Thoughts on the Nature of the Divinity of the Ruler in Ancient Egypt and Imperial Rome

One of the questions raised in the discussion of the character of ruler worship in both the Roman world and ancient Egypt is the nature and extent of the divinity of the ruler. In the discussion of the nature of the king’s divinity in Egypt there has been a move away from the concept of the king being seen as a god incarnate to a more differentiated view of there being a distinction between the king as a person and the office which he holds. In 1960, to some extent as a response to the view of the king presented in A. Moret’s study *Du caractère religieux de la royauté pharaonique* (Paris, 1902), which was dominant at the time, G. Posener\(^1\) presented a rather different view of Egyptian kingship, stressing the human character of the king. In the same year appeared H. Goedicke’s study, *Die Stellung des Königs im Alten Reich* (Wiesbaden, 1960), which showed that already in the Old Kingdom, a clear distinction was made between the king as a person and the king as office-bearer. In his study of Egyptian kingship Henri Frankfort\(^2\) expounds the view that the king received his divinity through the rituals that accompanied his accession and coronation, and this is also the conclusion of Erik Hornung in his study of Egyptian religion\(^3\), although he downplays the divinity of the king: ‘The king is not a god, but so long as there remained anything of the original reality of Egyptian kingship, he was a token of the efficacious power of the creator god in this world’.\(^4\) In a more recent study on the subject, David Silverman also emphasises the dual nature of the king, who belongs both to the realm of the human and the divine, but he

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goestr further and states of the king in the New Kingdom, 'deification of the living king had become an established practice, and the living king could himself be worshipped and supplicated for aid as a god'. There seems to be a general consensus that, although his character is in many respects definitely mortal, there is something about it which contains the element of divinity. In this study I would like to consider two central concepts in Egyptian kingship which are expressions of the divine power that resides in the king, namely the ba (or, in its more usual collective form bau) of the king, and his ka. Since these two concepts show some interesting similarities with the Numen and the Genius in the Roman ruler cult, I hope this digression from the Graeco-Roman world will be of interest to the scholar to whom this volume is dedicated and who, many years ago, gave me my first academic introduction to that area of the ancient world to the understanding of which he has made so many notable contributions.

Already in 1948, Henri Frankfort pointed out the close similarity that exists between the concept of the ka in Egypt and the Roman Genius. 'The best equivalent for the Ka is the genius of the Romans, though the Ka is much more impersonal. But in the case of the genius, as well as in that of the Ka, there is the recognition of a power which transcends the human person even though it works within him.' The ba-concept in Egypt has some aspects in common with the concept


6 For my information on the Roman ruler cult I have depended in particular on the collection of essays edited by Antonie Wlosok, Römischer Kaiserkult Wege der Forschung Bd. CCCLXXII (Darmstadt, 1978) and Wlosok's extensive introduction, presenting an outline of the state of discussion in the subject at that time. See also S.R.F. Price, Rituals and Power: the Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor (Cambridge, 1984) esp. 232ff.

7 As Frankfort points out (op. cit. 78), one can not really translate ka. 'Life force' is the expression commonly used; it is a power that indwells both the gods and mankind and in humans its existence continues into the afterlife.

8 Kingship and the Gods (Chicago, 1948) 65.

9 On this see H. Frankfort, op. cit. 63 ff.; L. Žabka, A Study of the Ba Concept in Ancient Egyptian Texts (Chicago, 1968) and in Lexikon der Ägyptologie s.v. 'Ba'
of the *ka*; it too is a manifestation of a being, god or mortal. The main
distinction between the *ba* and the *ka* is that the *ba* of a mortal, unlike
his or her *ka*, does not seem to play a role until after the person’s
death.\(^\text{10}\) In the case of the gods and the king one invariably uses the
word in the collective, magnified form, and refers to their *bau*, which
signifies a manifestation of their divine power and might, evoking
awe and dread in those who experience it.\(^\text{11}\) The *ba* of the ordinary
mortal probably does not come into its own until after death because
it is only then that the mortal enters the divine plane, albeit on a much
lower level than the king and the gods. Like the *bau* of the king and
the gods in Egypt, the *Numen* in Rome was originally a manifestation
of divine or superhuman force which was confined to the gods; not
until the Augustan age was *Numen* attributed to mortals, and then
only to exceptional persons whose deeds reflected the divine\(^\text{12}\), in
particular the *princeps*.\(^\text{13}\) We are fortunate in having an invaluable
source of data on the understanding of kingship in the New Kingdom
in the form of a series of reliefs and accompanying inscriptions that
record the divine conception and birth of the king. These are best
preserved in the temple built by Hatshepsut at Deir El-Bahri and in
the temple of Amun, built by Amenophis III, at Luxor.\(^\text{14}\) In addition
to the story of the birth of the king, in the temple of Deir El-Bahri we
also have the account of a further stage in Hatshepsut’s accession to
the throne; the decision of her earthly father, Thutmose I, that she
should be his successor, and his announcement of this decision to the

