

Dynasty 0

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Part I – Introduction

The general picture of our knowledge about the Egyptian Late Predynastic period and early state is currently undergoing rapid and profound changes.

For some decades, the way in which we interpret this important stage of ancient Egyptian history and culture through the analysis of its remains has been in transformation due to modern archaeological campaigns, re-examination of unpublished old excavations, new technologies, fresh theoretical and methodological approaches to old and new problems, and international congresses.

Since the seventies an outstanding step of renewal in Egyptological studies has been accomplished under the influence of scholars with an anthropological perspective, such as B. Trigger and M. Hoffman. Many Egyptologists have begun to accept and adopt a multi-disciplinary approach in their research (see also below, n. 105 and 114).

Especially in the first half of the 20th century, the *lack of history* characterising the period of this study (contrasting with the much better documented later phases) was a main factor in leading very learned scholars to attempt to extract historical events from myths, iconography and royal symbolism.

Kurt Sethe went so far as to reconstruct two stages in the predynastic expansion (first of the Lower Egyptians southwards and then of the Upper Egyptians northwards) based on some sparse allusions in later myths and on the order of importance of certain hieroglyphs in classic royal titularies.

At present there is a vivid interest in the Predynastic and Protodynastic period, as the increasing amount of related publications demonstrates; this is an obvious consequence of many factors stimulating modern scholars, chief among these being the proliferation of new field-work and the resulting availability of new discoveries/data and trails of research.

In these years a very debated aspect of Egyptian Late Predynastic studies is the process of State formation: there is still much uncertainty about the causes and dynamics of its origin and development.

As we will see below, there must have been a combination of various mutually-interacting elements acting as the catalyst for the origination of the state; indeed the attempt to gain the control (?) of Southern Palestinian and Lower Nubian trade routes actually seems to be one of the most determining factors (but certainly it was not the only one) in shaping and seconding the apparently genetical propensity for the expansion which characterised the classic Gerzean (mid-late Naqada II) civilisation.

Modern Egyptologists prefer to give (at least) as much weight to the archaeological data as to certain representations imbued with hardly interpretable ideology; consequently, many dogmas of past studies have to be reevaluated. For instance the Narmer palette, once considered to be the key source attesting the definitive unification of Upper and Lower Egypt by this king, is now almost completely and unequivocally dismissed as proof for such an event and removed from discussions about unification. Scholars are now more inclined to look at this important object as a memorial of a military victory¹ or rather as a ritual object aiming to reinforce the role of the king through the depiction of a scene (not necessarily realized in Narmer's reign, if not purely symbolic) which was part of an already well formed iconography and ideology of power and kingship.²

1 Victory over the Libyans (Schulman, in: BES 11, 1992, 79–105) but also other peoples have been proposed as Asiatics (Yadin, in: IEJ 5, 1ff.; Smith, in: BMFA 65, 1967, 74ff., Asiatic bedouins of the N. E. frontier of Egypt) and Nubians (?) (Fairervis, in: JARCE 28, 1991, 1–20; *ibid.*, 20: "... a memorial to Djibwty Ankh, an officer of Narmer's military forces who participated in the conquest of both banks of the Nile Valley south of Edfu – or Nekhen – and into Northern Nubia").

2 Baines, *Origins*, *passim*; but note that a recently found ivory label of Narmer (Dreyer, in: MDAIK 54, 1998, 139) depicts the same eponymous event. Also cf. this article n. 38. – Anyway Ian Shaw has recently remarked (*The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, 2000, 3) that Egyptians did not distinguish between historical events and ritual ones as we actually do; therefore the uncertainty of our positions about the interpretations of these scenes is likely to depend on the Egyptian ambivalence (and only for us 'ambiguity') of thought.

The unification is still a recurrent argument in the discussions on the origin and evolution of the Egyptian state. There is an entire series of so called *monuments of the unification*:³ palettes, ivories, mace heads and other types of decorated objects; also later documents like Royal Annals, Kings-lists and traditions or quasi-legends preserved by Greco-Roman historians have been scrupulously analysed for their potential utility in conveying significant information on this topic.

We have no explicit source of late predynastic date mentioning the “*Sma Tawy*” (Uniting the Two Lands) in the same terms as it appears in Khasekhemwy’s reign (or on later annals).⁴

The Palermo stone has preserved, in the first line, some Lower Egyptian kings’ names,⁵ while on Cairo fragment 1 both Lower Egyptian and Upper Egyptian Kings were listed (although their names are lost); it is possible that the (left) end of the first line of the original monument did report Double-Crown Kings, thus sovereigns already at the head of a united state.⁶

The Turin Canon gives an important list of the kings of Egypt;⁷ this papyrus was written during the reign of Ramses II. Contrary to the funerary Kings-lists like those found at Abydos and Saqqara (same period), the papyrus of Turin also includes *pre-menite* sovereigns like the “Followers of Horus” and, before them, a number of gods each one reigning for lengthy periods of time since the creation (compare concepts underlying Hinduist *Yuga* doctrine, Near Eastern myths and royal lists,

perhaps even, in Mesoamerica, some Maya glyphic *long counts* carved on stelae, altars, lintels).

Herodotus was the first to explicitly record the unification of the two lands of Egypt. In the past some Egyptologists have pushed so far as to propose that this concept did not reflect Egyptian history but could have been an effect of the well known and recurrent dualism of ancient Egyptian ideology tending to conceive the One as a union of two opposites.

Some iconographic motives recurring in Predynastic Egyptian *art* since the Naqada IIc period are assumed to have been introduced through various kinds of contacts with Near Eastern contemporary cultures.

The “Master of the Beasts”, a hero depicted frontally while grasping with his hands two rampant lions beside him, surely had a precise symbolical meaning. Certainly the Egyptians were initially inspired by the iconography of late Uruk (V–IV) and Elamite glyptic (Susa I–II): cylinder seals did reach Egypt through long distance trade contacts at least since Naqada IIc (cf. n. 104); but the Egyptians re-elaborated and manipulated these foreign visual metaphors according to their own ideology, beliefs and needs: later in Naqada III another similar motif, that of the two *serpopards* with their long intertwined necks held by means of ropes, recurs in the central register of the Narmer palette obverse; this motif was interpreted as a possible equivalent to the later fusion of the heraldic plants of Upper and Lower Egypt symbolising the Union of the two Lands (cf. n. 4).

3 Monnet Saleh, in: BIFAO 86, 1986 and id., in: BIFAO 90, 1990; Kantor, in: JNES 3, 1944, 110–136; Schott, Hieroglyphen, 21ff.; Vandier, Manuel, vol. 1, pt. 2, chapter 11; Baumgartel, Cultures, vol. 2; Asselberghs, Chaos en Beheersing.

4 This king had succeeded, at the end of the Second Dynasty, in reuniting Egypt after a serious crisis which had probably resulted in two contemporary ruling powers, one in the Memphite area, the other one in the Abydos or Hierakonpolis region. The *Sma-Tawy* (written with the same pictographical device as on Khasekhemwy’s bowls) is the accession ceremony which the Annals report since the early First Dynasty sovereigns: but it is doubtful whether in a retroactive and thus anachronistical way, or not. (Cf. Lorton, in: VA 3, 1987, 37f.). Actually there are earlier attestations of the formula/ceremony *Sma Shema Ta-Mehw* on stone vessels of Adjib (and perhaps of Hor-Aha too) and on a new ivory label of Semerkhet (MDAIK 52, 1996, pl. 14d).

5 Below their names, the hieroglyph of the sitting king with the Red Crown, *later* symbol of Lower Egypt. Of seven names fully preserved and readable, not one has been found in other contexts (...*pu, Ska, Hayw, Tyw, Tjesh, Nb, Wadj?, Mekh, ...a*). Cf. Helck, Thinitenzeit, 90ff. We must surmise that the association of the two crowns with the Upper and Lower Egypt is not so certain a fact for the predynastic period and is still an object of debate.

6 The Cairo 1 fragment is placed on the left of the Palermo, i.e. after it (this document is read from right to left), at 10 year-compartments of distance (in line 2). This object probably does not

belong to the same original slab as the Palermo (slight differences in the stone thickness and in the size of the year-compartments) but this does not affect the discussion. The major reconstructions of the original slab and the reciprocal placement of the fragments were attempted by L. Borchardt, by W. Kaiser (in: ZÄS 86, 1961, 39ff.), W. Barta (in: ZÄS 108, 1981, 23ff.), W. Helck (in: MDAIK 30, 1974, 31ff.; id., in: Thinitenzeit, 1987, 122–126). All agree in that the line 2 must have begun with Aha’s reign (= Menes in the opinion of some of them): henceforth each king’s reign is divided in rectangular compartments citing the most important events and the Nile level of every single regnal year; therefore Narmer should have been at the end of line 1 which, as we have said, only enumerates a number of earlier and nearly forgotten (mythical?) kings. – Vercoutter is perhaps himself in error when identifying double crowns on the Cairo fragment line 1; this is very hard to read for its bad state of preservation, yet a double crown clearly appears above the second line (in Djer’s titulary); on the contrary, those on the first line look more like red and white crowns than red and double crowns as Vercoutter infers (L’Égypte, vol. 1, 201, n. 1).

7 The Greek historian Manetho (IIIrd century B. C.) who introduced the subdivision of the Ancient Egyptian history into dynasties, likely used a source like the Turin Canon to compile his list; but this latter, except for some intervals giving subtotals of years, is a continuous list of kings names, each with his reign duration and with no grouping into *dynasties*.

Indeed, as we have seen, Narmer was probably ritually, magically and symbolically enhancing his *role* through the depiction of a military victory and subsequent sacrifice-ceremony of the defeated.⁸

The described motives abruptly ceased to be represented with the end of Dynasty 0; on the other hand a further old motif, the king smashing his enemies' heads with a mace, first attested more than half a millennium before Narmer (depicted on a C-ware vessel of Naqada Ic, cf. n. 103) did remain as one of the major symbols of the violent aspect of Egyptian kingship in its role of annihilator of the forces of chaos which constantly menace the order the king must grant;⁹ we generally do not attribute to each depiction of a pharaoh smiting enemies a value of chronicle of a real victory he would have obtained; thus we could consider earlier scenes in the same optic.

It is impossible to list here the entire series of attributes, emblems and rituals which the early sovereigns had manifestly inherited from the middle Naqada, or older chiefs.¹⁰ These *paraphernalia*, which continued to accompany the pharaohs for the following three thousand years, are thus part of an ideology of power, which had already emerged during the predynastic period.

Although some aspects of the predynastic material and culture were abandoned, many others were maintained and formed the basis of the Ancient Egyptian civilisation and the symbols of a successful conceptualisation and perfect exercise of monarchical rule (see below).

This powerful state, which in the past (for the scanty evidence available) seemed as if it had arisen out of nothingness, instead went through a long formative process. Cheops and the Great Pyramid are not a starting point

in Egyptian history, but the result and the apex of nearly one millennium of evolution, half of which was accomplished before the dynastic period.

As a result of the actual knowledge and data, we are inclined to give more importance to the points of *continuity* between the predynastic and dynastic periods, than to the sudden changes or differences between them; this was only a distorted view which biased the studies in the past, and which depended on the absolute paucity of sources about the oldest phases of this culture.

The German archaeologist Werner Kaiser re-elaborated in 1957 Petrie's Sequence Dating chronology, devising the subdivision into *Stufen*: Naqada I, II and III with 11 and later 14 sub-phases; the system has carried on for forty years and has only recently undergone some corrections by Stan Hendrickx.¹¹

In 1964 Kaiser proposed that the political unification of Egypt had to have happened some generations before Narmer;¹² moreover the study of the objects commonly found in cemeteries, particularly pottery, had already shown that well before this political unification, a "cultural unification" had affected and amalgamated customs and traditions of the peoples living along the Nile valley. Both processes must have been prolonged, lasting over several generations.

As early as the Badarian and Naqada I cultures, the cemeteries denote the beginning of social stratification.¹³ The increasingly larger funerary offerings in certain tombs, the presence of larger tombs and wealthy burials for children, are expressions of two important factors:

A) Diffused specific mortuary beliefs (*interaction of ideas and shared symbolic behaviour in a widespread regional belief system*, Bard, in: JAA 11/1, 1992, 12).

8 Later pharaohs used to copy the representations of their predecessors' military exploits; Schulman (in: BES 11, 1992) has shown that the names of the sons of the defeated Libyan chief, Wni and Wsa, are the same in the Abusir reliefs of Sahura and Neferirkara, in the Saqqara reliefs of Pepi I and II and in those of Taharka at Kawa; these belonged respectively to the Vth, VIth and XXVth dynasty! And curiously the two dead prisoners in the bottom register of the Narmer palette reverse, are labelled with hieroglyphs which may have phonetical value *Wnt* and *Sa*, recalling the cited *Wni* and *Wsa* proper names (cf. Smith, in: BMFA 65, 1967, 76).

9 Hall, *The Pharaoh*, passim and especially 4–7. Obviously this gesture has many parallels among other cultures: cf. for a parallel in late Classic Maya art: Schele/Freidel, *A Forest of Kings*, fig. 7,8 on the right (Stela 11, Yaxchilan, Mexico) the king Bird-Jaguar (Yuhyum Balam?) is going to sacrifice three bound prisoners kneeling before him in 9.15.15.0.0. = 6/4/750 A. D.); the king wears the ritual insignia and carries the eccentric obsidian blade.

10 Fattovich (in: RSO 45, 133–149) describes false tail, penis sheath, crowns, maces, reed, sceptres, ritual race, gazelle and hippopotamus hunt, and some further characters common to

predynastic and dynastic sovereigns (cf. n. 17). – For the early state reformulation and canonisation of religious ideologies (Bard, in: JAA, 11/1, 1992) and practices, which incorporated previous local beliefs and traditions, cf. Campagno, in: CCdE 2, 2001, 5–26; Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 35ff. – For evidence of a common pan-african cultural substratum in Egyptian ideology and rituals in parallel with those of Nilotic and Cushitic peoples cf. Cervellò Autuori, in: CCdE 2, 2001; Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, Chicago 1948.

11 Kaiser, in: AG 6, 1957, 69–77; id., in: MDAIK 46, 1990; Hendrickx, in: Spencer (ed.), *Aspects*; id., in: Archéo-Nil 9, 1999, 13ff. (See below, n. 23). The *Stufen* terminology is also more apt to describe one and the same culture in evolution, whereas Petrie's names conveyed the idea of foreign peoples who contributed to the development of the predynastic civilisation through their invasions. Cf. Kemp, in: CAJ 10, 2000, 236 for the wide range of changes during Naqada III which in some way would conceptually justify the introduction of the Dynastic Race theory.

12 Kaiser, in: ZÄS 91, 1964, 86–125.

13 Bard, *Farmers*, passim; id., in: JAA 11/1, 1992, 1ff.; Also see below and n. 17, for Naqada II and III.

- B) The formation of a ruling class which no longer shared the same destiny in life and death as the common people. The small, hamlet, egalitarian community was becoming a large, low-density farming village.¹⁴

Initially these *élites* lived in small villages sparsely scattered along the Nile valley which was not very densely populated at that time; but the climatic conditions ceased to be favourable for a life far from the river, hence the small population had begun to concentrate nearer to the Nile river. Agriculture and breeding, which mean better life conditions and increase in population, were the main sources of food; also hunting and fishing were much practised forms of sustenance (Badarian, Naqada I).

Once a group of individuals took the leadership of a larger population (due to charisma, success in battle, superstitious reasons, inclination to power or other attributes perceived as proper for a leader), this group originated the ruling class, the others became the ruled.

The rulers exploited the subjected classes who were forced to produce for them. The increasing population had larger needs of land for cultivation and breeding. Specialisation of crafts required that agriculture sustained a broader part of the population, including not only the rulers and their families, but also those who worked for them, producing objects, building their houses, procuring particular materials, and defending them from inner and outer dangers. The storage of large quantities of products made these centres an easy and fat prey for robbers. Many similar centres were contemporarily growing by the same *multiplicatory effect* consisting in the interplay of various factors.

The most powerful centres of the late Naqada I period were those controlling the Thinis-Abydos region, Naqada (*Nwbt* – Ombos and Ballas) and Hierakonpolis (Nekhen); before Naqada II, there probably still existed at least two more independent (?) key-areas at Abadiya (on the Qena bend, between the Abydos and Naqada region, thus Hu, Abadiya, Dendera; cf. pt. 2, n. 58) and in the south at Gebelein, between the Naqada and Hierakonpolis regions.

