹ But it is important to note that the use of these phrases in funerary autobiographies presupposes that the good official is not only supposed to execute specific tasks but must similarly engage in protecting the needy. This assumption is particularly clear in the frequent statement of officials acting to protect the “wretched man” from the abuse of the “powerful”:

I did not allow that a noble (šps) take for himself the property of a poor man (šwʒ) (Sekhemankhptah of Giza, 5th Dynasty).²²

I buried him who had no son. I ferried to land who had [no boat. I rescued] the wretched man (mʒr) from the powerful (wsr) (Merefnebef of Saqqara, 6th Dynasty).²³

[Never] I did abuse my authority over anyone [...] [I rescued the wretched man] from the one that was more powerful (Khentika of Saqqara, 6th Dynasty).²⁴

18 *Urk. I*, 217: 13; see Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 267–69.

19 Kanawati and Hassan, *Teti Cemetery at Saqqara*, 35–51, pl. 14–23, 47–55; see Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 282.

20 *Urk. I*, 122: 6; see Lichtheim, *AEL*, 24; Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 329.

21 On the contrast between Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period autobiographies, see Coulon, “Veracité et réthorique,” 120–22. For a detailed analysis of the autobiographies, see Kloth, *(auto-)biographischen Inschriften*. See also Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 42–46.

22 Badawy, *Tombs of Iteti*; see Kloth, *(auto-)biographischen Inschriften*, 279; Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 310.

23 Myśliwiec, *et al.*, *Saqqara I*; see Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 438–41.

24 James, *Mastaba of Khentika*; see Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 288–91.

These statements are doubly significant. Initially, because they suggest the existence of recurrent abuses of the weak by the powerful, an idea that allows us to consider scenarios similar to the one described in *The Eloquent Peasant*, where a peasant is the victim of a more powerful man, and where the councilors assume a patron-like “settling of accounts.” Although references to abuses in Old Kingdom sources do not provide details, we are able to envision the practical contexts in which these injustices could occur. Even if an official took advantage of his place within the state to abuse peasants, the abuse itself would not be properly a state matter but rather a “private” issue benefiting that official. It is difficult to continue speculating in this manner, but it would not be strange at all if these contexts were compatible with patronage practices. Furthermore, the frequency of these statements about helping the needy enables a more loaded question: is it plausible that these types of actions aimed at helping peasants would be performed without any reciprocal action from those receiving the benefit? We could assume that these repeated references only refer to a code of conduct, whose very vagueness indicates they were mere formalities. However, there are indications that point to more specific practices. The following example comes from Qar, nomarch of Edfu during the 6th Dynasty:²⁵

With regard to any man whom I found in this nome burdened down with a loan of grain from another, I paid back his creditor (with goods) from my funerary estate (Qar of Edfu, 6th Dynasty).

Can we suppose that this paying off of debts would take place without an action or a gesture in return? Would the needy not be obliged to reciprocate, at the very least with their loyalty, a key component of patronage practices? These questions give us reason to suspect the existence of different forms of social subordination, capable of thriving in the interstices of the state contexts.

In addition to the clues present in the funerary autobiographies, evidence about households and the mortuary space organization also allows us to suspect the existence of patronage practices during the Old Kingdom. The presence of large households, containing many more members than a single family, is well documented during the period. Upper elite households could contain hundreds of members, much in the way they are depicted in tomb scenes of some high figures such as Ti, or Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep.²⁶ While

25 *Urk. I*, 254: 17–255: 1; see Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 342–44.

26 Moreno García, “Households,” “The Territorial Administration”, 89, 96–97, and “The ‘Other’ Administration,” 1044, 1048. In fact, according to Eyre (“Organisation of Work,” 40),

most households would probably shelter fewer members than this, it is likely that many households included not only a kinship group but also “friends” or dependents of different types, probably related to the head of the household through patronage ties.