\(^{10}\) The only example I can think of where the *Ba* of a person appears during
his lifetime is in the composition known as ‘The Dispute Between a Man
and his Ba’ (a good translation in M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*

\(^{11}\) For a recent study of the concept see J.F. Borghouts, ‘Divine Intervention
in Ancient Egypt and its Manifestation (*b3w*)’ in R.J. Demarée and Jac. J.
Janssen (eds.), *Gleaning from Deir el-Medina* (Leiden, 1982) 1 - 70, esp. 31 ff.

\(^{12}\) F. Pfister, *RE* XVII 1282 f.

\(^{13}\) A. Wlosok, *op. cit.* 38 f.

\(^{14}\) The material has been analysed by H. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs.*
ÄA 10 (Wiesbaden, 1964), who also includes other versions of the account
from later periods.
court, is recorded in a complementary series of reliefs and inscriptions that follow on from those dealing with her birth. In the birth legend, there are two texts which are of particular interest to us since they record Amun's bestowal of special divine powers upon the child that is to be king, powers which seem to be prerequisites for kingship and which lift the bearer of the office from amongst ordinary mortals into the realm of the divine. In the account of the king's conception and birth, the god Amun makes the following promises for the future king to the queen mother after his union with her and after she has conceived the child by him:

Text 1

\[ H3.t-\text{t}-\text{sps.wt \ hnm.t-\text{t}-\text{lnn.w \ hmn \ rn \ n.y \ s3.t \ pn \ wdi.n(=i) \ m \ h.t=t } \]
\[ [tsi \ pn \ n.y \ md.t \ pr.t] \ m \ r3=t \]
\[ iw=s \ ri.i.t \ nsy.t \ tw \ mn\text{h.t} \ m \ t3 \ pn \ r \ dr=f \]
\[ b3=i \ n=s \ sh\text{m}=i \ n=s \ w3s=i \ n=s \ wrr.t=i \ n=s \]

Now Hatshepsut, Khenemetamun, is the name of this daughter whom I have placed in your body, (according to) this word which issued from your mouth.

She will exercise this beneficent kingship in the entire land; my \textit{ba} is hers, my power is hers, my honour is hers, my crown is hers.

Later in the legend Amun-Re presents his daughter Hatshepsut to the assembled gods of Egypt, telling them of his desire that she

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15 Hatshepsut's appearance in this situation is a little unorthodox for in Egypt kingship is an exclusively male institution; this is reflected in Hatshepsut's texts which show some inconsistency in gender - sometimes she is referred to by the masculine gender, sometimes by the feminine. I shall consistently refer to the king in my discussion, even though the text may be referring to a woman.


17 A reference to the preceding words of the queen mother to the god; the name of the child is a play on these words.
should become king. In the response of the gods we find the following statement:\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Text 2}

\begin{verbatim}
twt is s3.t=k n.t ti.t=k mtw.t=k spd.t 
rdi.n=k n=s b3=k shm=k 
w3s=k hk3.w=k wrt.t=k 
iw=s m h.t n.t msiw.t=s 
iw n=s t3.w n<ts> h3s.wt 
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
n=s im.y hbsw.t nb.t p.t šnn.wt nb.t w3d-wr 
iri.n=k is y m snn.t=k 
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
rh.n=k hnty di=n n=k n=s 
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
psš.t Hr.w m cnh 
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
rnp.wt Sth m w3s 
di.n n=s n[=k h\textsuperscript{c}i.t hr s.t Hr.w 
sm3=n n=s t3.wy m htp.w 
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
wnn rdi.n=n n=s cnh w3s nb hr=n 
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
snb nb hr=n 3w.t-ib nb hr=n 
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
htp.t nb.t hr=n df3.w nb hr=n 
wnn=s hnt k3.w cnh.w nb hn\textsuperscript{c} k3=s 
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
m nsw bity hr s.t Hr.w 
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
mi R\textsuperscript{c}.w g.t 
\end{verbatim}