These sites, possibly founded on old islands of the Nile (then flowing within a narrower course than before), began to be fortified with massive surrounding walls. The wooden palisades, which must have protected the older villages from beasts, were no longer sufficient for these centres of the Naqada II period; a clay model of fortification walls has been found at Abadiya.¹⁵

Kemp (Ancient Egypt) efficaciously described this stage of conflicts and competition in terms of many *Monopoly* games simultaneously played along the Nile: a combination of chances (local factors, environment, gold and other resources, luxury-goods trade, military victories) and personal decisions resulted in the growth of fewer and fewer centres which became more and more important and larger by conquering the territory of the neighbouring city-states.

The scenario at the end of Naqada II–beginning of Naqada III seems to be in fact that of very few regional proto-states, each one controlling a long sector of the Nile valley.¹⁶ These emerging polities were ruled by authoritative chiefs who were continuously strengthening their position through warfare, monopoly of long distance trade, control of important resources of their territory, and also elaborating a true ideology of rule which is evident in grave-size and types, children-burials, common orientation of the buried bodies, body treatment (skins, mats, coffin, post-mortem practices such as skeleton disarticulation) and gravegoods. Manufactured “craft” objects (*powerfacts*, the appearance of which is generally confined to the richest tombs) and the increasing size of the sepulchres, are the first signs of display and *conspicuous consumption*.¹⁷

Many of these distinctive traits would be usurped by the chiefs (cf. below and n. 121 for palettes), becoming symbols of their unique status and of kingship; others were king’s concessions or gifts to his closest relatives and/or collaborators (like the tombs and gravegoods in later élite cemeteries).

By this time, in Upper Egypt, only the three principal polities, centred in Abydos, Naqada and Hierakonpo-

14 For some models of State formation cf. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*; Hoffman et al., in: *JARCE* 23, 1986, 75ff.; Köhler, in: *GM* 147, 1995, 79ff.; a summary of the hypotheses is in Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic*, 44–47; Bard, *Farmers*, 1–5.

15 Williams, in: Silverman (ed.) *Fs Baer*, 271–283.

16 Köhler, in: *GM* 147, 1995, 79ff.; Wilkinson, in: *MDAIK* 56, 2000, 377–395, fig. 1, p. 379 (but cf. also n. 18). For a possible relation between this historical process and the animal processes carved on ivories see below and n. 128, 143.

17 Bard, in: *JAA* 11/1, 1992, 1–24; Trigger, in: *WA* 22/2, 1990, 119ff. – Common gravegoods were pots, jars, stone vessels (containers for foodstuff, beer and oils which magically provided nourishment for the dead into the Netherworld, but also having an ideological importance for their painted decoration – when present – perhaps alluding to mythical/religious beliefs); palettes and cosmetics; tools for daily use; weapons; sometimes also models of houses, boats and clay figurines of humans and animals.

lis, continued to flourish; Abadiya and Gebelein (whether or not they had ever been independent realities) already show signs of the loss of their *political* (?) importance.

The cemeteries of Naqada, the largest urban centre in the Naqada II (Gerzean) period, show a rather rapid decline in wealth, size and number of tombs during the following period – Naqada III. It could be assumed that this site was being eclipsed by the emerging rulers of the Thinite region, buried in Abydos cemetery U.¹⁸ The Thinis/Abydos regional state, like the southern one with its capital in Hierakonpolis (Nekhen), lasted until the dawn of the dynastic period and probably struggled up to that time for the sceptre of Egypt. An alternative theory, stressing the importance of trade, would account for the decline of important centres of the past owing to the loss of their commercial importance; the Hierakonpolis leaders might have based their power on the mediation in long distance trades between northern centres and Lower and Upper Nubia. If the Thinites had begun to directly entertain commercial relations with the A-Group cultures of Seyala and Qustul,¹⁹ by-passing Hierakonpolis by means of the Western Desert roads,²⁰ the decline of centres like Nekhen (as perhaps *Nwbt* – Naqada before), would find a good explanation without recurring to military conflicts. In turn the same A-Group rapidly disappeared with the beginning of the First Dynasty, when the Egyptian kings' military expeditions made them capable of directly exploiting the Nubian territories (a similar situation might have occurred early in Naqada II at Maadi).

It has been ascertained that the Thinite kings were the founders of the 1st Dynasty; the commercial contacts that favoured the spreading of Upper Egyptian culture in the north since mid-Naqada II probably (but by no means certainly) drove the main Upper Egyptian city-states to found new centres in the northern lands. Köhler²¹ has pointed out two important factors of this process: von der Way's *cultural unification* of Egypt must have

evolved through peaceful interactions (trade contacts) between the Upper Egyptian Naqada culture and the Lower Egyptian Maadi-Buto culture. Predynastic Middle Egypt, from Badari to the areas of Gerzeh and Tarkhan, is now the least known region of Egypt; hence Köhler thinks there could have been another regional polity, the Badarian facies, which favoured the northwards expansion of the Naqada culture. Certainly this latter had reached the Gerzeh region (i.e. cemeteries of Gerzeh, Harageh and, later, Abusir el-Meleq and Tarkhan) early in Naqada II, and its superimposition in Buto Layer III, marking the beginning of its influence in the Delta, coincides with Naqada II d2–III a1. In this period the local (Maadi-Buto) ceramic types are substituted by a production in the distinctive forms of the Naqadan jars, and a Naqada and Near Eastern influenced mudbrick architecture makes its first appearance in some Delta centres.

Maadi-Wadi Digla had been already abandoned at the end of the Naqada II b phase (c. 3500 BC).

Much later, the earliest attestations of royal *serekhs* at Tarkhan (Petrie's S. D. 77–80 = Naqada III b–c1) and Helwan (the Abydene Horus Ka) seem to show that the Upper Egyptians were now moving themselves, not only their products and culture, towards the North.

The Memphite region was a fundamental strategic place: like the Upper Egyptian sites, it was both very close to important resources and dominating the access to trade routes. Maadi-Buto sites all through the Delta had enjoyed commercial relations with Palestine and other Canaanite city-states, at least since early Naqada I; through those exchange circuits foreign pottery reached Abydos where it has been abundantly found in cemetery U (Hartung, in: SAK 26, 1998, 35ff.; Brandl, Colonization, 441ff.; Andelkovic, in: CCdE 3/4, 2002, 75ff.).

In the same way as with Nubian A-Group peoples in the south, the Thinite rulers shifted their interests towards the northern rich commercial network with Palestine and Syria.

18 Wilkinson, op. cit.; id. State Formation. – But note that the general mortuary evidence used as a basis to reconstruct *events* could be deceiving: the abandonment of a burial ground might have completely different reasons than the political or economical decline of the centre which the cemetery served. Thus these can only taken as hypothetical reconstructions (models) of the possible patterns of emergence and evolution which were pursued by the small scattered village-societies on their route toward the state.

19 The cemeteries 137 at Seyala and L at Qustul have yielded some objects of Upper Egyptian culture inspiration; a row of animals on a gold mace-handle from 137.1 and the important incense burner from L24 (with barks processions leading a ruler with White Crown, Rosette and falcon topped anonymous *serekh* to a

palace-façade structure) are dated early Naqada III; B. Williams, who published K. Seele's excavations, hypothesised a Nubian influence or origin of some of the early Egyptian state iconographic traits; but this assumption, as that of the earliest unification of Nubia than Egypt, was made some years before the most important findings of the German archaeologists in the Abydos cemetery U. (Cf. larger descriptions in part II and n. 82, 84).

20 For which there is recent evidence in Gebel Tjawty (and Wadi Qash) newly found *serekhs* and graffiti: cf. Wilkinson, Early Dynastic; id., in: MDAIK 56, 2000, 386. An important graffito has been found by Mr and Mrs Darnell in Gebel Tjawty, probably depicting king Scorpion I, the owner of the tomb U-j of Abydos (Hendrickx, pers. comm.).

21 Köhler, in: GM 147, 1995.

We have said that Naqada civilisation spread into the Delta at the end of phase II (d2). The following period shows a progressive uniformation of Egypt into one and the same culture, but the political uniformity and the events of phase III remain relatively obscure: there is no very marked funerary evidence of diffuse warfare and similar tensions, nor do the Delta sites show any kind of destruction layers (but cf. Cialowicz, *La naissance*, 96, 210, for a fire at Tell el-Farkha documented in an urban structure dated to Naqada IIIa2).

Maadi-Buto peoples were peaceful, living off their lands' products and off trades. The southern *Naqadians* are recognised as conquerors who had created few local entities after the reciprocal annihilation and the resulting enlargement of the strongest proto-states;²² but if so, where are the proofs of their violent subjugation of the Lower Egyptian region?

22 Anyway we have already pointed out (see above) also for them the importance of factors like trade and control of resources.

23 Petrie, RT, pt. 1, 1900; id., RT, pt. 2, 1901; id., Abydos, pt. 1, 1902; for general discussions of the period see Vandier, *Manuel*, vol. 1; Hayes, *Scepter; Trigger, The Rise*, 1–70; Needler, *Brooklyn Museum*, 12–44; Vercoutter, *L'Égypte*, vol. 1, 173–209; Midant-Reynes, *Préhistoire*, 217–234; Helck, *Thinitenzeit* (esp. 90–99); Wilkinson, *State Formation*; id., *Early Dynastic*, esp. 47–59; id., in: MDAIK 56, 2000; Cialowicz, in: SAAC 7, 1995, 7–23; id., *La naissance*; Bard, in: JFA 21/3, 1994, 265–288; important new considerations can be found in Hendrickx, in: GM 184, 2001, 85–110 (my sincere thanks to Dr. Stan Hendrickx from whom I received his article before it was published). – For the chronology cf. Hendrickx, in: *Archéo-Nil* 9, 1999 and also see below. – Petrie was undoubtedly the first Egyptologist to think and work in a modern scientific way; he excavated sites from all the periods of Egyptian history, but his greatest contribution was in the Predynastic and Early Dynastic studies. He always used to quickly publish his excavations (although he was often forced to make selections of his findings for limits of budget and time); his researches had not as a main aim the “hunt for Museum pieces” (he openly criticised Amélineau’s “methods”) but in his view a sherd could have the same value as a statue. He was not only a forerunner in the fieldwork, but also in theoretical approach: despite the lack, at that time, of methods of absolute dating, Petrie had invented an ingenious system of relative chronology (Sequence Dating, S. D.) based on seriations of archaeological contexts (tombs) through their finds (mostly grave-goods which he previously arranged in a relative order basing on the development of their shapes, decorations and other attributes). This method allowed him to have a sufficiently precise idea of the date (into 50 S. D. stages) of any tomb(-type) he excavated which produced a good number of pottery types or other classes of seriated objects. Petrie’s published excavations and corpora of predynastic pottery (nine classes and more than 700 types), protodynastic pottery and slate palettes continue to be of fundamental importance for the modern pre- and proto-dynastic studies. – His subdivision of the predynastic into three “cultures”, Amratian [S. D. 30–37 (mod. shift. 30/31–37/39)], Gerzean [S. D. 38–60 (38/40–52/62)] and Semainean [S. D.

We shall examine these and other arguments in the next part, dedicated to Naqada III, the history, the kings and the main cultural traits of the so called *Dynasty 0*.

Part II – Dynasty 0: The Rulers (Naqada IIIB–early IIIC1)

When W. M. F. Petrie readily published his excavations at cemetery B of Abydos,²³ it soon became clear to him that some of the evidence he, and E. Amélineau a few years before, had found on that site, did belong to a very remote period (very little was known then from before the Fourth Dynasty), one immediately preceding the First Dynasty Horus Aha and the legendary Menes, who

60–75/76 (54/62–76/79)], was later refined and correlated with the Early Dynastic period, forming the basis of the successive chronologies (Kaiser’s “Stufen”; cf. Needler, *Brooklyn Museum*, 44: NAQADA I = S. D. 30–38; NAQADA IIa.b = S. D. 38–40/45; NAQADA IIc.d = S. D. 40/45–63; NAQADA III = S. D. 63–80; for further adjustments cf. Kaiser, in: MDAIK 46, 1990). – Therefore, despite evident anomalies (i.e. Petrie did not consider spatial distribution of cemeteries, and, even more important, he differentiated the pottery types according to heterogeneous criteria like forms, date, fabric, decorations) Petrie’s method is still the core of the present chronologies; his terminology (*Amratian*, *Gerzean* but not *Semainean*) is still rather frequently used as a general indication but it mistakenly conveys the idea of different cultures which is not the actual case at all (being Naqada I–III phases, only subdivisions of one and the same evolving Egyptian culture). – The latest important achievements to the chronology of Naqada period were those by Edwin van den Brink (cf. below and n. 48f.) and especially by Stan Hendrickx; the latter (in his unpublished 1989 doctoral dissertation and in: Spencer (ed.), *Aspects*, 36–69; id., in: *Archéo Nil* 9, 1999, 13ff.) has resumed the most important methodological and structural critics to Kaiser’s system and made further fundamental adjustments: in particular we must mention here that Hendrickx recognised some differences in the periods of cultural break into Naqada *Stufen* proposed by Kaiser, namely 1) the end of Naqada I which occurred in Kaiser’s Naqada IIa(–b) rather than in Ic; 2) the transition from Naqada IIb2 to IIc1 is shifted in Hendrickx whom only acknowledges a period Naqada IIIB spanning Kaiser’s IIIB1–2 and early IIc1; 3) also very important is the consideration that Naqada IIIa1 fits better as the last phase of Naqada II: Hendrickx Naqada IID2 comprises both Kaiser’s Stufen IID2 and IIIa1; and Hendrickx’s IIIA1–2 are subdivisions of Kaiser’s Stufe IIIa2. – The motivations for these corrections are mainly due to persistence and modifications of some pottery types (but also of other objects and horizontal and vertical stratigraphy of cemeteries), but it is impossible to explain them in detail here; a remarkable confirmation of the validity of Hendrickx’s improvements is his publication of the Naqada III cemetery at El-Kab and the results of computerised seriation analysis provided by Toby Wilkinson (in: *State Formation*, 9ff., 63f.).

was thought to have been buried in the Naqada Tomb discovered in 1897 by J. de Morgan.²⁴

The term *Dynasty 0*, used by James E. Quibell to describe late predynastic material he found at Hierakonpolis, was adopted by W. M. F. Petrie for rulers such as Ka-Ip, Ro, Zeser, Nar-Mer and Sma;²⁵ only more recently has it gained a general acceptance through its use by W. Kaiser.²⁶

The Dynasty 0 rulers of Thinis/Abydos were buried in cemetery B; its latest royal tomb was that of Aha (albeit Dreyer proposed for some time the attribution of B40 – which is very close to Djer's tomb – to Manetho's Athotis I, a shadowy ephemeral successor of Aha). Horus Djer started the cemetery commonly known as Umm el-Qaab which became the burial place of all the other kings of the First Dynasty, queen Merneith, and the hundreds of retainers slain at their burial. After a period of disuse, kings Peribsen and Khasekhemwy of the late Second Dynasty also built their tombs on this sacred ground.

Cemetery B, the precursor of Umm el-Qaab, was in turn the continuation of an older necropolis, some steps to the north: the cemetery U recently and currently excavated by G. Dreyer of DAIK.

What emerged after the work of the archaeologists was another clue suggesting the existence of a "Dynasty 0": Royal Annals, Turin Canon and later Greek-Latin sources²⁷ proved as well that many kings had reigned in

Upper and Lower Egypt before the so called First Dynasty.

A precision has to be made: the terms *Dynasty 0* and *Dynasty 00*,²⁸ were both cloned to account for newly found royal names and objects of older and older periods: those just mentioned found by Petrie and the more recent ones discovered by the German archaeologists directed by G. Dreyer (cf. below). But the word *dynasty* is here somewhat improperly used, because it is often no longer applied to indicate a unique line of rulers of a certain site and of equal origin (like for Manetho's dynasties). Dynasty 0 in fact, currently aims to include not only the Abydos kings of cemetery B who preceded Aha, but also chiefs from entirely different ruling élites of other sites like Delta centres, Helwan, Tura, Tarkhan, or Hierakonpolis. They have in common only the same chronological collocation in Kaiser's Stufe Naqada IIIb1–2 (Hendrickx's Naqada IIIB). Similarly king Scorpion I from tomb U-j and his contemporaries of Naqada IIIa1–2 can be considered as Dynasty 00 kings within the same "chronological acceptance" of the term.²⁹

In this survey of Dynasty 0, I will proceed in an inverse chronological order, following only the succession Iry Hor–Ka–Narmer; several of the other kings might have had contemporary reigns.