In reference to the organization of mortuary space, several Old Kingdom elite cemeteries show a pattern consisting of large mastabas accompanied by different types of small tombs, which seems to suggest a pattern compatible with the one described above regarding Ankhtifi’s tomb, wherein the nomarch’s followers seem to have been buried in the vicinity of their patron.²⁷ In the Memphite region, a funerary pattern compatible with this scenario can be recognized in necropoleis such as Giza and Abusir, starting from the 5th Dynasty.²⁸ In Upper Egypt, the mastabas of 6th Dynasty nomarchs at Denderah are accompanied by a group of subsidiary tombs, and also in Abydos, the large brick mastabas of the late Old Kingdom upper elite “were surrounded by smaller mastabas, shaft graves with one or more burial chambers, and pit graves presumably belonging to family members and subordinates.”²⁹ Even earlier, at Naga ed-Der Cemetery 500–900, “minor members and adherents to the chief family” seem to have been buried near the largest mastabas during the early 4th Dynasty.³⁰

large estates during the Old Kingdom implied a type of organization within which “the personnel were in the same way dependent on the favour, patronage and provision of the official as he was on the king.” The importance of households throughout the history of Ancient Egypt has been addressed by Lehner (“Fractal House of Pharaoh,” mainly pp. 283–86), who seems to lose sight of the specificity of the state logic, by considering the whole Egyptian State as the king’s household (the place of some specific institutions—*e.g.*, temples—and bureaucratic roles within this scheme is problematic: see now Warden, *Pottery and Economy*, 16–20). See also Eyre, “The Economy: Pharaonic,” 294, 304–06; Frood, “Social Structure and Daily Life,” 471–74; Godenho, *Manifestations of Culture*, 98–108; regarding specifically the Old Kingdom, see Baines, “Modelling the integration,” 127–36; regarding the Middle Kingdom, see Kóthay, “Houses and Households.”

27 In this regard, see the considerations of Moreno García, “Élites provinciales,” 217–18, 223 and “Élites et états tributaries,” 42; for compatible observations see Eyre, “Organisation of Work,” 31; Alexanian, “Social Dimensions,” 93; Godenho, *Manifestations of Culture*, 109; Warden, *Pottery and Economy*, 24–25.

28 See Roth, *Cemetery of Palace Attendants*, 23–37; Brovarski, “Senedjemib Complex,” 120; Bárta, “Architectural innovations,” 114–16; “Egyptian Kingship during the Old Kingdom,” 269.

29 Doxey, “The Nomarch as Ruler,” 2; see also Richards, *Society and Death*, 134; “Spatial and Verbal Rhetorics of Power,” 258–62; Warden, *Pottery and Economy*, 24–25. For Denderah, see Seidlmayer, *Gräberfelder*, 408–09. A similar situation can be seen regarding the tomb of Mekhu and Sabni at Qubbet el-Hawa during the 6th Dynasty (Edel, *Felsengräber der Qubbet el-Hawa*; Godenho, *Manifestations of Culture*, 115–16).

30 Reisner, *Naga ed-Der*, 187; O’Connor, “Political Systems,” 23.

In more general terms, the tombs of certain high officials in Upper Egyptian cemeteries from the late Old Kingdom (for example, Weni of Abydos, Heqaib of Elephantine) would become “the focus for the development of regional cemeteries whereby sub-elite tombs were built in deliberate relationship to them.”³¹ Perhaps this connection between elite tombs and other, more modest graves nearby also denotes an asymmetrical relationship between the social statuses of those buried in each.³²

Thus, these indications allow us to infer that practices of patronage, which are relatively easy to identify in First Intermediate Period sources, have some precedents, at least since the second half of the Old Kingdom. However, if the analysis goes no further, there is little to be gained. What is important here is not simply to move back the dating of patronage practices one or two centuries because certain evidence suggests it can be done but rather to rethink the importance of patronage ties in the structuration of Ancient Egyptian society. This analysis of traces of patronage in the Old Kingdom is not intended to push back the *terminus post quem* for such practices, while maintaining that historical explanations must rely only on available evidence, but instead to indicate that such practices come from *before* the First Intermediate Period. But in order to think about this “before,” the problem must be posed in theoretical terms.

Kinship, the Emergence of the State, and Some Reflections on Patronage

The autobiographies of high officials that have been considered above—from the First Intermediate Period and the Old Kingdom—are significant because they allow us to identify both the importance of patronage in society during those periods as well as the fact that patronage is not the only social logic that can be recognized therein. In the first place, these autobiographies refer to the structuring nature of the state logic. The Old Kingdom autobiographies are certainly unsurpassed examples of this logic, where officials repeatedly allege that they have always acted with due diligence, under the king’s command.³³

31 Snape, *Ancient Egyptian Tombs*, 100; see also Baines and Lacovara, “Burial and the dead,” 9.

32 Warden (*Pottery and Economy*, 25–26) has highlighted another potential source for patronage evidence during the Old Kingdom that emerges from the iconographic funerary record: “the relationship between craftsmen (as clients) and elite tomb owners (as patrons).” See also p. 250.