Perfect is your daughter of your being\textsuperscript{19},
your effective seed,
you having given to her your \textit{ba}, your power,


\textsuperscript{19} The basic meaning of \textit{ti.t} is "sign, hieroglyph", but when used to designate the king as \textit{ti.t} of a god (almost always the sun-god, i.e. king of the gods, whom the earthly ruler represents on earth) it refers to the likeness between the king and god in respect of character and actions (see B. Ockinga \textit{Die Gottebenbildlichkeit im Alten Ägypten und im Alten Testament}. AAT 7 (Wiesbaden, 1984) 101 ff.
your honour, your magic and your crown. When she was in the womb of the one who bore her, to her belonged the flat lands and the hill countries, and she possessed all that heaven covers and the sea encircles. You made her your likeness\textsuperscript{20} when you learnt of the eternity (of years) we would grant her, the share of Horus in life, and the years of Seth in dominion. We will grant her for you the appearance on the throne of Horus, we will unite for her the two lands in peace. When we have given her all life and dominion from us, all health from us, all joy from us, all offerings from us and all provisions from us, then she will be at the head of all living \textit{kas}, together with her \textit{ka}, as King of Upper and Lower Egypt upon the throne of Horus, like Re eternally.

In both of these texts, the \textit{ka} and \textit{ba} concepts play an important role.

1. The \textit{Ba}

The two texts highlight the special powers and qualities which Amun has given to the future king - his \textit{ba} or his power, his honour, his magic and finally his crown, which is the insignia which bears the authority and power to rule. The assembled gods also promise various gifts - long life, a peaceful reign over Egypt on the throne of Horus, dominion, health, joy, and provisions.

That these divine powers and properties are a prerequisite for kingship is suggested by the closing section of the second text - once Hatshepsut has received the gifts of the gods then she will become king.

The properties of Amun which the king has received can be understood as being the manifestations of his divine power, his \textit{bau}, and it is the possession of this divine power which lifts the king out

\textsuperscript{20} The king is \textit{snm}, 'image' of the god in that he is like the god in character and acts like the god. See B. Ockinga \textit{op.cit.} 52 ff. for the significance of the term.
of the mass of other mortals and gives him a share of the gods' divinity already during his earthly lifetime. Through his bau the king operates on earth and is successful in all he wishes to do; it is also this divine power of the king which empowers his officials to successfully carry out his orders, something we see as early as the Old Kingdom, for example in the autobiographical inscription of the royal official WQeni\textsuperscript{21}, who tells us that he achieved all the remarkable feats of his career $\text{nsps n t33 n w3s b3w nsw bity Mri-n.y-Rc.w cnhr d.tr ntr.w nb.w n wn_n hpr ih.t nb.t hft hw wd k3=f 'because more splendid, greater (?)$, stronger is the (divine) power of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Merenre, may he live forever, than all the gods; because all things happen according to the authoritative utterance and the command of his ka.'

Similarly, in the Middle Kingdom inscription of one Mentuhotep\textsuperscript{22} in the amethyst mines of Wadi el-Hudi, it is said of Sesostris I in $b3w=f hr(?) iy.t(?) mn\text{h}=f srsi wi \text{fy}t=f hr.\text{ti m h}3.w-nb.w 'It was his (divine) power that came(?), his effectiveness which watched over me, his awe having felled the Haunebu.'

Another inscription by an expedition leader of the time of Sesostris III in the Wadi Hammamat makes a similar statement to that of Weni:\textsuperscript{23} $\text{ini.n}=f m3c.w nfr n.y thmw n \text{c3.t n.y b}3w \text{hn}=f 'He (the leader of the expedition Khui) brought the good produce of Libya because of the greatness of the (divine) power of his majesty.'