The predecessor of Hor Aha was certainly the famous **NARMER**. Since his discovery, a century ago, at

24 Petrie equated Aha with Menes which, in later traditions, is the name given to the founder of Memphis and of the First Dynasty. Petrie was one of the first scholars, with John Garstang, to challenge the ownership of the Naqada mastaba to Menes. For a recent re-analysis of this tomb and its finds cf. Kahl et al., in: MDAIK 57, 2001 and id., Vergraben, (sincere thanks to J. Kahl for presenting me this publication).

25 Zeser and Sma eventuated not to be royal names at all; *Ip* is not part of Ka's name but an indication of Upper Egyptian product. – I have been unable to ascertain the absolute first use of the name "Dynasty 0"; Petrie uses it in "Diospolis Parva", 1901, 24, (and in his *History of Egypt* 7th ed., 1912, but I do not know if even in the older editions too). In Hierakonpolis, pt. 1, J. Quibell describes some predynastic objects as "Dynasty 0", thus it must have been Quibell or Petrie to first adopt this term around 1899, independently from which of them first used it in a publication. (I am indebted to J. Kahl and E. C. M. van den Brink for their suggestions on some matters; but eventual mistakes are obviously only mine.)

26 Cf. Kaiser, in: MDAIK 41, 1985, 71.

27 As Herodotus, Manetho, Diodorus Siculus, Plinius the Elder; for the Shemsu Hor, the names on Annals line 1, and Annals reconstructions cf. pt. I passim and notes 5–7; also cf. Kaiser, in: ZÄS 84, 1959, 119–132; id., in: ZÄS 91, 1964, 86ff.; Helck, Manetho; id., Thinitenzen.

28 "Dynasty 00" has been introduced by E. van den Brink (after a

playful suggestion by G. Dreyer), in: van den Brink (ed.), Nile Delta, vi, n. 1, but it has not been as widely used as "Dynasty 0". van den Brink states that Dynasty 00, 0 and 1 respectively coincide with the periods Naqada IIIa, IIIb, IIIc. – I might have entitled the present article "*Late Predynastic Kings*", "*The Dynasties 0*" or "*Naqada IIIB Dynasties*", while it would actually result in a funny paradoxical pun talking about *Late Predynastic Dynasties*. Cf. prev. n.; also note that T. Wilkinson, Early Dynastic, 52 tends to include in the Dynasty 00 meaning, also the anonymous "owners of the Abydos vessel [U-502, U-239], the tombs in Naqada cemetery T, the Hierakonpolis painted tomb [100] and the Gebelein painted cloth", therefore all evidence of high status and likely local chiefs which did belong to the previous period (Naqada II) and, above all, to different regions-stocks. Cf. Wilkinson, Early Dynastic, 53, 61 for the term *Dynasty 0*. – As noticed above (n. 25) J. E. Quibell, in: Hierakonpolis, pt. 1, already applied the caption "Dyn. 0" to his book plates with late predynastic materials, thus in a clear chronological and not genealogical sense. – Wilkinson (Early Dynastic, 53) proposes to stem these monarchs as "Late Predynastic Kings", but this terminology, although less misleading than Dynasty 00–0, is also less specific. Alternatively we may adopt a chronological terminology based on Hendrickx's subdivisions of the Naqada culture, or one implying the use of geographical, iconographical or other distinctive criterions (i.e. Abydos Dyn. 0–A ...) for grouping the various "*predynastic dynasties*".

Hierakonpolis by Quibell and Green and then at Abydos by Petrie, many more attestations of his name (especially on pottery incised *serekhs*) have been found in Upper and Lower Egypt, in the Western and Eastern Deserts and outside Egypt in Palestine (see below).

Narmer is a key-figure in the history of Ancient Egypt, and one of the few single individuals of the Egyptian history *ante*-Fourth Dynasty; the role of this sovereign, who could be either considered as the last king of the Predynastic or the first one of the Dynastic age, was crucial in the development of the early state.

Some uncertainties in his collocation in late Naqada IIIb2 or early Naqada IIIc1 undoubtedly reflect either a long reign with important cultural transformations, or the fact that this imposing historical personage fits equally well at the end of an age (Predynastic) as at the beginning of a new one.

The long debated question of the identity of Menes is an argument which can hardly escape any discussion on such a subject: but it has not been, until recently, treated by many scholars,³⁰ thus I will not rehearse discussions already known and available elsewhere, because my aim here is to focus on new data and objectives.

It suffices here to underline three points:

1) none of the *proofs* for the identity of Menes with Narmer or Aha has proved to be decisive without

doubt: the so called “tomb of Menes”, a giant niched mastaba at Naqada probably built for the king’s mother Neithhotep, produced an ivory label on which the “*Men-checkboard*” sign was under/in the shrine of the double goddesses, represented beside the *serekh* of Aha. Scholars advanced scores of theories on the meaning of this shrine,³¹ on the reading of the sign,³² and on the interpretation of the name Men (Meni) as Aha’s own or Aha’s dead father’s (Narmer).³³ By the same way Helck’s interpretation of the *Prinzen-seal* of Narmer with rows of his *serekh* beside the *men-checkboard*,³⁴ has had, with the diffusion of this opinion in some articles of the *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, a certain weight in favouring the equation Aha–Menes in the last decades. Another important factor is that Menes was later said to have been the founder of Memphis; Narmer is indeed scarcely attested at Saqqara and Helwan,³⁵ while Aha appears as the first ruler to have had a giant mastaba (S 3357) in North Saqqara (probably built for his highest official of the Memphite administration) with impressive funerary offerings.³⁶

2) I have mentioned³⁷ the modern interpretations of the Narmer palette and the fact that the unification it was once thought to depict, seems to have happened well before Narmer’s reign and to have lasted much more than a single reign or generation.³⁸

30 Smith, in: BMFA 65, 1967, 70–84; Wildung, *Die Rolle*, 4ff.; Morenz, in: ZÄS 99, 1972 (pref.); Helck, *Thinitenzeit*, passim; id., in: LÄ IV, 486–493; Allen, in: GM 126, 1992, 19ff.; Baud, in: Archéo-Nil 9, 1999, 109ff.; Midant-Reynes, *Préhistoire*, 231f.; O’Mara, in: DE 46, 2000, 49ff.; id., in: GM 182, 2001, 97ff. For a recent general summary on the discussion of this topic cf. Kinnaer, in: KMT 12/3, 2001, 75–81 (some minor points are criticisable); cf. also n. 33.

31 Spiegelberg, in: OLZ 3, 1900; Vikentiev, in: ASAE 33, 1933 (double throne); Grdseloff, in: ASAE 44, 1944, 279ff.

32 The new fragment of this label found in Aha’s tomb central chamber (B15) at Abydos (Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, pl. 57c) leaves out any doubt that the sign is really the men checkboard hieroglyph (Gardiner sign Y5).

33 Cf. arguments for Menes in Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, 33–37; Lauer, *Histoire Monumentale*, 19ff.; Edwards, in: CAH vol. 1, pt. 1, 1–70.

34 Helck, in: ZDMG 103, 1953, 354ff.; contra (i.e. not princes’ names) Fischer, in: CdE 36, 1961, 19–22.

35 Saqqara: *serekh* on stone vessel found in the Step Pyramid gallery VII (B) (Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JdE 88406), Lacau/Lauer, PD, vol. 4/1, 9, pl. 1.1; *ibid.*, vol. 4/2, 1f.; Abydos: Petrie, RT, pt. 1, pl. 4.2; *id.*, RT, pt. 2, pl. 2.3.6; Helwan: *serekh* on a faience tag in the debris near tombs 1H3 and 40H3.

36 Emery, *Hor-Aha*; circa 800 cylinder vessels with ink inscriptions of Aha were found, but also stone vessels, labels, long pottery horns of rhinoceros. – Isolated *serekhs* of Aha from other memphite cemeteries have been found on cylinder jars at Helwan, Zawiyet el-Aryan (Z1), Abu Rawash (402).

37 Cf. part I passim and n. 1, 2.

38 I want to express here my view on the matter of the *period* of political unification; it has been argued since Kaiser’s fundamental researches (cf. n. 12) that this must have happened some generations before Narmer; indeed, although we have seen that a cultural uniformity was achieved as early as Naqada IId2 throughout Egypt, it is equally true that, up to the very end of the predynastic period, local and independent royal lines seem to have existed at Tura, Helwan, Tarkhan, Hierakonpolis and probably elsewhere (Delta?); the relationship of these with the Thinite rulers whose successors “founded” the First Dynasty is still obscure. But the mere attestation of mysterious and yet undefined figures like Scorpion II and Crocodile (also cf. below) may indicate that only with Narmer’s reign the last local polities had been finally and definitively abolished (whether in a peaceful or violent way it remains unestablished). – Important clues in this question are the already discussed (pt. 1, esp. n. 2; Appendix) Narmer’s label year-event (?), likely reporting the same defeat as the one on the palette; the abrupt disappearance of the *dualistic motifs* (like the two serpopards on the palette recto) just with the end of his reign; and finally, the apparent contemporaneity of his reign with that of his rival (?) of Hierakonpolis, Scorpion II (independently of whether and how did Narmer rule him out). – Therefore, even if I agree that the process of political superimposition or subjugation of the southerners over the north lasted for generations and began well before Narmer, it seems to me very likely that this latter king must have had still an outstanding and active role in this play. Still during the Second Dynasty, a series of undetermined factors appear to have caused not few troubles to the young monarchy; perhaps

3) Despite frequent examples of misinterpretations of early dynastic writings (esp. kings' names) by later scribes, it is not easy to think that Menes (Meni in New Kingdom lists) ought to be considered an entirely mythical figure.³⁹ Leaving aside the latest (and more corrupted) sources, we must admit that the occurrence of Meni in the funerary kings' lists (Abydos) and Royal Canon of Turin⁴⁰ of the time of Ramses II can not be overlooked, especially given the general correspondence of the other names with Nebty names attested on 1st Dynasty objects. But this name strangely appears only with the 18th and 19th dynasty! Furthermore on the Turin papyrus it directly follows the Shemsu Hor (which in turn come after the dynasties of gods) and it is written twice: on the first of the two lines with a human determinative, and on the second one with the god determinative. I continue to prospect the alternative hypotheses that, whatever the meaning of the *Men* on Princes-seals of Narmer and on Aha's labels, New Kingdom scribes or priests might have mistaken archaic documents which they surely had access to; or that they could have artificially created a mythical figure of the initiator of the Egyptian human kingship for religious and propaganda purposes or for the need of establishing a precise point of departure of their successful kingship, state, tradition, culture.⁴¹

In 1985 the German expedition re-excavating Umm el-Qaab and the cemeteries B and U at Abydos, found an

these critical events might have had an origin in the not yet perfectly balanced socio-political situation of the country. – Moreover in my opinion we cannot vindicate statements as those claiming that Egypt would be unified since the period of Scorpion I (Naqada IIIa2/A1): these can only be accepted as suggestions at present; I am not perforce meaning that such an early political unity is unthinkable at all, but only that we have not much to parallel this with (i.e. royal tombs from different sites); the same statements on the unified-state origins were in fact made for Qusut necropolis L rulers, when no other royal cemetery of that period and wealth was yet known (cf. below). – The U-j tomb imported riches (attested for the first time in such a massive amount from a single burial) were made available through trade relations with Southern Palestine; but it is still difficult to understand if the Thinite had a direct access to this circuit of exchange (as it later did) or if there was any mediation by other polities. In general, novelty or impressiveness of some finds can easily influence our deductions, leading us *not* to consider further possibilities which have not (yet) similar weighty, astonishing supports.

39 A mythical Sesostriis, mixing the characters of more than one XIIth dynasty kings, is known from the Greek sources; the name Menes could be interpreted as well as a conflation of two or more archaic kings.

40 Redford, King-lists; for the Shemsu-Hor cf. Kaiser, in: ZÄS 84,

important seal impression with the Horus names of Narmer, Aha, Djer, Djet, Den and the king's mother Merneith. Some years later a new example, again with the kings' names and the necropolis god Khentymenitiw was found containing all the names until that of king Qa-a, the last Thinite king of the 1st Dynasty (Merneith was now excluded).

On both clay impressions the oldest king in the list was Narmer: a clear statement of the light in which he was viewed in the middle and late First Dynasty! If a Menes did exist, in his quality of initiator of an epoch, he would never have been preceded by another individual's name: thus Aha can not be considered as Menes and, even if the monuments of Aha's reign at Saqqara, Abydos, and Naqada are much more impressive than those of Narmer, we can plainly believe that this depends on the fact that Aha enjoyed the wealthy state which his father (?) handed down to him. As stated above, Narmer is much more attested in throughout the country and abroad, and his reign is marked by an evident evolution in various aspects of the culture of this growing civilisation, which appears to our eyes to be owing more to him than to Aha.⁴²

Many more objects bearing the name of Narmer are known: in the Hierakonpolis temple *Main Deposit*, together with the Great Palette and further older objects, a small decorated ivory cylinder was found with his name's *nar*-fish handing a reed towards three rows of Libyan prisoners. Another well known and widely discussed and described object is the completely preserved mace

119ff.; id., in: ZÄS 85, 118ff.; Helck, in: ArOr, 18, 1950, 120ff.; von Beckerath, in: MDAIK 14, 1956, 1ff.

41 H. G. Fischer pointed out two more possible men-like occurrences (in: *Artibus Asiae* 21, 1958, 64–88): the palace-façade device on the *serekhs* on a stela fragment found by Petrie at Abydos (nearby Narmer and Aha's tombs) and that on the Metropolitan Museum palette (anonymous *serekh*) are very apt to be confused with the sign *men* (also some graphies of the sign *djer* can and have been mistaken with the *serekhs* palace-façade). – Schott, Hieroglyphen, 66, proposed to read "*Ma-nu*" the Lion + *nw*-vessel name written inside a fortress on the Bull palette, Louvre E 11255 (for certain ideological implications of "unification" and "Menes" cf. Lorton, in: VA 3, 1987, 33ff.).

42 In any case many innovations were accomplished just with and since Aha's reign, certainly in response to a situation of political, economical and psychological concord inherited from the previous reign, which primed major achievements in the fields of crafts, mortuary architecture, religion, ideology, administration, and technologies. – Cf. Wilkinson, Early Dynastic, 68 for the Menes-Narmer debate and *ibid.* 71 for the change in the commercial relation with Near East during Hor-Aha's reign. – For Den seal impressions see Dreyer, in: MDAIK 43, 1987, 107ff. (cf. Kaiser *ibid.*), while Qaa sealing was published in Dreyer et al., in: MDAIK 52, 1996, 72, fig. 26.

head of Narmer; it shows an important ceremony (*Heb-Sed* (?): a figure sits in a *replit* just in front of the king, behind the sedan-chair three prisoners stride within the *dnbw*-signs which recur also on the Den/Hemaka label and in the southern *usekhet*-court and underground reliefs of the Djoser complex, cf. Spencer in: JEA 64, 1978, 52–55). The ceremony involves the presentation of (numbered) prisoners and other gifts (or tributes) to the king; he wears the tight robe of the *Sed* jubilee and sits under the canopy on top of a nine step-high building surmounted by a flying vulture. There also appear fan- and standard-bearers, the Horus name, the pelt-dressing Tjaty, the sandal bearer (whose title “Servant of the king?” includes a seven petal rosette) and the temple of Djebawt (Buto?) above/with dead (?) hartebeests inside an enclosure.

This object (along with the cylinder and the palette) is a symptomatic, manifest banner of a new way to express the (key) role of the ruler into the young state ideological and functional ambit.

Some of the symbolic identifications of the king as bull or lion were quite inherited from the earlier cultural panorama, which, since the Badarian and Naqada I phases, witnesses a progressive allotting of more and more distinctive characters into the representations of chieftains. This fact obviously reflected the current beliefs and traditions centred onto the paramount leaders of the polities.

In Naqada IIIb–c, for the first time, the emphasised partnership of king and gods is apparent.