33 On this point, see Kloth, (*auto-*)*biographischen Inschriften*, mainly pp. 119–22. See also Moreno García, *Études sur l’administration*, 17–31.

But even the texts of the First Intermediate Period, when the central state crisis facilitates the appearance of regional autonomies, allow us to see that the state logic does not disappear, as it is evidenced by officials' titles as well as by references to external authorities. And in the second place, the autobiographies also refer to the structuring role of kinship logic, as a criterion that guides officials' actions, and allows for the assessment of these actions (for example, when an official declares he has fulfilled his funerary obligations towards his parents, or he has acted so that no child was dispossessed of his father's property, or in such a way that his deeds have exceeded the ones carried out by his ancestors).³⁴

The importance of kinship and the state as *coexisting logics* of social articulation in the Nile Valley is made apparent in the IVth millennium BCE, when the first signs of state-like practices appear. Indeed, the emergence of the state logic does not imply the replacement of the preexisting kinship logic but rather the convergence of both, with the state logic dominating on the broader scale of socio-political organization. Now, is it possible to assume that the coexistence of patronage practices with those of kinship and the state also goes back to this time? The evidence is mute. But the silence should not discourage us; on the contrary, it should urge us to think about the problem in its theoretical context.

The decisive point regarding the problem of the state origins is, in my opinion, the paradoxical emergence of practices based on the monopoly of legitimate coercion in realms previously organized by kinship logic, whose principles of reciprocity are *a priori* opposed to the state logic. In other places I have proposed that, within the dynamics that take place in societies organized along the lines of kinship, there are interstitial contexts where kinship logic does not rule and, therefore, where conditions propitious to the state emergence may exist.³⁵ These contexts are propitious insofar as kinship rules do not operate therein, so that, from an analytical point of view, they are characterized by a lack rather than by any identifiable quality. In other words, these contexts are not *specifically* conducive to the emergence of state practices, but *generically* favorable to the emergence of practices different from those determined by kinship logic. Therefore, patronage practices, inasmuch as they imply a kind of social subordination that goes beyond what kinship regulates, could find favorable conditions for their existence in the same interstices.

34 On the incidence of state and kinship logics in the *Autobiography of Ankhtifi*, see Campagno, "Lo patronal, lo estatal y lo parental," 91–97.

35 The issue has been considered in Campagno, *De los jefes-parientes a los reyes-dioses*; more recently: Campagno, "En los umbrales."

Let us take a closer look at this issue. With regard to the emergence of the state in the Nile Valley around the mid-IVth millennium BCE, and according to available evidence, I have suggested previously three kinds of interstitial contexts, characterized by wars of conquest between communities, by processes of population concentration in urban nucleuses, and by the existence of sacred, de-socialized leaders.³⁶ First, if the conflicts that seem to have taken place in Upper Egypt during Naqada II had been wars of conquest, they would imply a permanent dominion of the victorious group over the vanquished, a dominion that would emerge as a consequence of the coercive actions that took place during wartime. Second, processes of population concentration, taking place in the same time period and region and particularly in Hierakonpolis, produce heterogeneous urban populations, with subgroups coming from different places, whose convergence might involve various forms of conflict and subordination. And third, the possible existence of sacred leaderships as a precedent of later Egyptian kingship, allows us to consider the extra-kinship nature of sacred leadership that allows these leaders to be within the social order but outside the logic that governs it. All these interstitial contexts, insofar as kinship does not rule in each, could facilitate the emergence of different practices. State-like practices could certainly have found favorable conditions therein. However, other forms of social subordination might also have been favored.

In particular, sacred leadership is an attractive issue because the ethnographic record indicates these leaders are often the only ones who can take outsiders (captives of war, fugitives from other communities) as personal dependents, creating with them a kind of leader's entourage. ALAIN TESTART has proposed that the origin of the state can be seen in this type of retinue, inasmuch as the members of these groups are tied only to the leader and, therefore, not bound by the limits of kinship as they go about imposing their master's will on society.³⁷ From the viewpoint I am taking here, such a possibil-

36 See Campagno, "En los umbrales." In this respect see also Campagno, "In the Beginning was the War," "Kinship, Concentration of Population," and "Kinship, Sacred Leadership."