\textsuperscript{22} Wadi el-Hudi inscription No. 14; A.I. Sadek, The Amethyst Mining Inscriptions of Wadi el-Hudi Part I (Warminster, 1980) 33 ff. The statement that concerns us is made in line 11 of the inscription. The Middle Kingdom references to the baw of the king have been collected by E. Blumenthal, Untersuchungen zum ägyptischen Königtum des Mittleren Reiches I, ASAW 61,1 (Berlin, 1970) 205 ff.

\textsuperscript{23} Wadi Hammamat No. 47; J. Couyat & P. Montet, Les inscriptions hieroglyphiques et hieratiques du ouadi Hammamat, MIFAO 34 (Cairo, 1912) 49ff.; E. Blumenthal, op.cit. 206.
In the New Kingdom it is particularly in the context of military undertakings that the power of the king is mentioned; for example, on the 7th pylon at Karnak an inscription records the following of Thutmose III (Urk IV, 773.10 - 12): the god Amun says to the king hft.yw=k hr.w h3s.wt nb.wt m 3mm.t=k ph.n b3w=k ²sn.w p.t ‘your enemies are fallen, all foreign lands are in your grasp, your (divine) power having reached the circumference of heaven.’

In an inscription of Seti I at Qasr Ibrim it is said of the king24 iwi n=f h³s.tww n.w rsy m ks.yw mh.tww m sn t³ n b³w=f ‘The foreigners of the south come to him bowing, the northerners do obeisance because of his (divine) power.’ The bau of the king is sometimes also referred to in the context of oaths in the New Kingdom; the oath is sworn in the name of a god and the ruler and the latter is given the epithet ‘whose (divine) power is worse than death’.25

2. The Ka.

In his study of Egyptian kingship Frankfort discusses the significance of the ka concept. Apart from some of the texts pertaining to Hatshepsut’s birth and selection for the throne (our Text 2), he confines his discussion to the Pyramid Texts; in the following I will also draw upon material from the New Kingdom.

In the second of the texts of Hatshepsut discussed above, the impression is given that it is the possession of these gifts and qualities granted to her by Amun and the gods which will distinguish her from all other people (the ‘living kas’ of the text) and which give her a share in the divinity of the gods.

In the final section of the second text reference is made to the concept of the ka. As this text implies, all people possess a ka, which


is an expression for the life-force that resides in every person. But as a result of the special gifts of power and authority bestowed upon him by the gods, the king and his life-force are greater than those of all other people.

The *ka* appears again in that section of the cycle of reliefs and texts in which the accession of Hatshepsut is recorded. The following text accompanies a scene depicting her standing before her father Tuthmosis I, who presents her to the assembled court:\textsuperscript{26}

**Text 3**

\(\begin{align*}
&m^3\text{ sy } h\text{m n.y iti=s pn} \\
&ntr.wy qm^3=s \\
w.r.t h\text{nnt.y ib=s} \\
c^3\text{ wrr.t=s wd}^c-mdw=s(?) m^3c \\
(i^c(r).n s^c h=s n iri.t k^3=s) \\
di(w) c\text{nh.w m-hnw c.wy=sy m } c^h(mr)<f> n.y is.t \\
dd.in n=s h^m=f \\
nm (i)r=t 3h.ti di.n(=i tn?) m-hnw c.wy=i \\
m^3=t tp-rd=t m^c h \\
(10) iri=t k^3.w=t \$ps.w \\
\$sp=t s^c h=t \\
3h=t m \$k^3.w=t \\
wsr=t m \$h ty=t \\
sh^m=t m t^3.wy \\
(15) iti=t h^3k.w-ib \\
h^c i=t m^c h \\
hkr h^3.t=t m sh^m.t(y) \\
htp=t m \i w^c.t=i ms.i.tn=i \\
s^3.t hd.t mry.t w^3d.t \\
(20) di.w n=t h^c i.w in H\nt.y s.wt ntr.w
\end{align*}\)