Each of the *royal decorations* is focused on an exploit of the sovereign (be it aggression of enemies, victory, jubilee, rites, celebrations or maybe his own death!) where the main characters do remain unchanged: beaten or bound captives and slain defeated enemies represent the evil-pole constantly menacing the state which the king or the gods protect; the divine favour and legitimisation

(cf. Narmer palette, mace head, cylinder, label) testify to the supernatural right to the sovereignty.

The “event” which is depicted, has always to do with the king performing acts which the whole country will directly or indirectly benefit from (as the presentation of the booty to the king; or as the rejuvenation of his forces and capabilities through the performing of the Heb-Sed ritual cycle). When the king’s power is rejuvenated (whether through the effective performing of the Sed or by the effect of the magically efficacious power of the representation of the same jubilee) or a booty/tribute is presented to him, the whole state is benefited, since the king is the state.

In 1997–98 a label was found at Abydos with the year-event depicting the same “military victory” as on the palette and the cited ivory (see n. 38; 46). The recent book of T. Wilkinson has a convenient summary of the sources for this king.⁴³ However it does not include some pieces which have often been related (indeed without any sure ground) to Narmer; such as the unprovenanced king’s head in University College (he proposes a Second Dynasty date for it), or the ivory statuette from Abydos in the British Museum, or possibly, the limestone stela fragment from Abydos (n. 44); furthermore Narmer’s *serekh* is found on the base of a statue of a baboon, the god Hedj-Wr, in Berlin,⁴⁴ and (almost completely erased) on the thigh of one of the three Coptos Colossi, the one in Cairo Museum.⁴⁵ A stone vessel from Djoser’s complex at Saqqara (cf. n. 35) and some more from Abydos bear his *serekh* in relief.

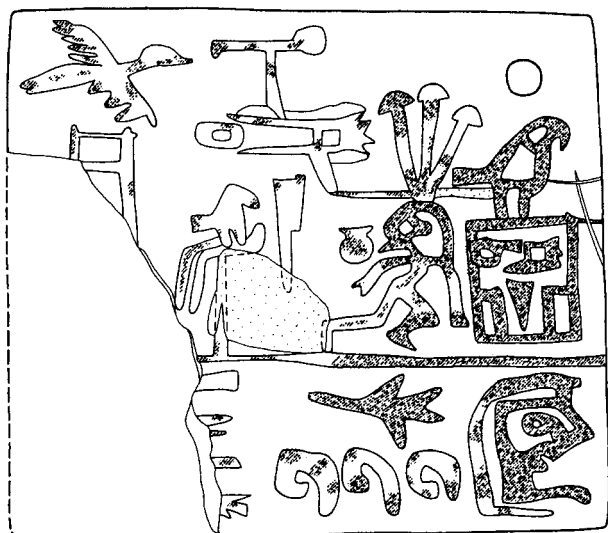
The fragmentary statue in München (Staatliche Samml. Äg. Kunst ÄS 7149, unknown provenance, sedimentary rock, 11,2 cm high; head and legs lost) has some characteristics of the basalt bearded man now in Oxford (1922.70, formerly MacGregor coll.) and has also been

43 Loc. cit. (Zawiyet el-Aryan, Tura, Helwan, Naqada); for a complete list of all the inscriptions of Narmer known up to 1993 cf. Kahl, *Das System, Quellen* 79–131; my website <http://members.xoom.it/francescoraf/> has an updated list in the Dynasty 0 page.

44 Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum, 22607, height: 52 cm; cf. also Schott, in: *RdE* 21, 1969, 77ff.; and Krauss, in: *MDAIK* 50, 1994, 223–230. – The limestone stela fragment with *serekh* device (niches and a *men*-like top) is in Petrie, *Abydos*, pt. 1, pl. 13; Fischer, in: *Artibus Asiae* 21, 1958, fig. 24; id., in: *JARCE* 2, 1963, pl. 6b. See also n. 41. – The limestone head UC 15989 was bought by Petrie in Cairo (Petrie, *Ancient Egypt*, 1915, 168; id., *The Making of Egypt*, pl. 38, 13f.; thanks to Joris van Wetering for supplying information on this object). – For the ivory statuette from Abydos see Petrie, *Abydos* pt. 2, pl. 2.3, 13(1); S. R. K. Glanville, in: *JEA* 17, 1931, 65f. – Other most-

ly unprovenanced inscriptions on jars and stone vessels are found in Kaplony, *IAFS*, fig. 1061f.; id., *KBI AF* fig. 1138; id., *Steingefässe*, 5; id., *BK*, pl. 6f., 18f. (= id., in: *MDAIK* 20, 1965, fig. 1–3). – An alabaster plate fragment *MDAIK* 49, 1993, 38, fig. 5; an ink inscription on cylinder vessel in: *MDAIK* 54, 1998, 140, fig. 30; a (type 74b) jar incised *serekh* Dreyer interprets as an eastern Delta estate of Narmer in: *MDAIK* 55, 1999, 1ff.

45 Williams, in: *JARCE* 25, 1988, 35–59; in fig. 1, p. 26 there are also three further incisions: a Nar fish, a *serekh* and a harpoon. Also cf. Dreyer, in: *SDAIK* 28, 1995, 49–56; id., *Umm el-Qaab*, vol. 1; Kemp, in: *CAJ* 10, 2000, 211–242; for an attempt to a lexico-grammatical analysis of the signs on the Colossi and of some contemporary inscribed objects from tomb U-j: Anselin, in: *CCdE* 2, 2001, 115–136.



Ivory label of Narmer found south of tomb B16-2 (Aha's complex) at Abydos: the hieroglyphic compound on the left of the serekh, a defeated Tehenw, can be paralleled with the similar ones on Narmer palette (verso) and on the Hierakonpolis ivory cylinder. Size: 3,65 cm x 4,20 cm x 0,25 cm (from G. Dreyer, in: Dreyer et al. MDAIK 54, 1998, 138f., fig. 29).

paralleled by A. Grimm to the Third Dynasty Brooklyn (58.192, diorite) statuette of Onuris. The ruler only wears the penis sheath (in relief and provided with a buckle) bound to an incised belt, the long extremities of which (in relief) hang on both sides of the sheath; the arms and hands fall vertically on the flanks (as the Oxford statuette); the presence of a short beard is perhaps suggested by a jagged portion below the unpreserved neck. On the left part of the thorax there is the smoothly incised lower half of a *serekh* with a glyph on the base of the name compartment and a simple palace façade below it. The name has been read as Nar(mer), although the sign could equally recall a scorpion (if it were not for the too short claws which are in fact mere appendices) because the hind part, unlike the fish tail, has no fin and it seems instead to pursue upward (into the erased portion of the name-frame) as the scorpion tail does (see n. 52; cf. A. Grimm, in: Donadoni-Roveri/Tiradritti (eds), *Kemet*, 226f.).

Far less probable (also for the statue typology) is the eventuality that the glyph may represent a badly scratched *neb*-sign, thus deferring to the Second Dynasty royal name Nebra ([Ra]-neb).

As said above, Narmer is attested in the Desert (graffiti around Hierakonpolis, Wadi Qash, Gebel Tjawty, Coptos); further possible routes in which to search for his traces are those towards the western Desert Oasis and beyond: some rock graffiti, including a *serekh* (Narmer, Aha or later?) have been found by

Giancarlo Negro at Abu Ballas, a little hill about half way between Dakhla and Gilf Kebir. Negro, Kuper, Kroepelin and Bergmann, are searching for a road from the Oasis of Dakhla (Mut) to Gilf Kebir (near the modern Libyan border) and from here to the wells of Uweinat or Kufra (cf. *Geo* 10, 2000). He informs me that Abu Ballas was provided, during the Old and Middle Kingdom, with a water supply of c. 1000 litres; Predynastic (?) and Middle Kingdom graffiti are also found nearby.

The route to Abu Ballas and those from there to Uweinat and Kufra would have been difficult to run along even with the aid of asses; on the other hand we must consider that the environment at that time must have been still more like a savannah than the arid desert it became a millennium later.

G. Negro thinks that areas which are now in the eastern Sahara Desert must have been sources of various minerals and rocks: he suggests in particular the silica glass (the material later used for a scarab on a pectoral of Tutankhamon).

It equally remains largely debatable if we can really accept this isolated *serekh* (in such a distant place from the Nile Valley) as an early one; only additional similar findings could solve the question (for an introduction to Egyptian presence in the Eastern Sahara see J. Vercoutter, in: *Sahara* 1, 1988, 9–19).

Most of the occurrences of Narmer's name are on jars and jar fragments; an astonishing number of *serekhs* has emerged in the last 25 years from excavations in Israel and Palestine (Tel Erani, En Besor, Arad, Halif Terrace/Nahal Tillah, Small Tel Malhata, Tel Maahaz, Tel Lod and some more) signifying an apex of commercial contacts between Egypt and Canaan which lasted all through EB I: since Naqada IIc (introduction of Ware in Egypt and evidence from Lachish Nw settl., Site H and Taur Ikhbeineh mainly involving direct contacts with the (Maadi-)Buto Lower Egyptian cultural complex) through Dynasty 0 and to Naqada IIIc1 = Early First Dynasty; not to count the clay seal impressions from En Besor that Schulman has dated to late First Dynasty = Naqada IIIc3; (for EB I see Brandl, *Colonization*; Levy et. al., in: *BA* 58/1, 26ff.; for EB II – Naqada IIIc3 see Schulman, *Seal Impressions*, 409f.). These data and the excavation of many Southern Palestine sites, are proof of a very complex series of interrelations between Egypt and peoples centred beyond North Sinai lasting more than two (or three) centuries (Andelkovic, in: *CCdE* 3/4, 2002).

It has been ascertained, mainly on the base of ceramic types and fabric, that Egyptian colonies did exist in this area, which must have worked either as trading-posts or as bazaars or points of exchange, storage and forwarding to Egypt of products (wine, oils) and raw

materials (wood, ores, copper, resins, honey Andelkovic, in: CCdE 3/4, 2002, 77).

In many cases the evidence of imported foreign pottery in Egypt and of Egyptian ceramic types in Palestine (both locally made or imported from Egypt), dates back to early Naqada II (thus before EB Ia, in late Ghassoulian and late Beersheba contexts; cf. Hartung, in: MDAIK 50, 1994, 107ff.).

Some more *serekhs* of Narmer have been excavated at Minshat Abu Omar (44.3), Tell Ibrahim Awad and Tell Farain-Buto in the Delta and at Kafr Hassan Dawood (913) in a c. 1000 tombs cemetery on the southern limit of the Wadi Tumilat.

Dreyer interprets a mark on a jar in a private collection as an eastern Delta Narmer estate (cf. n. 44).

There is a slight possibility that a late Naqada IIIb1 ruler with the name Nar did exist: some such *serekhs* appear on earlier jar types (cf. notes 44, 46, 49, 72); however all the other forms *nar* do belong undoubtedly to Narmer.

In fact, his name often recurs in this abbreviated form with only the *nar*-sign; it is unlikely that, as it was hypothesised, the use of the writing Nar was (always) from the latter part of his reign.⁴⁶

Narmer was buried in the sacred necropolis (B) of Abydos, tomb B17/18 (two united rectangular mud-brick-lined chambers; size: c. 10 m x 3,10 m and 2,50/2,80 m deep); it is few meters north of the westernmost chamber (B10) of his successor Aha (Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, 220f.).

Some meters to the north of Narmer's tomb, a true double chamber tomb B9/7 (these two are c. 1,80 m distant; B9 is c. 5,9 m x 3,1 m; B7 is c. 6,0 m x 3,2 m; both are

c. 1,9 m deep), produced inscriptional material of his predecessor. His name, **KA**, also appears in at least two different writing forms: with the standard *ka*-sign and with the same sign but reversed. Because this latter can also have a different reading, i.e. the verb "to embrace", P. Kaplony proposed to read the name *Sekhen*. More than 40 inscriptions have been found in Ka's burial chamber (B7, the southern of the two) of the Abydos tomb: one is a seal impression, all the remaining ones are inscribed on tall jars or cylinder vessels (incised or written in black ink).

Apart from this site, the only further attestation of Ka in Upper Egypt is a carbon inscription on a jar fragment recently found at Adaima (Grimal, in: BIFAO 99, 1999, 451, fig. 1; more inscriptions in van den Brink, in: Archéo-Nil 11, 2001). Other traces of Ka have been found in northern sites: in the cemetery A of Tarkhan an ink inscribed cylinder vessel from tomb 261, and in Helwan tombs 1627 H2 and 1651 H2 two tall jars with incised inscriptions; some inscribed vessel fragments are unprovenanced.

A new *serekh* has been found on pottery by F. Hassan in tomb 1008 at Kafr Hassan Dawood, at the southern boundary of Wadi Tumilat; and another one is known from a pottery fragment from Tell Ibrahim Awad. Most important is a new *serekh* from Tel Lod, southern Palestine.

Finally there is a cylinder seal from (nearby?) Helwan tomb 160.H3 with an anonymous *serekh* and a human figure beside it; this has his arms raised and the right hand appears to be partly placed in the *serekh*, just nearby to where the name would be written; A. J. Serrano has thus proposed that this figure could designate the king and his royal name – *Horus Ka* – contemporarily (but see below).⁴⁷

46 In the important tomb Tarkhan 414 a third form, Narmer-Tjay, appeared on one of the seal impressions of Narmer found in it: cf. Petrie et al., Tarkhan I, pl. 2,2 (also cf. below and n. 58); Vikentiev (in: JEA 17, 1931, 67–79) proposed to read his name *Nar-Ba-Tjay* whereas Godron advanced the reading *Mery-Nar* (in: ASAE 49, 1949, 217–220, pl. 1 with 24 examples, + note compl.). W. Barta interpreted the name as "The Horus who belongs to the Catfish God", to be read *Nary* (MDAIK 24, 1969, 51–55). Cf. also Goedicke, in: SAK 15, 1988, 123–141 (*Nar-menekh-Hrw*). – The Nar sign in the abbreviated form varies from a simple horizontal stroke to a wider sign (where the fish head and tail are easily distinguishable) as the Royal Ontario Museum example in Gilroy, in: GM 180, 2001, 67ff. – Another very doubtful attestation of Narmer is an ink inscription on a jar from Tarkhan tomb 415 (Petrie et al., Tarkhan I, pl. 31,69) cf. below. – For a further reading (suggested by John Ray) of Horus Narmer's name cf. Wilkinson, in: JEA 86, 2000, 26, n. 23 (*Hrw-s'ib*, "Horus the dappled"); however the necropolis

seal-impressions of Den and Qa-a appear only to depict a variant of the *Nar* sign (reproduced with a previously unattested appendix hanging down from up above the tail of the fish), and not a generic animal pelt as proposed by J. Ray. The *serekh* in Junker, Turah, 5, was erroneously thought to be Scorpion's (Schott, Hieroglyphen, 8) or Narmer's one (Vikentiev, in: BIE 32, 1951, 223): it is indeed Aha's name. – Finally a Nar-fish appears on both sides of the Brooklyn (Abu Zeidan t. B32) knife handle dated to early Naqada IIIa (sometimes it is mistakenly indicated as being a scorpion); for a possible king Nar (different from Narmer) cf. n. 49.

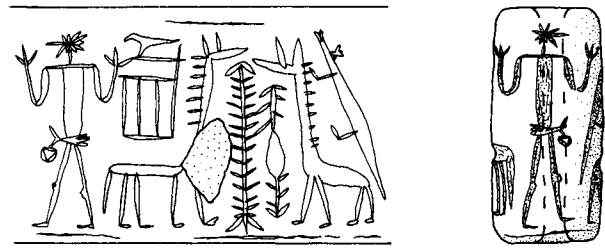
47 The seal was found by Z. Saad; recently reconsidered by Ch. Köhler (in: GM 168, 1999, 49ff.) and by A. Jimenez-Serrano (in: GM 180, 2001, 81ff.). – Köhler has correctly shown the similarity of the motif assemblage on this seal with the small fragment of palette in Berlin Sammlung 23301 (in: GM 168, 1999, 52, n. 17; Cialowicz, in: SAAC 4, 1992, 9; also cf. the appendix below). – I would also add that the human figure por-

Additionally this author believes, contra Köhler, that the space below the falcon (?) is punctured.

