Hatshepsut’s Appointment as Crown Prince and the Egyptian Background to Isaiah 9:5

Boyo Ockinga

Department of Ancient History – Macquarie University

Abstract

A possible Egyptian background to Isaiah 9:5 is reviewed in the light of a text from Deir el-Bahari in which Thutmose I announces to his courtiers and to the people that Hatshepsut will be his heir. Only four of Hatshepsut’s names are proclaimed, since she already bore the fifth name, her nomen Hatshepsut, given to her at birth. The text does not link her nomen with the Son of Re title, since only the reigning king could be defined as Re’s son. This assessment of the Hatshepsut text also supports the interpretation that the Isaiah text, which has the same sequence of events, refers to the proclamation of a crown prince rather than to an accession to the throne. It is further argued that the understanding of the nature of the Egyptian king’s relationship to the deity in the New Kingdom would not have precluded it from serving as a model for Israelite kingship.

Introduction

In 1929 H. Gressmann1 suggested that there might be an Egyptian background to the giving of the names to the child in Isaiah 9:5, but it was not until the appearance of G. von Rad’s 1947 study2 that the possibility of an Egyptian influence behind the names, as well as the context in which they are proclaimed, became regularly part of the discussion of the interpretation of this text.3 The majority of scholars seem to support the idea of an Egyptian connection, including the authors of a number of standard commentaries on Isaiah.4 However, in the debate voices have been raised that discount the posited Egyptian connection,5 and the author of one well known commentary is very cautious.6

Although the weight of opinion seems to favour seeing an Egyptian influence, the reservations of

1 Gressmann, Der Messias, 245.
3 For example, Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 107-08; Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 401 ff.
4 In addition to von Rad and Gressmann, Alt, “Jesaja 8,23-9,6,” 206-25; Mowinckel, He That Commeth, 102-10; Rehm, Der königliche Messias, 162-66; Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12; Seybold, Das davidische Königsum, 83; Mettinger, King and Messiah, 286; Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 107-08; Barth, Die Jesaja-Worte, 168; Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 401 ff.; Sweeny, Isaiah 1-39; Beuken, Jesaja 1-12.
5 As, for example, by Kitchen, Ancient Orient and Old Testament, 106 ff.; Carlson, “The Anti-Assyrian Character of the Oracle in Is. IX 1-6,” 130-35; Wegner, “A Re-Examination of Isaiah IX 1-6,” 103-12.
6 Blenkinsop, Isaiah 1-39, 248.
those who discount it need to be addressed and there are still some issues on which the supporters of the theory have varying views.

It is the aim of this study to review these issues in light of an ancient Egyptian text that has not received full consideration in the debate. H. Wildberger, in his 1960 study, does refer to it, but only in connection with one specific detail, namely the observation that in Egypt the names given the king and proclaimed by the priests were placed in the hearts of the priests by the god.

**Hatshepsut’s Deir el-Bahari Texts**

The series of reliefs and accompanying inscriptions on the walls of the northern middle terrace of Hatshepsut’s temple at Deir el-Bahari recording the birth of the divine king is one of the best known features of the decoration of the temple. This record fills the lower of the two registers on the temple wall. Less familiar are the reliefs and inscriptions occupying the upper register which form a continuation of the birth relief sequence and record the following:

1. The purification of the child by Horus and Amun;
2. Amun’s presentation of the child to the gods of Upper and Lower Egypt;
3. Hatshepsut’s visit, in the company of her father Thutmose I, to the gods of Egypt;
4. Hatshepsut being received by Atum and then Amun;
5. The announcement by Thutmose I of his decision that his daughter Hatshepsut was to be his heir and successor, with the proclamation of her official titles;
6. The god Iuenmutef leading Hatshepsut to the god Ha who performs the ceremony of purification;
7. Horus leading Hatshepsut to the shrines where he, together with Seth, crown her first as king of Upper and then as king of Lower Egypt.

Of interest to us is the fifth episode of this sequence, the king’s announcement that Hatshepsut will be his heir. Here, the king appears enthroned under a baldachin, with his daughter (her figure hacked out) standing in front of him. The first eleven columns of the text with the beginning of the inscription are carved behind the baldachin; the text continues in front of the scene in seven columns which are followed by a scene with

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7 Wildberger, “Namen des Messiahs,” 314-32; on 326 he refers specifically to *Urk. IV*, 261.

8 Naville, *Deir el Bahri III*, pl. LVI.
9 Naville, *Deir el Bahri III*, pl. LVII.
10 Naville, *Deir el Bahri III*, pl. LVIII.
11 Naville, *Deir el Bahri III*, pls. LIX-LX.
12 Naville, *Deir el Bahri III*, pls. LX-LXIII (left end).
13 Naville, *Deir el Bahri III*, pls. LXIII-LXIV.