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(1) The majesty of this her father (Thutmosis I) sees her, her nature being exceedingly divine, her understanding outstanding, her crown great and her judgements just, (5) her rank having risen (to match) that which her ka will do\textsuperscript{27}, the living being placed in her embrace in <his> palace of the residence. Then His Majesty said to her, 'Come, glorious one, that (I) may place (you?) in my embrace, that you may see your arrangements\textsuperscript{28} in the palace, (10) that you may exercise your splendid kas and receive your rank; that you may be effective in your magic and be powerful in your strength; that you may be mighty in the two lands (15) and grasp the rebellious; that you may appear in glory in the palace and your brow be adorned with the double crown; that you may occupy (the position of) my heir, whom I bore, the daughter of the white crown\textsuperscript{29}, beloved of Wadjet \textsuperscript{30}, (20) and that the crowns may be given to you by the one who presides over the thrones of the gods (Amun)'.

In this text we find clear indications that there is a connection between the ka and the office of kingship. The words of lines 5 and 10 express a direct correlation between the actions of the king's ka and the rank that he holds; it is because of what his ka will do that he is given the office of kingship and that his ka takes precedence over those of all others. The importance of the ka concept in Egyptian kingship is also stated at the end of text 2, where it is the king, \textit{together with his ka}, who is king at the head of all other living kas. The texts

\textsuperscript{27} I take \textit{iri.t k3=s} to be a prospective relative form.

\textsuperscript{28} Presumably, as suggested by Redford's translation, the arrangements made for the accession of the queen.

\textsuperscript{29} Of Upper Egypt.

\textsuperscript{30} The cobra-goddess of Lower Egypt.
thus gives the royal ka a special identity, distinct from the king himself, a phenomenon which is also discernible in the reliefs depicting the king, where he is often shown exercising his office in the company of his ka, who appears behind him either as a smaller figure with two raised arms, (the hieroglyph for ka) holding the Horus name of the king, upon his head (Fig. 1, detail from the temple of Luxor depicting Amenophis III, Hellmut Brunner, *Die südlichen Räume des Tempels von Luxor.* AV 18 [Mainz, 1977] pl.92), or, in symbolic form, as a personified standard. (Fig. 2, *ibid* pl. 110). The royal ka regularly appears behind the king in the traditional scene of smiting the enemies, a motif which usually appears on a monumental scale in a very public place, the outer walls of temples, in particular on the outer faces of the temple pylons. (Fig. 3 from the temple of Hathor at Abu Simbel depicting Ramesses II slaying a Libyan enemy; Chr. Desroches-Noblecourt and Ch. Kuentz, *Le petit temple d’Abou Simbel* Vol. II [Cairo, 1968] pl.XXXVI.)

We also meet the ka of the king as the instrument through which he is active in the world in numerous inscriptions. Already in the Old
Kingdom inscription of Weni quoted above, we see that it is the *ka* of the king which causes things to happen. In the New Kingdom references to the king’s *ka* become even more regular. In the words of the goddess of writing, Seshat, addressed to Sety I inscribed in his temple at Abydos we read *p.t bk3.ti m n3y=k nfr.w t3.wy mh.w m k3=k* ‘heaven is pregnant with your perfection, the two lands (Egypt) is full of your *ka*.’ (*KRI* I, 187.4-5). In the text of the treaty between Ramesses II and the Hittites the king is said to be the one who *s-cnh idb.wy m k3=f* ‘vivifies the two banks (Egypt) through his *ka*.’ (*KRI* II,256.15f.) Officials of the king acknowledge the activity of the king’s *ka* in their lives; the overseer of the royal Harem, Hormenu, calls him *p3 shpr wi m k3=f* ‘the one who created me through his *ka*.’ In the inscription recording Ramesses II’s battle against the Hittites at Kadesh the king asks his officials, who have let him down in his hour of need, *is bn chC.n=i m nb iw=tn m nmhy.w di.w=i iri=tn sr.w m k3=i rf.w nb* ‘Did I not arise as Lord (i.e. ascend the throne) when you were of lowly status and do I not make you magistrates through my *ka* every day?’ (*KRI* II,57 §176)
The *ka* of the king plays a central role in ruler worship. In a great number of dedicatory prayers addressed to the king it is his *ka* which is invoked.