But in the light of the new evidence from Helwan it can be assumed that the seal may refer to one of the last local rulers reigning before Ka and Narmer; the *serekh* could be anonymous or perhaps to be read Ny-Hor, because the animal seems to be placed on a horizontal stroke rather than on top of the *serekh* (in this case it would show a falcon on a N or on an harpoon, separated from the plain *serekh* below it. Another uncommon royal-name device from Helwan is the Nj-Neith *serekh* in GM 187, 2002, 59ff., with the falcon beside the *serekh*). Alternatively the animal could also not be a bird at all, but a crocodile in profile, thus recalling Dreyer's reading of Horus Crocodile on the two jars from Tarkhan (cf. *infra*); another crocodile is represented – but seen from above – on the seal behind one of the giraffes.

The moderate amount of objects bearing the *serekh* of Ka found outside Abydos, which is however far superior to that of his predecessor, induces us to establish an increasing pattern of expansion of influence and appropriation of the territory (in terms which we cannot more precisely determine) by the thinite kings. On the other hand it seems that this process could be directly responsible for the overshadowing of local *dynastic-lines* to the south (Hierakonpolis) and north (Fayum and Memphis regions) of the Abydos region. It is, however, too specu-

trayed with enlarged arms (similar to modern gesture for surrendering), pronged hands and bird-like head is a common motif in Susian glyptic, as shown in an important article by B. Teissier (who fails to include the present example from Egypt, but does include some from Iran, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Syria-Palestine: Teissier, in: *Iran* 25, 1987, 27–53, esp. 45f., fig. 12). Another similar posture can be found on a fragmentary cylinder seal from tomb L17 at Quatul (Williams, Qustul, fig. 57, 58c). For palettes cf. n. 119. – For the tomb of Ka and more findings from within and nearby it cf. Kaiser/Dreyer, in: *MDAIK* 38, 1982, 221f., 229f.; fig. 14f.; Petrie, *Abydos*, pt. 1, pl. 1–3; id., *RT*, pt. 1, pl. 13,89 (seal impression) and pl. 13,90; Gilroy, in: *GM* 180, 2001, fig. 2, pl. 1b (Royal Ontario Museum unpublished fragmentary *serekh*); Köhler/van den Brink, in: *GM* 187, 2002. – About the Helwan jars: note that Z. Saad (*SASAE* 3, 111) states that the provenance of these jars is inverted than that shown in the number written on his plate 60 (where 1627H2 is written below the right hand jar with inverted ka; I think I can also read 1651H2 at the right end of the label placed below the left hand jar); I have followed the plate 60 indication as did Kaiser, in: *ZÄS* 91, 1964 and contrary to Kaiser in: Kaiser/Dreyer, in: *MDAIK* 38, 1982 and van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), *Aspects*; the latter corrected this mistake in Köhler/van den Brink in: *GM* 187, 2002, 59ff., fig. 1,3, 1,4. – For the *serekh* from excavations at Kafr Hassan Dawood see F. Hassan, in: *EA*, 16, 2000, 37–39; for that from Tell Ibrahim Awad see van den Brink (ed.), *Nile Delta*, 52, fig. 8,2. – Finally I think



Grey steatite cylinder seal from (nearby) tomb 160H3 at Helwan. Naqada IIIB. Cairo Museum JdE 87518. Height 3,0 cm; diam. 1,4 cm (from Köhler, in: *GM* 168, 1999, 49–56, fig. 1).

lative to pursue on this course which implies a piece of knowledge we still lack about the geo-socio-political context of the emergence of kingship in Naqada III outside the Abydos region (including Hierakonpolis; see also below).

The mentioned *serekh* from Southern Palestine (An-delkovic, in: *CCdE* 3/4, 2002, 85, n. 34) proves that the south Canaan colonisation process, which had its apex with Narmer, was not a late Naqada IIIB undertaking (cf. Double Falcon).

The stratigraphic analysis at cemetery B seems to confirm that Ka immediately preceded Narmer. Indeed there

that, judging by the amount, variety (and original purpose) of sources relatable to this ruler, we can no longer accept the theory (which Petrie – only initially – suggested) that all the inscriptions referring to Horus Ka would “convey the idea that the falcon god is the *ka* of the king, in which case it remains unknown which specific king, which name lies behind the apparent Ka...” (Quirke, *Pharaohs*, 1990 cit. in Adams, *Ancient Nekhen*, 49 and shortly in Wilkinson, in: *JEA* 86, 2000, 31). The same applies to Scorpion and Irj-Hor, notwithstanding the still uncanonical ways of portraying their names (cf. n. 50; 62). – For further examples of inverted *Ka*-signs *hardly* relatable to Horus Ka cf. the Hierakonpolis ivory Quibell, Hierakonpolis, pt. 1, 11, pl. 34; (also see *ibid.*, pl. 15,6; and Quibell/Green, Hierakonpolis, pt. 2, pl. 306); Williams, Qustul, pl. 78a (*serekh?*) from L2, pl. 80a–d from L23 (post-firing pot marks), p. 169, n. 49 and fig. 58b (Sarras West seal); Dreyer, *Umm el-Qaab*, vol. 1, etiquettes no. 70, 138 and 164 all from tomb U-j. – For a general discussion on *serekhs* see Wignall, in: *GM* 162, 1998; O’Brien, in: *JARCE* 33, 1996, 123–138; cf. Dreyer, in: *MDAIK* 55, 1999, 4f.; for important considerations on the Delta origin of *Serekhs* mudbrick architecture, with palace-façade features possibly reflecting the existence of relevant Maadi-Buto élites: Jimenez-Serrano, in: *GM* 183, 2001, 71ff., interestingly commented by van den Brink, in: *GM* 183, 2001, and disputed by Hendrickx, who proposes arguments for an independent Upper Egyptian origin of both the iconographical and architectural devices, in: *GM* 184, 2001, 85–110.

are some inconsistencies: an important tall jar type which has been used before and after Ka's reign, has never been found during his own.

A recent useful innovation in the study of this period has been achieved by E. C. M. van den Brink:⁴⁸ he has produced a catalogue of 24 complete jars with incised *serekhs* of Naqada IIIb–c1. The interest of this work is in that, contrary to two older corpora provided by W. Kaiser in 1964 and 1982, van den Brink's has been prepared giving much more than a superficial consideration to the pottery types on which the *serekhs* are incised. The analysis of the pottery types has resulted in a distribution of the *serekhs* within four main phases corresponding to the development of the jar types. This comparative study has succeeded in fixing a more certain chronological frame for some royal names of Naqada IIIb; although a few minor problems do arise⁴⁹ this system has offered a valuable means of relative dating of these names and it has even avoided the weak points inherent to Kaiser's subdivision into three *Horizonte*.

Before continuing to ascend the Abydene line of Dynasty 0, we must consider two rulers who have left no trace of themselves at Abydos; King **SCORPION (II)** and Horus Crocodile. Both are known by very few inscribed objects.

The particularity of these rulers is that the epigraphy, provenance and typology of their sources speak for a date surely neither post-Narmer nor, very likely, pre-Ka. They might be thought to represent *Gegenkönige* (as Dreyer defines Horus Crocodile) thus rebels or usurpers; more likely they were the last expressions of ancient local independent ruling lineages which ceased to reign only when the powerful kings of the Thinite region moved northward and southward to occupy the territories with which, until then, they had only entertained peaceful commercial relations (?). But in this respect the position of Scorpion II at Hierakonpolis is harder to explain and Dreyer thinks he was a Thinite king too,

whose tomb should be searched for in the unexcavated areas of cemetery B. The different writings of his name and the Main Deposit finds can not be a certain indication of the Hierakonpolite origin of Scorpion II: Iry Hor also had a different royal title (without *serekh*), and Narmer is also known by some finds at Nekhen (cf. above).

The giant mace head of Scorpion from Hierakonpolis (it is bigger than Narmer's) is another important masterpiece of the period; it is virtually the only object attributable to this king and there is no need to add a detailed description of this piece (commonly reproduced in general publications). I only remark that the name of this king is not written in the *serekh* and is not surmounted by Horus; the expression for "sovereign" is rendered by the *rosette*.⁵⁰ Cialowicz thinks that at the right end of the rows of Rekhyt/bows standards and dancers in the upper registers, there would be the standing king Scorpion represented (in higher scale) with the red crown of Lower Egypt (see Adams/Cialowicz, Protodynastic, fig. 1; Cialowicz, *La naissance*, 197). Manifold interpretations and hypotheses have been proposed with respect to the meaning and genre of the ritual represented (agrarian ceremony, state-sponsored irrigation, opening of a canal); the ritual concern is emphasised by the dancing women, the presence of standard- and fan-bearers and the (bare-footed) king's adornment (compare his bull tail, crown and attire with those on Narmer palette).

Another mace head from the same cachette at Hierakonpolis, more fragmentary than the previous one, shows a king sitting under a canopy; he wears the red crown and the Heb-Sed robe. Arkell interpreted a slightly visible sign before the head as a Scorpion;⁵¹ Adams has found no trace of the rosette in a break in front of the red crown curl. Therefore the object could belong to another king of the period immediately before Narmer: I would suggest that the fragmentary glyph might be interpreted as a standard with a crocodile whose tail hangs down (Horus Crocodile?). Cialowicz has given a con-

48 van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), *Aspects*, 140–158; for the second part of this study cf. id., in: *Archéo-Nil* 11, 2001.

49 I.e. the *serekh* with the Nar fish from Tarkhan 1100 has too early a position to be Narmer's as the epigraphy would suggest; the *serekh* 22, of king Iry Hor (B1), is later than those of Ka and than some of Narmer too; of course these strange behaviours can not depend on van den Brink's method of tracing and subdividing the pottery types development: instead it is possible that there are external factors to be reconsidered, as the duration of some pottery types which might have to be stretched out.

50 E. Baumgartel proposed that there was no need to distinct this king from Narmer; in the same way Horus Ka had been already interpreted to be possibly an indication that B9/7 was the tomb of Narmer's ka (but this is impossible for the finding of a seal

impression in B7 and many more reasons of decorum and display; cf. n. 47). – Cf. Smith, *The Making*, 244ff. for the semantic value of the Rosette; but also Schneider, in: *SAK* 24, 1997, 241ff. For other *Rosettes* cf. below (Qustul incense burner and MMA knife handle) but note that some more appear on Gebel Tarif, Carnarvon, Univ. College and Brooklyn Museum knife handles, Metropolitan Mus. comb). – Also see Vikentiev, in: *BIE* 32, 1951, 214–218, pl. 3–6; Schott, *Hieroglyphen*, 25.

51 Arkell, in: *Antiquity* 37, 1963, 31ff.; cf. also Adams, *Ancient Hierakonpolis*, 3, pl. 1, 2; Cialowicz, *Têtes de massues*, 41–43, fig. 5. For this macehead and a fragment from a further one from Hierakonpolis (Bearers macehead), cf. Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*, pt. 1, pl. 26A (photos); recent discussion by Cialowicz, in: *Études et Travaux* 18, 1999, 36–42.

vincing interpretation of the scene as the Heb-Sed celebration after a military victory of Scorpion (or Narmer); to the right of the sitting king, in the centre of the scene, there is a big falcon (turned towards the king) gripping into his claws a rope (this is quite the same as the falcon on the Narmer palette verso) which directs to the right-end of the preserved fragment; here, behind and in a lower position than the falcon, there must have been a number of prisoners (the ear and the curious head-dress/hairlock of one of them is clearly visible) which the rope kept during their presentation to the king by Horus. The mentioned hairlock has been considered as probable indicator of a defined ethnic group (it also appears on other early representations, as carved ivories from Narmer's tomb, cf. Petrie, RT, pt. 2, 21f., pl. 4,4–6.12.15; cf. Smith, in: BMFA 65, 1967, 76; and on the Bearers mace head from Hierakonpolis, cf. n. 51).

The last reluctantly accepted piece of evidence for king Scorpion II is a graffito in Upper Nubia, Gebel Sheikh Suleiman.⁵²

It is not far from the well-known graffito now in Khartoum Museum: it represents a scorpion with a prisoner into its claws. Two more human figures with a bow and false tails, are directed towards the captive and the scorpion. This scene could, in my opinion, be far earlier than the presumed time of Scorpion II: it is surely related to a chief, but I would prefer a date in Naqada IIIa (Scorpion I?).

The date is far more certain for an alabaster vessel from Quibell and Green's Hierakonpolis excavations: but the scorpions and bows which surround its body can not be attached with full confidence to king Scorpion; a larger group of objects which would have to be assigned

to this king's reign has been proposed by Kaplony:⁵³ but it can not be assumed that almost any known late predynastic representation of scorpions ought to refer to the king.

The tomb of Scorpion II has never been found; indeed Dreyer and Hoffman have speculatively proposed the four-chambered Abydos B50 and the Hierakonpolis loc. 6 tomb 1 respectively.⁵⁴

This latter burial was comparable in size to Abydos B17-18 (Narmer) and B9-7 (Ka): length: 6,5 m, width: 3,5 m, depth: 2,5 m; it was "lined with triple-course mud brick walls and the floor showed barely visible remains of wooden planks and at each end were five postholes cut 50 cm into the sandstone bedrock averaging 28 cm in diameter. These posts originally supported the roof which was level with the surface of the ground. On the surface surrounding the tomb there was a picket fence approximately 13,75 m and 9,50 m wide pierced by a gate in its north-east wall" (Adams, Elite Tombs, 7). The pottery analysis suggested a date to Naqada IIIB–C1 (perhaps slightly earlier than Narmer) and a C-14 date was calibrated to approximately 3050 BC.

No administration indicator (jar inscriptions or seal impressions) has yet been found concerning this ruler's reign, and his burial place remains only hypothetical; therefore a dense mist still surrounds the traces of Scorpion II hindering any safe reconstruction about the place of origin of this obscure sovereign and his role in the late predynastic history.

A royal name within a falcon topped *serekh* incised on a jar from tomb 160.1 at Minshat Abu Omar has been alternatively read as Aha and Scorpion. The sign does look like a scorpion, curved with both the tail (drawn above

52 Published by W. Needler, in: JARCE 6, 1967, 87–91, pl. 1f. See also Jimenez-Serrano, Two Proto-kingdoms. – This scorpion, with long linear claws may be compared with the sign in a *serekh* on a statuette in München (cf. above, Narmer) which has only two very short appendices. The time span between the two monuments seems however wide.

53 I.e. the incision on the Abu Umuri palette and others: Kaplony, in: Orientalia 34, 1965, 132ff., pl. 19–23; id., IAF. – Also note that the cited alabaster vessel (Quibell, Hierakonpolis, pt. 1, pl. 19f.) with Scorpions (in boats?, like the god Nemty or Andjety) and Falcons in relief has been proposed by Dreyer as a possible indication of filiation or gift between the supposed successive (Naqada IIIa2) rulers Scorpion I and Falcon I (Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, 173, n. 249). – See also Quibell, Hierakonpolis, pt. 1, pl. 34 (vessels with incised *ka* and scorpion signs). Schott, Hieroglyphen, 8, fig. 1 (vertical Scorpion inscribed in a *serekh* with falcon) on a vessel from Tura (Junker, Turah, 5), must be instead the Horus name of Aha. – More attractive is the attribution of the Tehenw/Towns Palette to the reign of King Scorpion II as proposed by G. Dreyer, Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, 174.

54 Dreyer, in: MDAIK 43, 1987; id. et al., in: MDAIK 46, 1990, 71; Hoffman, in: The Sciences, 1988, 40–47. – Also see Williams, Qustul, 176f., (Hierakonpolis loc. 6 tombs 1–2, precursor of the later complex *tomb + enclosure*). – For other *scorpions* cf. Williams, Qustul, pl. 96b: in vertical position, reconstructed after a small portion of a claw on a stone vessel from Qustul L2 (which also yielded the Pe-Hor incised jar); pl. 95: from the large tomb L24 (the one of the major incense burner, cf. infra and n. 83; 84), a bowl with four scorpions directing rightward; although more simplified, the paint rendering of these scorpions is not very distant in style from those of King Scorpion I, in Umm el-Qaab U-j (Dreyer, Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, fig. 13). Similar painted motifs on the vessel BM 35324, Lacovara, in: GM 59, 51–50. – For Tomb 1 at Hierakonpolis loc. 6 see: M. A. Hoffman et al., The Predynastic of Hierakonpolis. An interim report, Giza/Macomb, Illinois 1982, 43ff.; Adams, Ancient Nekhen, 46ff.; id., Elite Tombs, 7ff., Cialowicz, La naissance, 122f. – For a scorpion (?) reconstructed on a jar fragment from Tel Erani: Yeivin, in: JNES 27, 1968, 37–50, pl. I, A, fig. 3f. – Also a *serekh* from Tel Maahaz (Andelkovic, in: CCdE 3/4, 2002, n. 37) has been attributed to Scorpion or Narmer!

the body) and the head looking rightward, whereas the falcon looks towards the left. van den Brink has suggested that this sign might be a reversed variant of the coil identified by Dreyer on two vessels and a seal impression from Tarkhan;⁵⁵ the two ink-inscribed cylinder vessels were found by Petrie⁵⁶ in tombs 1549 and 315.