37 See Testart, *L'origine de l'État*. In fact, Testart has suggested that subsidiary tombs in Early Dynastic royal cemeteries, as well as the contemporary iconographic representations of individuals being put to death, could be interpreted as "morts d'accompagnement," which were often chosen, in very different societies, from the leader's group of dependents (Testart, *Les morts*, 78–81). The possible existence of a king's entourage during this period may be reinforced if the title *šms nswt*, "follower of the King," is considered, which appears in the official Merka's titles in late 1st Dynasty (see Emery, *Great Tombs*, pl. 39; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 136). The practice of the "Following of Horus" (*šms Hrw*) might be understood in similar terms as a possible visit of the king, accompanied by his followers, to the various territories under his control for purposes of tax collection and

ity is doubly significant because, on the one hand, these entourages could in fact exercise coercion over society, given that their members were not bound to it through the logic of kinship. On the other hand, the relationship with the leader would not be through kinship ties either but instead through bonds of direct dependence, compatible with those of patronage practices. Thus, the same context could favor the expansion of state and patronage practices at the same time. In a similar sense, conflicts between communities, or within urban areas, could favor not only the emergence of state practices but also other, less coercive, forms of social subordination, like those offered through patronage.

Regardless of what those forms may have been, the political scenario in the Nile Valley during the last centuries of the IVth millennium BCE involves a process of state expansion whose details are poorly known, but whose main result would be the political unification of the entire region, a little before 3000 BCE, from the Nile's First Cataract to the Mediterranean Sea. Traditional historiography—mainly based on iconographic sources—argued that such events were particularly violent and culminated in the conquest of the Kingdom of Lower Egypt by Menes, the mythical leader of the Kingdom of Upper Egypt. In more recent times, archaeology has tended to paint a less violent picture of the process, taking into account the lack of strong evidence in the form of destruction that would reflect the supposed conquest.³⁸ In any case, it is true that the iconography of the period strongly emphasizes conflict, so that the process must have been, at the very least, *discursively* violent. And although evidence of physical destruction is missing, we cannot exclude the possibility that episodes of war took place, as the evidence of destruction by fire of a large building in Tell Farkha at the beginning of Naqada III might suggest.³⁹ It is also likely that northern elites would have accepted or proposed certain alliances or other forms of pacific subordination to southern elites, taking into account that the latter would have had sufficient political and military capacity to overcome any long-term resistance to its expansion. The fact that the stratigraphy of Buto, one of the most important centers in the Delta during the IVth millennium BCE, exhibits an uninterrupted continuity between the earlier stages (where local culture is prominent) and the more recent ones (where integration into the southern state realm is evident), suggests that

the affirmation of his power (see Edwards, "Early Dynastic Period," 37–38; Baines, "Origins of Egyptian Kingship," 126; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 220).

38 On this point see the approach of Köhler, "History or Ideology?"

39 In this respect, see Ciałowicz, "Tell el-Farkha 2001–2002," 380.

at least some forms of integration could have been determined, to a certain degree, by consensus rather than by violence.⁴⁰

What matters at this point is that the process of state expansion could have involved two modalities: a more direct mode, based on violence on those who might resist, and a more “indirect” mode, expressed through different forms of peaceful integration. These more peaceful forms might be expressed in terms of kinship logic if, for example, the elites of the regions newly incorporated into the state had forged ties with the southern elites through channels such as marriage.⁴¹ Likewise, such integration could also be expressed according to patronage principles, if for example the state organization were to have incorporated northern elites without open conflict, while still maintaining the north’s subordination to the southern political core.

This twofold process of political expansion during the late IVth millennium BCE could have continued to influence the ways in which state domination was consolidated during the IIIrd millennium BCE. On the one hand, the state elite applied a policy of direct intervention to the territory under its control, through the appointment of administrative officials, as well as through the realization of a number of building projects, mining and quarrying tasks, and the creation of state land-holdings (*ḥwt*) along the Nile Valley and Delta.⁴² On the other hand, various indications allow us to note that the central elite

40 This situation has been suggested by von der Way, “Excavations at Tell el-Fara’in/Buto.” A similar continuity can be seen in other Delta sites (Mendes, Tell Ibrahim Awad; summary in Campagno, *De los jefes-parientes a los reyes-dioses*, 187–89). Other sites in the North (e.g., Tell el-Farkha, Tell el-Iswid) seem to show a greater discontinuity between earlier and later strata. Interpretations differ regarding this discontinuity, explained as a cultural shift as a result of the northern incorporation into the southern state realm, and as a change in the predominant criteria of craft production in the North. In this regard, see Ciałowicz, *La naissance d’un royaume*, 91–92; Levy and van den Brink, “Interaction Models,” 13–14; Köhler, “The interaction.”