In Wadi Kanais the viceroy of Sety I in Nubia left the following inscription:

\[ i3yw n k3=k p3 hq3 nfr \v n msi lmn.w p3 \sw \nf tw m pfr=f p3 k3 n.y hr.w nb p3y=i ntr qd=i r irr=i di=k \sbi=i sr.w w3d.wy \sms tw m mn.t 'Praise to your ka, you perfect, beautiful ruler born of Amun; the light from the sight of whom one lives, the ka of everyone, my god who built me\textsuperscript{31} so that I can act. You let me associate with the magistrates, how fortunate is the one who follows you daily!' (KRI I, 303.16 - 304.2) \]

These inscriptions are particularly commonly found in distant parts of the empire, especially in Nubia where they were left by royal officials: An inscription from Aswan addresses Sety I as follows:

\[ \text{Cf. the inscription of Hormin (KRI I, 309) in which he states that it is the ka of the king that created (shpr) him.} \]
Giving praise to your ka, mighty king, Horus who vivifies the two lands. Made by the chief charioteer of his majesty, the King’s son Amenemope, son of the King’s Son Paser.’ (KRI I, 302.14 f.)

A number of Viceroy's of Ramesses II record similar prayers on monuments found at various sites: Neferrenpet at West Silsila (KRI III, 48.6; 49.10 & 12); Hekanakht at Amarah (KRI III, 73.1 & 4) and Abri (KRI III, 73.10 & 15); Setau at Wadi es-Sebua (KRI III, 89.2 & 4; 95.6; 97.11, 13, 15 & 16; 98.2; 98.16). The Viceroy Hori, who served Ramesses IV, left a similar votive inscription at Buhen (Fig. 4, R.A. Caminos, The New Kingdom Temples of Buhen. Arch. Surv. Memoir 33 [London, 1974] pl. 23). Examples of these dedications have been found in Egypt proper as well, such as that of the Nubian Viceroy Setau on a lintel found at Memphis (KRI III, 111.15).

The number of these dedications honouring the ka of the king can probably be considerably expanded for there is good reason to believe that in the very numerous cases where the ka is not

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32 Another similar inscription by the same official in KRI I.303.3 - 5.
specifically mentioned and the object of devotion is the name of the king, the *ka* is still actually the focal point of worship.\(^3\)\(^3\) The inscription of Hori mentioned above (see Fig. 4) refers to the king’s *ka* but in the representation Hori is shown adoring the name of the king. The same situation applies to the dedications of Heqanakht at Abri (see above). The name and the *ka* of the king thus form a close unit, a conclusion which is supported by the fact that in texts of the 22 Dynasty and later the word *ka*, determined with the name-ring or cartouche, has the meaning ‘name’, and in Demotic texts the word is actually translated as *rn* ‘name’.\(^3\)\(^4\)

The frequency with which dedications and invocations to the king appear outside Egypt, particularly in Nubia and the mining and quarrying regions of the eastern desert, is noticeable and also understandable - the officials who made these monuments were not only in the king’s service, they were also dependent upon his authority and power for their own safety. An interesting parallel phenomenon can be drawn from the Roman ruler cult. There is evidence of Roman citizens who lived in isolated parts of the empire being very ready to acknowledge the divinity of Augustus.\(^3\)\(^5\) Like the Egyptian king, he was the embodiment of Roman power, the guarantor of their protection and well-being, and the worship of Augustus would have countered to some extent the feelings of isolation from which such people would have suffered. Here the ruler cult is motivated by genuine religious response rather than any political considerations. The Egyptian dedications must also be seen as personal responses and not the result of official prompting.

There was a long tradition in ancient Egypt for statues to be produced as a substitute body of their owners\(^3\)\(^6\) and as such they

\(^{33}\) The reliefs of officials worshipping the name of the king are also most commonly found outside Egypt proper, particularly in the mining and quarrying regions in the deserts and in Nubia.


\(^{35}\) Wlosok *op. cit.* 43 & n. 112.