Kaiser and Kaplony read their *serekh* name as *Scorpion* (with the tail now being curved below the animal's body); but this is impossible because the scorpion would have, in both examples, an opposite orientation than the falcon above the *serekh*. Dreyer⁵⁷ has introduced, to account for these two *serekhs* (but not the M. A. O. one), a king **CROCODILE**, ruler of the Tarkhan region; he also opined that to this king might belong the apparently anonymous *serekh* (surmounted by a bull's head and surrounded by crocodiles) on a seal impression also found by Petrie at Tarkhan (tomb 414, Narmer's reign).⁵⁸

Contrary to Kaiser and Kaplony, Dreyer (employing infrared photo techniques) does not see only one sign in the *serekhs*, but a crocodile (in profile) above a coil of rope (see n. 61).

One can observe, however, that the M. A. O. 160.1 distinguishes a squarish body from a slender linear tail, but I suggest that a crocodile would not be depicted, even in a cursive and stylised writing, as an animal with two very distinct parts of the body (cf. hieroglyphs of other animals as bees, scarabs, birds), because it has a uniform shape from its head to almost all the tail length; so this is surely not a crocodile (in the way Kaiser and Kaplony interpreted it). The sign looks more like a scorpion (this does not necessarily mean that it belongs to

king Scorpion II of Hierakonpolis, it might also be another homonymous sovereign). The alternative proposed by van den Brink is also interesting (n. 55) because he thinks that the only coil is represented in the M. A. O. *serekh*, thus (Crocodile) The Subduer (*snj.w*).

The crocodile is generally depicted in profile (with a straight or curved tail) not to be confused with the lizard (which is portrayed from above);⁵⁹ the scorpion sign here is identical with Gardiner sign G 54 ("fear") which is used in the Saqqara king list and the Turin Canon as a later variant of the mid Second Dynasty king's name Senedj.

This makes what we have assumed to be the scorpion tail become the head of a goose; and this is the only way to account for the animal looking in the opposite direction than Horus (unless considering it as an unlikely kind of political statement against the other Horus kings of the country), because the sign *snd* is always written with the body in accordance to the writing direction and the curved snout and face in the opposite direction (cf. the Saqqara King list and Turin Canon).

Therefore the two vessels in Tarkhan t. 315 and 1549 cannot name Scorpion (II) but a Naqada IIIb2 king whose name can be read Horus Senedj, The Dreadful⁶⁰ or (if two signs are involved as Dreyer has hypothesised) Crocodile the Subduer.⁶¹

A similar animal has been reconstructed from a shadowy painting on a jar in tomb L6, Qustul (by Williams, Qustul, pl. 86f.) as a representation of a possible defeat of Nekhen in a conflict with the Ta-Seti A-group dynasty (*Devouring Hierakonpolis*); but the details

55 Wildung, Ägypten, fig. 32; van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, pl. 28a–b: Horus (Crocodile – *sbk* or *hmnz* –) the Subduer (cf. van den Brink, in: Spencer [ed.], Aspects, and id., in: Archéo-Nil, 11, 2001); only B. Adams has attempted the equation of this *serekh* with Horus Crocodile; A. Jimenez-Serrano has reaffirmed the identity of a scorpion, in: GM 183, 2001, 73, n. 15, pointing out this being the only known *serekh*-name of Scorpion II (but see also n. 62). For Dreyer's view cf. n. 58 and 61.

56 T. 1549: Petrie, Tarkhan II, 1914, 11 and pl. 9,3; t. 315: Petrie et al., Tarkhan I, 9, 29, pl. 31,66 (wrongly reproduced as Ka) and pl. 60 (no mention of the vessel here); cf. Kaplony IAF, vol. 3, pl. 1f.; id., IAF, vol. 2, 1090.

57 Dreyer, Horus Krokodil, 259ff.; also cf. n. 61.

58 Cf. n. 46; Tarkhan 414 (S. D. 78) contained some seal impressions of Narmer and a wine jar (type 76b) of his too; for Dreyer cf. notes 57, 61. The crocodile on a standard, with a feather on the head, is the later emblem of U. E. 6th nome (Dendera); as I have stated above, there was, before Naqada II, a strong polity between the Thinite and Ombite regions (Hu, Abadiya, Dendera). I would also add that the bull-head on the *serekh* of the seal recalls the Hathor (Bat?) cow heads on Narmer palette.

59 Gardiner sign i3–i5; Möller, Paläographie I, 1927 sign no. 239, 241; *snd* is no. 226. See IInd Dynasty ink drawing and glyph of a crocodile in: Lacau/Lauer, PD, vol. 5, fig. 247 and 18*.

60 The presently known oldest attestations of the goose hieroglyph date to the Old Kingdom (Unas P. T.). But in the Second Dynasty offering lists on Helwan stelae (with *pictographical* use but drawn like the later hieroglyph G54) at least two examples are shown in Z. Saad, Ceiling Stelae, pl. 13 and esp. pl. 24 (1641 H9). – Helck, Thinitenzeit, 92, states instead about the goose-like sign that "an die *snd*-Gans ist wohl kaum zu denken!".

61 Dreyer, Horus Krokodil, proposes the reading of the (Gardiner signs V1, V7) curls on one of the seal impressions from Tarkhan t. 414 and on the two mentioned Tarkhan vessels (below the crocodile cursive sign) as Sheny or Shendet, recalling the Fayyum old name Shedet; but also the reading I have proposed of the ink inscriptions Sened recalls She(n)ed(t), and this could have been an efficacious word-pun for a king of the Fayyum region (see also above n. 58). – Note that Dreyer (Horus Krokodil, fig. 1b) presents a clear spot on the crocodile's head, like a kind of eye: but owing to the brush size and to similar spots which must be traces of the ink deterioration (see fig. 1a and 2a) this can by no means indicate the animals' eye; finally I rehearse that the attributive "The Subduer" for the reading of the rope coil has been proposed by van den Brink (in: Spencer [ed.], Aspects; in: Archéo-Nil 11, 2001, cf. n. 55) whom I thank for some information and corrections.

that make up this reading are, in my opinion very conjectural (see below).

Finally I have very tentatively proposed (cf. supra sub Horus Ka) that a crocodile may be involved in the name or *serekh*-topping animal on seal 160H3 of Helwan.

The oldest king known from Abydos necropolis B is **IRY HOR**. His name was read “Ro” by Petrie but the identification as a royal name was considered doubtful because the falcon is directly placed on the mouth sign and it never appears in a *serekh* (but see Wignall, in: GM 162, 1998, 104). Only after a paper of Barta and the publication of the second DAIK (re)excavation campaign at Umm el-Qaab his status and reading as king *Iry Hor* has been almost universally accepted and the chronological position before Ka ascertained. Wilkinson advanced the idea that this could have been a treasury mark; Kaplony read it, since 1963, as a private name Wr-Ra (thus interpreting the bird as a *wr* swallow).⁶²

Many jar fragments from chamber B1 (c. 6 m x 3,5 m) of his double tomb (B1/2) were incised with this name; the German excavation of B2 (4,3 m x 2,45 m) produced another incised jar fragment plus eight ink inscriptions and a private seal impression, vessel fragments with the names of Narmer and Ka and parts of a bed, in particular a fine ivory fragment of a bull-leg bed-foot. An offering pit B0 is immediately south of B2.

Two seal impressions with rows of Hor + mouth (no register line) are known: one from Abydos B1 and another from debris of tombs Z86–89 at Zawiyet el-Aryan;⁶³ this latter is the only signal of the presence of Iry Hor outside the Abydos necropolis, if we exclude a further uncertain incision on a spindle whorl from Hierakonpolis.⁶⁴

A few meters north of Iry Hor’s tomb B 0/1/2 there are 3 tombs (X, Y, Z) which link the B cemetery with the

more ancient cemetery U. Some of its latest tombs (U-j, U-k, U-s, U-f, U-g, U-h, U-i, U-t and the cited U-x, U-y, U-z datable to Naqada IIIa2–b1) continue back into the history of the Abydos chiefs (tentatively defined as “Dynasty 00”); they will be analysed in a further study.

We leave now definitively Abydos to consider royal names from other cemeteries. Note that (contra Kaiser, Dreyer, van den Brink and partly T. Wilkinson) Hendrickx doubts that all the *serekhs* I am going to consider from early Naqada B actually represent individual royal names (GM, 184, 2001).

It remains obscure (especially for those *serekhs* which do not surpass 2–3 attestations) whether or not the named kings were originally of the area in which their names have been found.

Three pear-headed mace signs form the name of another king whose *serekhs* were found at Turah;⁶⁵ these both have three circles below the *serekh* and no falcon above it. These signs substitute the palace-façade device in the *serekh*, and only a narrow empty space (where the name is usually written) is left in the upper part. But a variant of the same name was found somewhere in the Eastern Delta, with the palace-façade lines, the three maces in the name compartment and a further mace outside the *serekh* (which this time has the falcon on it).⁶⁶ All three inscriptions were incised on (completely preserved type 74j) jars which belong to van den Brink’s IIIrd phase/type,⁶⁷ roughly spanning Naqada IIIb2 (Kaiser’s Horizont B), therefore the same period as the reigns of Iry Hor, Ka, early Narmer, Crocodile and Scorpion.

Interestingly van den Brink has associated this ruler’s name with the Gardiner sign M8 (sha) and with Helck’s reading “Wash” of the name of the prisoner Narmer smites on the verso of his palette.⁶⁸ If the writing showed instead three maces the reading could be Hedjw or **HEDJW-HOR**.

62 Barta’s reading (in: GM 53, 1982, 11–13) followed by Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, 232ff., has been questioned by Wilkinson in: JEA 79, 1993, 91–93; id., in: JEA 86, 2000, 32; O’Brien, in: JARCE 33, 1996, 131ff. Cf. also Petrie, Abydos, pt. 1, 4. For Wr-Ra cf. Kaplony, IAF, vol. 1, 468 (Proper names). – Wignall (in: GM 162, 1998, 104) argues that the Minshat Abu Omar *serekh* from t. 160.1 would instead name Iry-Hor.

63 Kaplony, IAF, vol. 1, 62, 66, 467f.; ibid. vol. 3, fig. 13; Zawiyet el-Aryan: Dunham, Zawiyet, pl. 16b.

64 Quibell, Hierakonpolis, pt. 1, pl. 63,1; this is attributed by Kaplony to Wr-Ra, and inserted instead in J. Kahl’s System, Quelle no. 5 under *Iry Hor*: – Note that van den Brink has proposed to read Iry Hor the post-firing scratch on a storage jar from Qustul L2 and two desert graffiti actually considered a distinct royal name, Pe-Hor (cf. n. 85 and text below).

65 By Junker in tombs 15g2 and 17L7a (published in: Junker, Turah).

66 Fischer, in: JARCE 2, 1963, (pt. 8), 44; fig. 1, pl. 6a, 6c. Other drawings in Wilkinson, Early Dynastic, fig. 2,3,3; Helck, Thinitenzeit, 93, fig. i; photos in van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, pl. 30a; although considering the difficulty to draw precise small circles, it is relatively easy to do this when the clay is still wet, before firing the jar; a careful look at the drawings and photos procures for me at least a slight doubt that the name on this jar in the Metropolitan Museum might not be formed by three identical signs and none of these might be a hedj mace. The *serekh* on Fischer published jar might indeed represent a different ruler than the one attested on the two Tura jars.

67 van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, 140ff. and tab. 5.

68 van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, 147; for the reading Wash and other textual considerations on Dynasty 0 kings: Helck, Thinitenzeit, 90–99.

Two more *serekhs* from Turah are dated in van den Brink phase/typology IIB (Kaiser, Horizont A) or Naqada II-Ib1;⁶⁹ the *serekhs* have only a horizontal line in the name-space, so, despite the lack of the falcon, they are usually read NY-HOR.

Sometimes they have been read as a variant of Narmer's name:⁷⁰ a *serekh* of this latter (?) from Ezbet el-Tell⁷¹ has the Nar sign represented just as a horizontal stroke. Another *serekh* has always been considered to be of Narmer: it was found by Petrie in Tarkhan tomb 1100; the (complete) jar inscription has the Nar fish inside the *serekh* (no falcon upon) and a kind of mer-hoe below it. Helck supposed this sign was an alternative to the mer chisel for the second part of the king's name; but probably the hieroglyph is Gardiner sign U13-14 (*shena*, "deposit"). The problem with this vessel arises from its form typology (74b), which is van den Brink type IIB: too early for Narmer's reign; indeed the horizontal hieroglyph is here not a simple stroke but it closely resembles the body of the Nar-fish.⁷²

HAT-HOR is the reading of a *serekh* on a jar from Tarkhan tomb 1702 (as with Nj-Hor this *serekh* is falconless too, so the reading would be simply Hat or Haty);⁷³ the name sign could be probably associated with Nar(mer) too if the jar on which it is incised (type 74b) was not of a type too early for Narmer's reign (which spans late Naqada IIIB/b2-early Naqada C1/c1).

The earliest *serekhs* of Naqada IIIB/(b1) (van den Brink type IIa) are, like the oldest of those emerged from the necropolis U at Abydos (tombs U-s and U-t),⁷⁴ anonymous and without falcon above them. The only exception is perhaps provided by nine known attestations of an anonymous *serekh* surmounted by two falcons facing each other.

Generally indicated as **Double Falcon** this king-name (?) was encountered by M. J. Clédat; in the spring of 1910 he was excavating at el-Mehemdiah, in the north-eastern Delta, when a Bedouin arrived to his camp with a jar and some fragments incised with inscriptions which

Cleat soon recognised as archaic; their provenance was a site a few miles distant, known as el-Beda, where they had been found during the planting of a palm-grove. Led to that place, Cleat found more fragments in the debris, but, when he returned once again in the following year, he could only gather some flints.⁷⁵

In his publication he reported three *serekhs* with the double falcon and another one with only a strange mark on its right (see below and n. 78).

In 1912 the excavation in Turah by Junker had already been published; in a tomb at Ezbet Luthy (SS)⁷⁶ some years before, a complete jar with the Double-falcon *serekh* had been found.

The fifth inscription of Double Falcon is on a jar from Sinai;⁷⁷ all 5 incised *serekhs* have a mark on the right (but the Turah on the left). Dreyer (in: MDAIK 55, 1999, 1ff.) thinks the upper part of two of the *serekhs* from el-Beda represents a *dw* related to the royal name Double-Falcon (he considers *dw* as a variant of the three-mounts sign *khaset*) which might have influenced later concave-top *serekhs*. Hence it would be a pair of falcons on mountains above a plain *serekh*.

Some of the *serekhs* just discussed have a punctured pattern in the body of the two falcons and in the upper compartment of the *serekh* (or mountain-sign), when it is present (cf. van den Brink, in: Archéo-Nil 11, 2001, group 2a-c). The same device is found on the *serekh* of the main Gebel Sheikh Suleiman graffito and, perhaps, on that of the Helwan 160H3 seal (Jimenez-Serrano, in: GM 180, 2001; see above under Horus Ka).

The last known Double-Falcon *serekh* fragment has been found at Tell Ibrahim Awad (van den Brink (ed.), Nile Delta, 52, fig. 8,1). But three more inscriptions with Double Falcon *serekhs* have been very recently published and they have been included by van den Brink, in: Archéo-Nil 11, 2001: they come from Abydos (fragmentary, non punctured), Palmahim Quarry and Adaima (both with punctured falcons and mountain, fragmentary).

A relief on a slate palette in Geneva (Barbier-Müller Museum) shows a standard (?) with two falcons facing

69 Junker, Turah, tombs 19g1 and 16g9, both incised on completely preserved jars of Petrie's (Proto-Dynastic Corpus) type 75s.

70 As Wilkinson, State Formation, 13 indicates.

71 van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, no. 21; it has a falcon on *serekh*, the name variant Nar, and a circle with central point (as the later sign Ra or day). The two Nj-Hor jars of n. 69 are in van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, no. 8-7 res., fig. 25 b-d.