41 Such a possibility has been proposed, for instance, regarding a monumental tomb of the early 1st Dynasty at Naqada, which could belong to queen Neithhotep, thus indicating her membership in a local elite, allied through marriage to the central state elite. See Hoffman, *Egypt before the Pharaohs*, 322; Trigger, “Egypt: A Fledgling Nation,” 61.

42 On the creation of *ḥwt*, the main reference is Moreno García, *Ḥwt et le milieu rural*. See also Moreno García, *Egipto en el Imperio Antiguo*, 95–49 and “La dépendance rurale.” For some strategies of Old Kingdom central administration in the provinces, see Warden, *Pottery and Economy*, 226–33. On the general characteristics of the state administration during the Early Dynastic period and the Old Kingdom, see also Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 109–49; Engel, “Organisation of a Nascent State”; Bárta, “Kings, Viziers, and Courtiers”; Brovarski, “Overseers of Upper Egypt”; Godinho, *Manifestations of elite culture*, 11–61; Martin-Pardey, *Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Provinzialverwaltung*;

carried out a policy of coopting local elites, both by way of kinship and patronage ties. Although marriage alliances could be traced back to the beginning of the Early Dynastic Period, these kinds of relationships between central and provincial elites are better attested during the Old Kingdom.⁴³ Similarly, references regarding provincial elite members whose early education had taken place at the Royal Court (Ibi of Deir el-Gabrawi, Weni of Abydos, Qar of Edfu) also date back to the same period, which suggests certain forms of subordinate articulation of the provincial elites to the Memphite core.⁴⁴

However, this process of expansion and further consolidation of the state logic that takes place in the Nile Valley between the IVth and IIIrd millennia BCE did not only imply the formation of a supra-regional elite ruling over pre-existing local elites. It also involved the structuration of a much more heterogeneous kind of society. Indeed, if the pre-state scenario can be characterized by the existence of a plurality of village communities, each of which might have forms of leadership and differentiation compatible with kinship logic, the expansion of the state logic generated new possibilities of social interaction, potentially reconfiguring the links between rural villages and local elites, as well as between local elites and officials from the central elite. Thus for example, central administration officials could be appointed to govern at regional levels, which would facilitate state control over the territory; at the same time, this could open the doors for the cooption of these officials by regional elites. In the same sense, regional elites might end up distancing themselves from their old communal dynamics through their interaction with the central state. In this context we can consider the formation of an intermediate and diffuse social group, usually referred to as “sub-elites.”⁴⁵ In the frame of this new social heterogeneity, the interesting feature is that any group could be simultaneously traversed by the logics of the state, kinship, and patronage, depending on the different links connecting one group to another.

Moreno García, “The Territorial Administration”; Papazian, “The Central Administration”; Müller-Wollermann, *Krisenfaktoren im Ägyptischen Staat*, 55–98.

43 Moreno García, “Élites provinciales” and “The ‘Other’ Administration,” 1034–35. For a compatible conclusion, see Bárta, “Egyptian Kingship during the Old Kingdom,” 275–76 (although the author considers these relationships in a context, from the 5th Dynasty on, in which kinship would become more “socially obliged”).

44 See Moreno García, “Primer Período Intermedio,” 184. Textual references in Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 363 (Ibi), 352–57 (Weni), and 343 (Qar).

45 See Baines, “Modelling the integration,” 134; Moreno García, “Élites et états tributaries,” 40 and “The ‘Other’ Administration,” 1055.