\(^{36}\) See W. Helck ‘Statuenkult’ in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* V, 1265 - 1267.
could function as the seat of the person's ka. Statues likewise played a central role in the cult of the living king in Egypt and the reign of Ramesses II has produced significant evidence for this, with numerous statues of the king that carry a specific name and enjoyed cultic worship. A number of these statues are represented on some 70 dedicatory stelae of officials which were found at Qantir, the site of Ramesses' new city in the Delta, Perramesses; four of them are specifically named: Usermaatre-Setepenre-Month-in-the-Two-Lands, Ramesses-Meriamun-the-god, Usermaatre-Setepenre-beloved-of-Amon, and Ramesses-Meriamun-Re-of-the-Rulers. The stele often simply depict the dedicator worshipping the statue without any accompanying prayer, but there are two that do record the words addressed to the king's statue:

The stele of the vizier Rahotep has the following text in front of a scene depicting him kneeling worshipping the royal statue which is in an upper register: rd1(t) i3w n k3=k nb h3.w Rc.w-nsi-sw hq3 hq3.w p3 ntr c3 sdm nh.wt n.y tmm.w di=f cnh wd3 snb hs.wt spd-hr mr.wt 'Giving praise to your ka, Lord of Diadems, Ramesses-Meriamun-Ruler-of-Rulers, the great god who hears the pleas of people. May he give life, prosperity and health, favour, alertness and love'.

Another stele depicts the royal tablescribe Mahuhi making offering to a royal statue; here the scene is accompanied by the following text; i3w n k3=k nb t3.wy Wsr-m3c.t-Rc.w Stp-n-Rc.w Mnt.w-m-t3.wy di=k cnh wd3 snb chc.w nfr ib hr rs.wt r ph (im.y-)nr(t) m ḫtp 'Praise to your ka Lord of the Two Lands, Usermaatre-Setepenre, Month-in-the-Two-Lands! May you grant life, prosperity and health, a good heart with joy until reaching the west (cemetery) in peace."

As these two texts make very clear, it is again the ka of the king, dwelling in the statues, which is being addressed. Because, as Frankfort points out, the ka is a power that transcends the person, the

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37 The material has been collected by Labib Habachi, *Features of the Deification of Ramesses II*. ADAIK 5 (Glückstadt, 1969).

38 KRI III, 53.4-5; a photograph of the stele may be found in Habachi, *op.cit.* pl. XIII b.
king can also present offerings to his own statue — it is again to his *ka* that he presents these divine honours. It is along these lines that one should seek to explain the temple reliefs, found particularly in Nubia, of the king, seated in the company of the gods, receiving offerings from himself.39

Just as in Egypt the royal *ka* is the recipient of the divine honours paid to the king, so too is its Roman counterpart, the *genius*, the focal point of the ruler cult at Rome.40 The role played by statues in the ruler cult of the Graeco-Roman world is well known. It is alluded to in the apocryphal biblical book *Wisdom of Solomon* (ch. 14) and gained notoriety through the part it played in the persecution of Christians, as recorded in the younger Pliny’s epistles (Bk X.96). However there is a distinct difference between the prayers addressed to the statues of Ramesses II and the dedications to the Roman ruler. We note that in the Egyptian texts the king’s *ka* is a divine power which, like the *kas* of other gods, can be invoked and called upon for help and blessings; in contrast, with reference to the cult of the Roman ruler, A.D. Nock states, ‘That his deity was anything with a serious religious content we may refuse to believe until we find an inscription or papyrus in which a man records that in sickness or shipwreck he prayed to the *numen* of Augustus and was delivered from his trouble.’41

To conclude, notwithstanding the difference between the ancient Egyptian and Roman ruler cult just noted, there remains a great deal that they have in common, in particular the significance of the very similar concepts of the *ka* and *genius* on the one hand and the *ba* and *numen* on the other. This does not, of course, imply that one should look for any Egyptian influence on the Roman concepts; it is quite clear that the ruler cult as introduced by Augustus in Rome42, in which his *genius* and *numen* played a central role, was firmly rooted

39 The examples of these representations have been collected by Habachi, *op. cit.*

40 Lily Ross Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown, 1931) 192 ff.

41 *Gnomon* 8 (1932) 518. See also Price, *op. cit.*

in ancient Roman religious tradition. But it is of interest that the ancient Egyptians and Romans should have come up with such similar answers to the question of the nature of the divinity of their rulers.

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43 A. Wlosok, op. cit. 38 and 41.