72 Petrie, Tarkhan II, pl. 6, 30; Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, fig. 14,39; van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, no. 10; the same problematic affects Narmer's (?) jar in Dreyer, in: MDAIK 55, 1999, 1ff. (cf. n. 44).

73 Petrie, Tarkhan II, pl. 6, 30; Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, 264ff. (*Hat-Hor* reading), fig. 14,6; van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, no. 9.

74 Pumpenmeier, in: MDAIK 49, 1993, 39-49; Dreyer, Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, fig. 59.

75 Clédat, in: ASAE 13, 1914, 115-121, fig. 3-6, pl. 13.

76 South of the southern cemetery; Junker, Turah, 1, 31, 46ff., fig. 57,5; van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, no. 6.

77 Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, Marke 5; p. 262, n. 193 cites "Oren, Sinai, 184, fig. 37".

each other; a snake creeps up on the standard pole; beside it there is a curly-tail (domestic) dog which is also found on other objects (see n. 135, 153) of early Naqada III date (cf. Needler, Brooklyn Museum). It can not, however, be assumed that this scene should be related to king Double Falcon, primarily because of the unquestionably much earlier date of the palette: this should be in fact Naqada II. But a comparison can be made with the similar Min-palette from el-Amra t. B62 dated to Naqada II and interpreted by Dreyer (Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, 179) as likely reporting in its relief (*Heqa* scepter + *Min* sign) the name of a late Gerzean ruler.

The evidence concerning king (?) Double Falcon and the widespread diffusion of his *serekhs*, especially those in Adaima, Sinai and Palmahim, clearly suggest that the long distance authority of Dynasty 0 kings had already commenced in Naqada IIIB.

This also implies that the genetical propensity for interregional diffusion and true colonialism of the Naqada II (Gerzean) culture was, already by that time, coupled with achieved and organised subsystems typical for the proto-states (late Gerzean administration, religion, marked status differences as apparent by seals, tombs, propaganda-objects for kingship and kingship attributes).

Anonymous *serekhs* are being found quite frequently in the Delta, Upper and Lower Egypt, but also in Southern Palestine (Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982; van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects; id., in: Archéo-Nil 11, 2001).

One of the fragments Cleat found at El-Beda had an incised *serekh* (without name-compartment) with a strange mark on its right: it could perhaps represent a person or place name, Ka(?) - Neith.⁷⁸

Two complete jars with *serekh* have been found at Wadi el-Arish, Southern Palestine (previously believed to come from Rafiah),⁷⁹ one on a van den Brink type IIa and another on a type I jar.

Type I corresponds to late Stufe IIIa2 / early IIIb1 to which two more examples are added by van den Brink: the anonymous *serekhs* on two jars from tombs 1021 and 1144 at Abusir el-Meleg.⁸⁰

Early Naqada IIIb1 are the Abydos tombs U-s (119) and U-t (120) which yielded some anonymous ink *serekhs*.⁸¹

The study of these inscriptions provides important information about the oldest forms of writing and their use: this always concerns the royal propaganda and the royal administration.

They can give interesting clues about the regional authority of the rulers and the range of their commercial or exploitative activities.

Indeed it is very difficult to trace the area of influence of many of these local chiefs based only on a few inscriptions. The problem is that all the rulers attested in Naqada IIIB, with the exception of the Thinite line Iry Hor-Narmer, are not documented by royal tombs of their own but only by inscriptions found in their dignitaries' tombs, in desert graffiti or on some unprovenanced objects. In this respect it is noteworthy that *serekhs* were found also among the material excavated in urban or cultural areas such as those reached at Tell Farain-Buto.

Ancient royal inscriptions reported in desert sites can be a valid suggestion not only to know the paths to some resources but also to understand possible directions of commercial or *colonial* interest (as the discussed case of the Wadi Qash and Gebel Tjawty inscriptions, or those in Nubia).

During the 1910–1911 archaeological survey of Nubia, C. M. Firth found at Seyala, in a disturbed tomb (n. 1 in cemetery 137), a gold mace-handle (later stolen from the Cairo Museum) decorated with embossed motives representing rows of animals, a typical late Naqada theme often found on ivories, bones, seals, combs and knife handles.⁸² This object was probably imported from

78 Clédat, in: ASAE 13, 1914, fig. 5; Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, Marke 12. A different interpretation of the side mark is offered by Williams (Qustul, 147, n. 42), who proposes this could be a simplified representation of the *bark + rosette* motif.

79 Cf. ref. in Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, 268, fig. 16, 1f.; van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, no. 3f., n. 10. van den Brink, Archéo-Nil 11, 2001, n. 20, indicates the correct provenance of both these *serekhs* from Wadi el-Arish.

80 van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, no. 1f.; Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, Marken 9 and 19 (inverted references in fig. 15). – The plant-like vertical sign beside t. 1144 *serekh* resembles a similar one found at Qustul (Williams, Qustul, 350, pl. 80) and perhaps the one on Gebel Sheikh Suleiman graffiti above the water-hieroglyph (if not part of the later script).

81 U-s: Dreyer et al., in: MDAIK 46, 1990, 59, fig. 3a–b; U-t: Dreyer et al., in: MDAIK 49, 1993, fig. 9; Dreyer, in: MDAIK 55, 1999, 1ff. – I must rehearse that, although the oldest known *serekhs* are (ink) inscribed in Naqada IIIa2 tomb U-j vessels and incised or painted on early Naqada IIIB jars, the lack of a name (compartment) can not be taken as an early-dating proof per se: some anonymous *serekhs* (potmarks of royal ownership?) are found on Ist dynasty jars, as those from Abu Rawash t. 402 or Abydos B15 (Aha's reign).

82 See Whitehouse, HK ivories, 80f., fig. 3. For a review of the evidence from Seyala see: H. S. Smith, The Princes of Seyala in Lower Nubia in the predynastic and protodynastic periods, in: BdE 106/2 (Homm. Leclant), 1993, 361–376.

Upper Egypt. The chiefs of the Seyala polity controlled the entrance to the Wadi Allaqi (rich in gold mines) and part of the trade circuit between Egypt and Upper Nubia. Some of the graves in cemetery 137 had sandstone slabs as roofs, and the mentioned tomb 1 also contained two Egyptian palettes, two stone vessels, two mace heads (each one with a gold handle) and other status-marker objects. Thus Seyala must have been an important trade centre which, as possibly the whole A-Group and the much later C-group cultures, benefited of the role of middlemen in the complex net of interchange of products between Upper Nubia and Upper Egypt and beyond; near Seyala were found rock drawings with representations of boats in the peculiar Gerzean style (Naqada II, D-ware).

Sparse findings of ivory seals from Nubia (Siali, Faras, Qustul, Sarras West cf. below) also display *pharaonic* motives as *serekhs*, local rulers, human sacrifice ceremonies, processions of (royal) barks towards a palace façade shrine, rows of animals and possible proto-hieroglyphs.

Some 150 km upriver from Seyala there is the site of Qustul; abundant material from the last part of the 1962–1964 excavation campaigns, directed by Keith Seele for the Oriental Institute of Chicago, have been published by B. Williams. A multitude of objects show clear traces of Egyptian influence. The impressive characters of this cemetery, namely large tombs consisting of a long trench and a side chamber, and, above all, most of their contents, led Williams to expressly state that it was “necessary to raise the strong possibility that Egypt’s founding dynasty originated near Qustul and that the unification was accomplished from Nubia” (Williams, Qustul, 177).

But, even considering Seyala cemetery 137, the indicators of a Nubian proto-state of the A-group were found only at Qustul, whereas in Egypt the regions, which shared a similar evolution and extremely marked social distinctions were more numerous.

Qustul was compared with the royal cemetery B of Abydos because, only some years later, its older section,

the cemetery U, was adequately excavated and published.

It is thus more probable that the two proto-kingdoms in Lower Nubia developed under the influence and the stimulus exerted by the Egyptian contemporaries through the exchange of products and subsequently, of iconographic symbolism, ideas and beliefs.

The most important tomb of Qustul cemetery L was L24, in which a decorated fragment from a stone incense-burner revealed an astonishing representation of a boat procession towards a palace-façade building. The first boat carries a prisoner held onto a seat by another individual. The central boat carries the king, sitting and equipped with long robe, flail and white crown; he is labelled with a falcon on a *serekh* which is just in front of his head together with a slender rosette of 9 petals. Ruler and *serekh* both face the last bark which is preceded by a harpoon and an erased sign, a rampant antelope and a *saluting* man. Below the prow of the last boat is a kind of saw-fish saw (cf. those on Coptos Colossi) and a big fish. The last boat is occupied by a wild animal (lion with wide mane and prolonged claws? Cf. n. 83) followed by a falcon-(?) topped standard.⁸³

Another find, the *Archaic Horus* incense burner (from tomb L11), was incised with a similar motif of six barks proceeding towards two palace-façade shrines. The iconography of the L24 burner served as base to reconstruct the much more fragmentary scene of the other object which also seems to include one or two sitting rulers with white crown and falcon topped *serekh* in two barks and, perhaps, a captive (held with his arms behind the back) in another bark.

As I have anticipated, such evidence, even if not lacking chronological problems, was interpreted by the excavator as a proof for a possible Nubian A-group influence on the Egyptian state formation. Now that excavations in the cemetery U at Abydos have brought to light a series of early Naqada III royal tombs (the 12-chambers U-j which is contemporary or earlier than Qustul L24) this theory needs no alternative discussions to be dis-

83 Williams, Qustul, 138ff.; Williams/Logan, in: JNES 46, 1987, 245ff. The identification of the beast in the last boat is doubtful; rather than a lion, (and still more hardly a bull) it could represent an hamadryas baboon, particularly owing to the fingered (rather than comb-like) paws and the silhouette of the forehead, snout and mane; besides, the tail lacks the hairs on the extremity which is a notorious characteristic of lions. – For all the other objects found in L24 cf. Williams, Qustul, 357–375; these include a crude hippopotamus miniature, a copper spearhead, gaming-board, -rods and -beads, palettes and mortars, A-group

Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian (EB I) pottery, stone vessels. A vessel of Egyptian hard pink pottery (Williams, Qustul, fig. 180b) was decorated with painted wavy lines (water or a liquid) above the incised potmark of an inverted Ka over a human figure. Tomb L24 has been dated among the earliest ones of the cemetery L and it was the largest one of all: the main trench (denuded), oriented parallel to the Nile, was 10,80 m long and 1,50 m wide (about 50 cm deep), the side-(burial) chamber was 5,60 m x 3,0 m x 2,7 m deep; a plunderers’ passage penetrated it from its eastern corner.

proved; indeed the material found by K. Seele, later published B. Williams, was tentatively proposed to have been of an early Naqada IIIa date (as for the tomb L24 burner) based on architectural, stylistic and epigraphical criterions.

But the emergence of the Nubian monarchy, although accompanied by a symbolism which in part *seems* to have entered the Egyptian imagery only slightly later (Williams, Qustul, 163ff.), was yet chronologically subsequent to the Naqada II indicators of kingship, like the well known scenes of the Gebelein textile, of Hierakonpolis tomb 100, and of the recently found decorated pottery and knife handles from Abydos cemetery U (see below).

The earliest image of a crown in Egypt (red crown in relief on a B-class sherd from Naqada tomb 1610) dates to Naqada I (Petrie/Quibell, Naqada, pl. 52,75) but the oldest white crowns could be those from the Qustul burners and the MMA knife handle. The earliest rosettes which might be compared with those from Lower Nubia are found on some late Naqada II/early III knife handles and contemporary seal impressions (cf. Dreyer, Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, fig. 72c, from tomb U-j).

Cross-comparisons of ceramic types lead us to prefer a slightly later Naqada IIIA2–early IIIB date for the emergence of the Ta-Seti state within the A-Group culture (as stated in n. 83, in the richest tombs at Qustul there was much of pottery imported from Upper Egypt and Palestine, and also Egyptian stone vessels). The pottery in some of these tombs has been equated by B. Adams with that from Hierakonpolis loc. 6 tomb 11 (late Naqada IIIA2); however, all the W-class examples found at Qustul are of later types than those from Scorpion (I)'s tomb U-j at Abydos (Hendrickx, in: GM 184, 2001, 95).

The Egyptian goods by which Nubian and inner African materials were exchanged were mainly finished

products: wine, beer, oil, fat, and cheese, but also stone vessels, metal objects, beads, palettes, and pots (see Cialowicz, La naissance, 60–63; Jimenez-Serrano, Two Proto-kingdoms).

Initial A-Group coincides with Naqada Ib–Iic; middle A-group with Naqada IId1–IIIA1; terminal A-Group with Naqada IIIA2–early First Dynasty. Military raids and the increasing presence of Thinite rulers in Nubia likely aimed to obtain a direct control of the costly products previously traded with the markets of the distant south with the mediation of A-group centres: ivory (elephant tusks), gold, resins, timber (ebony), fine stones, apes, feline pelts and other exotic genders and raw materials. Therefore when Egypt became capable of bypassing or abolishing the expensive middlemen of the A-group, this culture rapidly declined, and certainly the military intervention of Egypt must have accelerated its complete extinction (or migration towards the south).

Another tomb (L2) at Qustul contained, among some objects, a cylinder jar (net-painted decoration) and, above all, a storage jar⁸⁴ inscribed with a falcon on a squarish sign; it has been read **PE-HOR**. This possible royal-name was incised (unlike most of the *serekhs* on Naqada IIIB jars), post-firing. In these circumstances, as van den Brink notices,⁸⁵ the clay can not consent easy round scratches as when it is wet, but, as per the graffiti on rocks, it forces the engraver to produce mostly squarish signs. Wilkinson⁸⁶ states that the inscription may merely represent a royal-ownership mark. This author called the attention to two rock graffiti (which he never coupled with the one from Qustul)⁸⁷ whose *serekh* contained, just below the falcon, a sign he reads P (although in one of the two inscriptions it has more rounded horizontal sides). Even harder to interpret is the lower sign, which rests with some vertical strokes on the base of the *serekh* and has a rounded upper part. Wilkinson pro-

84 Williams, Qustul, 147–150, pl. 76f. (the jar is Reg. no. 24268). Also from tomb L2 a possible falcon topped *serekh* pot mark (Williams, Qustul, pl. 78a: with two indistinguishable signs in a rectangle), the stone vessel with fragmentary scorpion relief (n. 54), a theriomorphic stone vessel, more Egyptian stone vessels and several fragments of painted A-group, Egyptian and Sudanese pottery (Williams, Qustul, 204–224). – For Pe-Hor see also Jimenez-Serrano, Two Proto-kingdoms; von der Way, Untersuchungen, 99ff. – Other large tombs, a few meters south of L24 and only slightly later than that, were the (paired?) L23–L11, L19–L22: among a wide range of types and number of artefacts I must cite the nice terra-cotta hippopotamus head and a painted bowl from L19; as well as few decorated fragments of stands (op. cit., pl. 94, 97 with an incised *Edjo*, i.e. Cobra on basket), *inverted Ka + Mhw plant* potmarks on Egyptian jars and another beautiful painted vessel from L23. The two vessels in

L19 and L23 are decorated with motives which we must regard as important as those on the incense burners: cf. Williams, Qustul, 152ff., pl. 84f., 88f.; id., Decorated Pottery, passim and fig. 1f.; they have been equated to scenes painted on Egyptian C- and D-class pottery now in Brussels MRAH, Petrie, Turin and British Museums (see also Cialowicz, La naissance, 152–166; id., in: SAAC 4, 1992, 11f.; S. Hendrickx, in: CdE 67, 1992, 5ff.; Petrie/Quibell, Naqada, pl. 28ff.; Payne, Ashmolean Museum, pl. 27f., 35ff.; cf. below, appendix).

85 Personal communication; also the opinion that this inscription and the graffiti might represent Iry Hor has been expressed to me by this author.