Coexisting Logics: State, Kinship, and Patronage

Let us consider some scenarios in which we can perceive this multiplicity of social logics operating simultaneously. A late Old Kingdom elite cemetery at el-Hawawish (near Akhmim) contains the burials of a group of nomarchs related through kinship ties.⁴⁶ In particular, the tomb of Tjeti-Kaihep is significant because there is evidence of another tomb built by the same nomarch at an earlier date in the Memphite area. Two preserved lintel blocks of this earlier tomb indicate that Tjeti-Kaihep had been a member of Pepi II's court since his youth, having acted there as a seal bearer of the king, sole companion, and overseer of priests. It is likely that, *a posteriori*, the premature death of his elder brother precipitated the return of Tjeti-Kaihep to Akhmim, to assume the government of the nome.⁴⁷ What I want to emphasize here is that, on the one hand, the education of the future nomarch in the Memphite court seems to reflect relations of clientelistic cooption between regional elites and the central court. On the other hand, Tjeti-Kaihep's return to Upper Egypt may have occurred because of the need to assume a political position—that is, a place within the state apparatus—for which he was qualified as a member of a regional ruling family. Similarly, the contemporary nomarch Qar of Edfu describes in his autobiography how he “was taken to Pepi (I) to be given an education among the children of the chiefs,”⁴⁸ which also seems to show patronage relationships between central and regional elites. Upon his return to Edfu, he would occupy the highest state offices at the regional level, as nomarch, overseer of the grain of Upper Egypt, and overseer of priests. But the exercise of these functions in no way obstructed the practice of patronage at the local level. On the contrary, it facilitated patronage, as we can infer from the above-mentioned references of Qar's autobiography, where he describes himself helping the needy and, in particular, paying the debts of the poor with his own resources.

If examples such as those of Tjeti-Kaihep and Qar correspond to the upper segment of this heterogeneous society, other less precise information allows us to paint an image of the situation at lower levels. Several Old Kingdom sources reference individuals using the term *ḥqꜣ*, a generic word used to refer one's condition as a “chief.” While the term could be used, as MORENO GARCÍA notes, to refer to certain royal domains officials (*ḥqꜣ ḥwt*, *ḥqꜣ nwwt mꜣwt*), when

46 See Kanawati, *Rock Tombs of El-Hawawish*.

47 See Moreno García, *Egipto en el Imperio Antiguo*, 143, “Élites provinciales,” 221, and “The ‘Other’ Administration,” 1035.

48 *Urk.* I, 254: 1; Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid Age*, 343; El-Khadragy, “The Edfu Offering Niche of Qar,” 211. On the biography of Qar, see also Campagno, “Lógicas coexistentes.”

the term appears alone, it was often used “to refer to provincial responsables—both in the Archaic Period and the Fourth Dynasty—as well as the heads of rural communities.”⁴⁹ Indeed, the term does not seem directly tied to the central administration and

semble particulièrement apte à décrire l'exercice du pouvoir non royal, mais délégué ou reconnu par le roi sur un territoire précis à l'extérieur de sa capitale: en somme, une caractérisation des 'pouvoirs locaux' vus des Memphis.⁵⁰

The low social status of at least some of these *ḥqꜣw* is apparent in the iconography of elite tombs such as the mastaba of Ti, high dignitary of the 5th Dynasty, at Saqqara, where the *ḥqꜣw* are represented prostrate and beaten before the scribes.⁵¹ But if such images eloquently depict a state scene in which probable communal leaders are the object of coercion, other sources show them in more benign contexts: the existence of some seated *ḥqꜣw* statuettes imply that some of them may have had access to prestige goods; an inscription in the stela of Hasi, a minor official at Naqada during the First Intermediate Period, indicates: *jnk mry nb.f ḥzy n ḥqꜣw.f*, “I was one loved of his Lord, praised of his chiefs.”⁵² While the broad meaning of the term prevents us from knowing the specific status of these chiefs in any one context, it is possible that, during state times, rural leaders may have had more freedom to act than the logic of kinship would ordinarily allow in village contexts, precisely because of their status as local representatives before the state.

From one end of this social spectrum to the other, it is necessary, according to MORENO GARCÍA, at least

distinguer deux niveaux au sein des élites provinciales: d'une part les nomarques et les fonctionnaires subalternes, qui possédaient des tombes décorées et des objets inspirés par la culture palatine; et, d'autre part, les chefs locaux et les gouverneurs des villages, souvent évoqués de manière collective dans les textes et qui ne sont repérables que grâce à

49 Moreno García, “*Ḥqꜣw*, ‘jefes, gobernadores,’” 143 (my translation).

50 Pantalacci, “Pouvoir central,” 59.

51 See Kanawati, *The Tomb and its Significance*, 114.

52 Moreno García, “*Ḥqꜣw*, ‘jefes, gobernadores,’” 149; Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies*, 35.

leur mention occasionnelle dans l'épigraphie ou à l'emploi qu'ils font, exceptionnellement, d'objets de prestige.⁵³

This distinction may roughly coincide with the contrast indicated in texts from the First Intermediate Period between those figures identified by the terms *ʿ3* or *wr*, “great one,” and those referred to with the term *nḏs*, “small one.”⁵⁴ Again in the words of MORENO GARCÍA, “this terminology is revealing due to the way it highlights the existence of inequalities at the heart of provincial society in some areas of Egypt.”⁵⁵ Although this distinction cannot be interpreted in terms of precise, unambiguous concepts, it suggests a contrast between, on the one hand, the “rural magnates,” related in one way or another to the state hierarchies, and on the other, a heterogeneous group that might include local leaders, “more or less well-to-do small owners” and certain residents in urban areas, all of whom are distinct from the rural potentates as well as from the peasant majority. These differences appear to have left traces in the funerary realm, as can be seen by comparing nomarchs’ large sepulchers—as already noted, sometimes surrounded by tombs of lesser size—with other small mastabas, whose shapes were similar to those of the elites’ tombs, though on a scale that suggests a relatively lower social status.⁵⁶

This social diversity in the late IIIrd millennium BCE, which, excluding the king and his entourage, implies at least three socio-economic levels—the “magnates,” the *nedjes*, and the peasants—, would be the result of more than a millennium of interactions between the logics of the state, kinship and patronage. The social scene that could have prevailed until the first half of the IVth millennium BCE would have been characterized by village communities internally organized through kinship. In that context, the state logic would introduce drastic transformations, including a “leap of scale” from local to supra-regional realms, and the introduction of principles of social subordination based on coercive mechanisms. But this event would also facilitate the activation of patronage ties, as another practice of social subordination, which is parallel to, but different than, the state logic. Indeed, if the consolidation of state domination implied the expansion of an administrative device

53 Moreno García, “Élites provinciales,” 220.

54 On this regard, see the analysis of Moreno García, *Études sur l'administration*, 32–39, “Limits of pharaonic administration,” 92–93, and “The Territorial Administration,” 140; Franke, “Fürsorge und Patronat,” 165–67, 172–76.

55 Moreno García, *Egipto en el Imperio Antiguo*, 91 (my translation).

56 See Seidlmayer, *Gräberfelder*, 399–412; Moreno García, “Primer Período Intermedio,” 192.

responsible for conveying and imposing decisions taken at the top of society, those administrators might forge other relations in their own contexts of intervention, different from those specifically derived from their role as state officials. Just as any official—including the king—would have a kinship network in which the norms of existence would be different from those sustained by the state logic, these same officials could forge patronage ties with members of the subordinate population, in addition to the ties they had with that population as representatives of the state.

This process of consolidation of the state logic, which might favor the expansion of patronage practices, can be seen from two different perspectives: namely, that of the state and that of society. From a state point of view, all practices that aimed to strengthen the political, administrative, and economic state apparatus, through the appointment of a broad array of royal officials, would simultaneously enable a broad range of relations between state officials and their local contexts of intervention. These officials could establish kinship links with local elites, but could also intermediate between regional and central elites by stimulating patronage ties. In turn, as local notables, these officials could exert patronage over sub-elites and the peasantry.⁵⁷ From the point of view of society, patronage practices could imply a strategy of association directed at the core state elite by regional elites, a mode of relationship between elites and sub-elites, as well as a way of increasing the distance between the local elites and the village social base. In pre-state times, the existence of village elites was possible, although they depended on regulations inherent in the framework of kinship logic. But once the state makes its appearance, new parameters for guiding the actions of leaders and local elites arise. If patronage was capable of thriving between different elite groups, perhaps it could also do so within those realms where kinship was formerly the only principle of social organization.

True, these possibilities can only be formulated in theoretical terms. The available evidence is enough to determine—or at least, to intuit—the importance of state, kinship and patronage logics in the Nile Valley during the IIIrd millennium BCE, but it does not provide sufficient indications to reliably establish the connections that link one to the other. This is precisely the reason why theoretical reflection is important for historical thinking. If the evidence considered in this article is taken into account on its own, we could make a case for the existence of patronage in Ancient Egypt in the First Intermediate

57 See Moreno García, “La dépendance rurale,” 114–16 and “The ‘Other’ Administration,” 1046, 1050.

Period, and some centuries earlier too. But theoretical reflection allows us to trace its existence to a much earlier date, at least to the time at which the state logic would begin to create a new kind of society. In this sense, all indications suggest that, wherever the state expands, new spaces open, possibly to be inhabited by other practices than those based solely on the legitimate monopoly of coercion. There is room for other practices that imply subordination but do not require the use of a coercive apparatus. A different kind of social logic—different from the state and kinship logics—seems to govern these practices. And that logic can be reasonably recognized under the name of patronage.

Concluding Remarks

After all, are there historical changes that explain the greater number of references to patronage practices in the evidence from the First Intermediate Period (and from the end of the Old Kingdom)? Or it is merely a matter of chance in the preservation of potential evidence? Strictly speaking, there are reasons to suspect the first possibility is the most likely. The biographies mentioned above from nomarchs such as Tjeti-Kaihep of Akhmim, or Qar of Edfu, indicate the existence of families that kept the same positions for generations. Indeed, the tendency of state high officials to settle permanently in the regions they administered increased during the 6th Dynasty, as can be inferred from the expansion of elite cemeteries in various regions of Upper Egypt. The consolidation of state officials at the local level may have strengthened ties with the region, which may have been expressed, at least partially, through various forms of patronage. Furthermore, considering the available evidence, the presence of these officials and the creation of state domains appear to have been on the rise over time, and their maintenance may have resulted in greater fiscal pressure on the peasant population.⁵⁸ That pressure could have pushed sectors of the peasantry into impoverishment and indebtedness, and these peasants might then need to seek the protection of a patron, as suggested by the autobiography of Qar, referenced above (in which the nomarch assumes the debts of others), as well as texts from other officials showing their pride at having prevented a child from being deprived of his father's property. Although this evidence does not appear decisive in establishing the origin of patronage practices, it might point to some intensification of such practices during the 6th Dynasty.

⁵⁸ See Moreno García, *Egipto en el Imperio Antiguo*, 277.

Moreover, given the crisis of the central state at the end of the Old Kingdom, the autobiographies of high officials undergo a series of changes, characterized by the loss of centrality of the figure of the king, and the inclusion of a greater variety of themes, which transcend—without excluding—the more stereotypical topics from previous times. Among the statements most frequently used in the First Intermediate Period biographies are precisely those that reference the propensity of officials to act out of their own initiative, emphasizing attributes such as bravery and courage, as well as generosity and a protective attitude towards the needy; all of these qualities suit the overall image of the patron. However, rather than reflect a change in the social structure, as proposed by ASSMANN, what the more frequent references to patronage seem to imply is a variation in the modes of symbolization and legitimation of authority figures.⁵⁹ If there is something that permeates the entire set of funerary autobiographies of the Old Kingdom, it is the central position of the king as a figure that motivates and justifies the actions of officials in the context of a full dominion of the state logic. With the central state withdrawal, symbolization procedures seem to move towards other logics, also available in the framework of social practices of the time.⁶⁰ Indeed, the logic of patronage coexisted with state and kinship logics in the structuration of ancient Egyptian society. Thus, rather than constitute the emergence of a new social actor, what seems to happen in the First Intermediate Period is a new balance between those logics that organized society since much earlier times.

59 Although Godenho (*Manifestations of Culture*, 2) sees the political situation during the First Intermediate Period not in terms of a central state crisis, but “as the culmination of a highly successful policy of decentralisation whereby authority is delegated to local rulers, who still represent the central state,” he reaches a compatible conclusion regarding the modes of self-presentation of regional elites in mortuary contexts in the late IIIrd millennium BCE, when the figure of the king is sidelined and identities centered in self-reliance and household membership of regional rulers arise (pp. 126–28).

60 At this point, kinship logic also seems to expand itself as a consequence of the withdrawal of the state logic. According to Moreno García (“La gestion sociale de la mémoire,” 230), “l’essor des cultes rendus à certaines personnalités locales, au cours de la Première Période Intermédiaire, s’explique vraisemblablement par la crise de la royauté unitaire à cette époque-là. Les élites locales durent largement puiser dans leurs traditions et dans leurs valeurs sociales, fondées sur le prestige du lignage, afin de développer de nouvelles sources alternatives d’autorité et de légitimation auprès de leurs subordonnés, précisément à une époque où la royauté n’était plus capable d’assurer cette fonction.”

Abbreviations

<i>Am. Pol. Sci. Rev.</i>	<i>The American Political Science Review</i>
<i>Int. J. Public Admin.</i>	<i>International Journal of Public Administration</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>J. Soc. Archaeol.</i>	<i>Journal of Social Archaeology</i>
JSSEA	<i>Journal of the Society of the Study of Egyptian Antiquities</i>
Urk. I	K. Sethe. <i>Urkunden des Alten Reichs</i> , vol. I. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1933.
WA	<i>World Archaeology</i>

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