86 Wilkinson, Early Dynastic, 54.

87 Wilkinson, in: JEA 81, 1995, 205–210, fig. 1a–b (= Winkler, Rock Drawings I, pl. 11,2f. from Site 34 in Armant Western Desert). Cf. Wignall, in: GM 162, 1998, 105, n. 63.

posed it could be *spt* (Gardiner sign D24) or more likely *khent* (Q3) comparing it with similar signs in Den's domain *Hor Sekhenty Dw* on seal impressions.⁸⁸ But almost certainly this is not a *khent*, which would be drawn with the vertical signs partly overlapping and surpassing the horizontal one. I would suggest two alternatives: the lower sign could be either a stylised *serekh* panelling or the profile of an animal with tail and snout hanging down close to the ground (perhaps an elephant for Dreyer, or, I believe, a mammal with upward-curved, armoured back, as hedgehog, porcupine or more probably a pangolin).⁸⁹

The first evidence to suggest the possibility of a Nubian (A-Group) proto-state *Ta-Seti* during early Naqada III, was a seal impression from Siali, found in the 1910s by G. A. Reisner. It represents a sitting, bearded, bare, ruler (?) apparently saluting with his hand the Ta-Seti glyphs (Land of bows). There are also a falcon above a niched building (in Kaplony this is rendered more like a rounded *aloe* or an *ensete tree*; there are differences in the drawing of the impression between Reisner/Williams and Kaplony; the motif recalls the D-ware *aloe*/bush and appears on a seal impression in: Quibell/Green, Hierakonpolis, pt. 2, pl. 70,8, with the Nemty falcon), an anonymous falcon-topped *serekh* (maybe two) near the head of the sitting man, and some hounds (rather than monkeys). Over the nestled rectangles-palace with falcon, there are two "D-Pylons" (?) and seven circles with a projection from their upper part; finally, like on the Qustul burner and on the Metropolitan Museum knife handle, there is a crescent and also a strange wavy band (false tail? cf. below).

After this find, a seal from Faras, on the opposite (west) Nile bank from Qustul, was also published (Griffith, Oxford Excavations, 1921; cf. Williams/Logan, in: JNES 46, 1987; Kaplony, IAFS, fig. 884) displaying the same kind of palace-façade made of nestled rectangles. One seems to be surmounted by a rosette/star, while beside another one there is a person sitting on the ground

and apparently playing a flute (like the masked individual on the Oxford palette) over which lies a hemisphere or crescent (which could be compared with the D-pylons on the Siali sealing); but this could instead be a label for his name, a title or a toponym (Ta...?). The man seems to carry a particular head-dress, a hanging tuft. Williams proposed it might represent a sprinkle of blood from the head of the human sacrificed, a complement of the ceremonies – involving prisoner's sacrifice – represented on the two carved incense burners (other sprinkles/tufts/curls recur with prisoners sacrificed by chiefs represented on late Naqada I vessels of C-ware type: Williams, Decorated Pottery, fig. 35f.).

A seal from Sarras West (cf. n. 47, 93) portrays a typical Ta-Seti Nubian chief labelled by an inverted *ka*-sign, standing in a high prow/stern bark preceded by a wading bird.

More waders appear on a cylinder seal from Qustul L17 (Williams, Qustul, fig. 57, 58c) together with the half-preserved body of a bearded Nubian in a posture which resembles that of the pronged man on Helwan seal 160H3 (see above, *sub* Horus Ka). This species of bird is also found on the decorated knife handles and ivories as well as on the Gebel Tjawty graffito (pecking a serpent).

The southernmost attestation of a possible Dynasty 0 *serekh* is that at Gebel Sheikh Suleiman, near Wadi Halfa and Buhen (IInd cataract, 50 km south of Qustul). This graffito (now in the Khartoum Museum) had been considered as the reportage of a military water-raid of king Djer, in the early First Dynasty.⁹⁰ W. Helck expressed first doubts about the reading as Djer, proposing the *serekh* ought to have been an anonymous one.⁹¹ This was further developed after a new analysis by Murnane⁹² showing that the *djer* sign was instead a deeper and later incised representation of an antelope facing left. The now widely accepted dating to Naqada IIIb1 is also supported by the fact that a lower date to the Early Dynastic period is to be excluded *a priori* because of the likely definitive extinction of Nubian proto-states in Naqada IIIC1.⁹³

88 Kaplony, IAF, vol. 3, fig. 218, 227.

89 van den Brink has suggested to me that these graffiti may perhaps represent Iry Hor too: as in the Qustul jar, incised post firing, the scratches hardly yield fine round signs; indeed Iry Hor is always written without any *serekh* and one of the two P (?) is perfectly square. – A much earlier King Elephant should have reigned a few generations before Scorpion I (according to Dreyer, Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, 118ff., 140ff., 173ff.) thus in late Naqada IIIa1 or early IIIa2. – For pangolins see Osborn, The Mammals, 124; *ibid.*, 19f., 53f. for hedgehogs and porcupines.

90 Sayce, in: PSBA 32, 1910, 262ff.; Arkell, in: JEA 36, 1950, 28f., fig. 1, pl. 10; Hofmann, in: BiOr 28, 1971, 308f.

91 Helck, in: MDAIK 26, 1970, 85. Also, few months later, Hofmann, in: BiOr 28, 1971.

92 Murnane, in: JNES 46, 1987, 282–285; cf. *ibid.*, 263f. (Williams/Logan, in: JNES 46, 1987, date the *serekh* to Kaiser's Horizon A, "the period of incense burners and seals from Nubia"). Also see Jimenez-Serrano, Two Proto-kingdoms.

93 Arkell, in: JEA 36, 1950, already pointed out the similar representation of dead enemies' corpses on Khasekhem(wy) statue basis (but this motif is indeed roughly unchanged in Egyptian reliefs and incisions – cf. the early Naqada III Gebel el-Arak knife handle and Battlefield palette). Also to be stressed is the similarity of the prisoners (especially the standing one and that

The graffito can be interpreted (being assumed it was evocative of an *event*) as reporting a victory of an Egyptian Dynasty 0 ruler over Ta-Setiw Nubians (not the contrary, as alternatively proposed by Williams, Qustul, 171).

I would emphasise the use of hieroglyphs in the scene: the prisoner pierced by an arrow is probably labelled by a hut-like sign drawn on the prow of the bark onto which he is hanged; the two city(?)-signs; the water sign before the standing captive (I am unable to precise if the vertical sign above the *she*-pool does belong to the graffito or to the later script added over it; this sign resembles some from t. L23 Qustul – with *ka* – and t. 1144 at Abusir el-Meleq – with plain *serekh* –: see n. 80, 47).

After this “Nubian parenthesis”, let us return to the Egyptian evidence.

Three ink inscriptions on jars from Tarkhan must be mentioned: they consist of two *serekhs* from tombs 415 (S. D. 80 cemetery A) and 300 (S. D. 80 cem. L?) and a possible private name from 412 (S. D. 78, cem. A).⁹⁴

Tomb 415 *serekh* has been equated to Narmer (n. 46); a long beaked falcon surmounts the *serekh* from t. 300; two roughly circular signs in the name frame are possibly remains of Aha's name.⁹⁵

The oldest of the three inscriptions (S. D. 78) with no *serekh*, was read as the private name *Djehwty Mer* by Petrie; it has been considered a royal name by Kaiser, while Dreyer⁹⁶ (*Falke + Meissel*) compares the bird with the falcon of the *serekh* attributed to Aha mentioned above. The two certain royal names among these three ink inscriptions on jars should be dated to early Naqada IIIC1.

An incised *serekh* on a jar fragment from Buto bears a sign which could be read either *Nb* or *R* (von der Way, Untersuchungen, 99f., fig. 22,6). But also one of the two R. O. M. fragments recently published (Gilroy, in: GM 180, 2001, 67ff., fig. 4) have a *nb*-like sign in Iry-Hor's name *R*-mouth.

Two important decorated objects from Dynasty 0 are now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

We have already considered the infrequent device called *rosette* appearing as a mark of royalty near the name of Scorpion II and on Nubian incense burners and seals (and later also as a title of Narmer's official or priest on the Narmer palette and mace head). The rosette also accompanies a possible *serekh* (?) and other erased signs (crescent) which appear near another king with the white crown on the right hand of the Metropolitan Museum knife handle recto.⁹⁷ As on the Qustul burners this ivory handle represents a boat procession. The king with flail sits in an high prow/stern bark facing and paddling towards a standard which has two crescents atop of it (throwing sticks?); from the pole of the standard a rope appears to catch four heads before which there is the same combination of “*enemy head + papyri*” which is surmounted by Horus on Narmer's palette verso; there are also three papyri and indecipherable signs. Below this row three canonical boats seem to land by a *Per-nw* (*Per nsw*) shrine; the last boat on the right carries a bearded man with his arm raised (hand in front of his face); this man is thus depicted just below the king's boat and has the typical *Ta-setyw* features: bare head, short beard and, behind his neck, the thick wavy band (similar to that at the waist of the man standing before the third boat on the Qustul incense burner; cf. also the Siali seal); the following boat has a lotus-bloom-like sign on the stern.

This flock or ribbon must be a distinctive trait of Nubian chiefs, equivalent to the pharaohs' bull tail.

The verso of the knife handle shows two rows of men turned towards a mat-work and niches shrine (*Per Wr?*) apparently surrounded by water; there is a man kneeling behind the shrine and the lower row is made of seven kneeling men (squatting with one knee raised, a typical pose of the prisoners) preceded by the walking king with white crown. Of the upper row remain five partly visible bearded men holding in their left hand a kind of crook resting on the left shoulder and, in the

whom is hanged on the prow of the boat) with three other representations of Nubians: the sitting chief of Ta-Seti on the Siali seal impression and Sarras West seal in Williams, Qustul, fig. 58a–b, and the Ta-Seti captive-determinative on the Horus Aha label Petrie, RT pt. 2, pl. 3,2, 11,1 = Helck, Thinitenzeit 145: they all portrait Ta-Setyw with very short-shaved hair and a squarish beard few centimetres long.

94 Petrie et al., Tarkhan I, pl. 31,69–71 respectively.

95 But note that the ink inscription in *ibid.* pl. 31,66 (Crocodile/Scorpion) had been erroneously drawn in the plate as a kind of upset *ka* in the *serekh*. See Dreyer, Horus Krokodil.

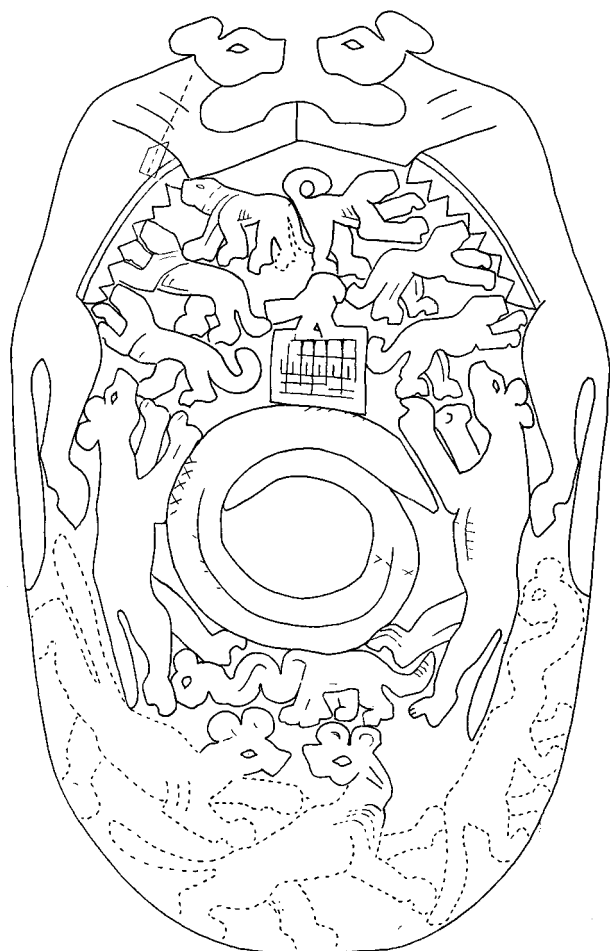
96 Kaiser in: Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, 262, 267 (fig. 15,gg); Dreyer, Horus Krokodil, 261, n. 9; *id.*, Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, 179.

97 MMA 26.241.1; it was gifted (with its flint) to the Metropolitan Museum by Howard Carter; the decoration is very poorly preserved; provenance unknown; cf. Williams/Logan, in: JNES 46, 1987, 245ff., fig. 1–7; the rosette has indeed the shape of a five-pointed star, while that from Nubia has 9 slight petals. (Also see Boehmer, Orientalische Einflüsse, fig. 13; Kantor, in: JNES 3, 1944, 110ff., pl. 10; W. Hayes, in: CdE 22, 1947, 220–222).

right hand, the bent and incised handle of a throwing stick. The space between the two rows behind the king's head is completely defaced.

This object reports therefore a ceremony of triumph of the king (commemorating a real or a symbolical victory over Nubians in the same manner as Narmer did on his palette with Libyans), undoubtedly to be ascribed within the same ritual cycle proposed and discussed by Williams and Logan (in: JNES 46, 1987, 245ff.; cf. above under Narmer).

The other object is the Metropolitan Museum of Arts decorated palette.⁹⁸ It is decorated on one side only and shows the typical scenes with animals and monsters within a frame provided by the two rampant canids (Lycans) forming the unreserved edge of the palette. Above a coiled snake, which forms the usual saucer-circle for powdering, there is a falcon topped anonymous *serekh*; it is low in height and its interior seems to be entirely filled by the palace-façade device. H. G. Fischer



Small palette in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (28.9.8). Schist. Carved on one side only. Early Naqada IIIB. Provenance unknown. Height 8,9 cm (from Fischer, in: Artibus Asiae 21, 1958, 64–88, fig. 20).

has suggested this sign to be very similar to that on the Narmer (?) stela fragment from Abydos;⁹⁹ it slightly resembles *men* and *djer* hieroglyphs too, or perhaps a mat (Pe-Hor?); Dreyer (in: Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, 179) suggested that the sign might be alternatively a (plain) *serekh* or Gardiner sign G37, G39 which appears in tomb U-j etiquettes and ink inscriptions on jars associated with Scorpion I's and his successor Falcon I's names; this would indicate the royal residence (Dreyer, in: Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, 85, 143f.).

The palette with zoomorphic motives recalling (and perhaps slightly later than) those on the smaller (Two Dogs) Hierakonpolis palette, can be independently dated with a good degree of confidence to approximately the beginning of Naqada IIIB, thus possibly overlapping the reign of the ruler (?) Falcon I (albeit the fact that the palette might have anything to do with him is purely speculative).

It is not the place for a detailed discussion of the palette and its probable chronological position relative to the other palettes. Here we must only underline the importance of the *serekh* which indicates that other more developed palettes must have been late Dynasty 0 productions and many of them (as the Bull, Tehenw, Battlefield palettes) certainly even contained, in their lost portions, the royal names of some of the Dynasty 0 kings we have reviewed here.¹⁰⁰ Despite the recent occurrence of a decorated palette at Minshat Ezzat in a middle First Dynasty context (with tools bearing Den's *serekh*) this latter palette must have been a two centuries old ceremonial object at that time and all these palettes do remain chronologically linked with the period Naqada IIIa1/2–b1/2 (Hendrickx's late IID2–IIIB).¹⁰¹

98 MMA (New York) 28.9.8: Hayes, Scepter, 28f., fig. 22; Fischer, in: Artibus Asiae 21, 1958, 82ff., n. 34, fig. 19f.; Asselberghs, Chaos en Beheersing, 199f., 288, 339; fig. 170; Vercoutter, L'Égypte, vol. 1, 187f.

99 Fischer, in: Artibus Asiae 21, 1959; cf. above n. 41 and 44.

100 Another important general consideration on these palettes has since long ago involved the seemingly Delta provenance of many of them (as opposed to the generally Abydene origin attributed to the latest decorated group).

101 For the Minshat Ezzat palette see: Boghdadi, in: Archéo-Nil 9, 1999; also see below (Appendix). – Given the certainty that the *serekh* on the MMA palette was not a posterior addition, it is important to note that it appears in a class of palettes with zoomorphic decorations which is tendentially associated with an earlier Naqada III phase than the Bull, Battlefield, Tehenw and Narmer palettes. No type of *serekhs* is presently known on pottery before late Naqada IIIa2; so we must suppose that the animal and human scenes were roughly contemporary, or that there were different styles according to local craftsmanship or functional purposes; alternatively there could have been a revival of obsolete figurative themes. Noteworthy are the *inlaid* (void) eyes of the beings and the one side carving of this palette (n. 156).

The possible royal names Dreyer proposes to read on the Coptos Colossi, on some seal impressions, tags, palettes and vessel inscriptions from Abydos cemetery U and elsewhere, have not been included in this discussion; they relate to what we may call, for convenience, “*Dynasty 00*” [= Naqada (IIC–d2) IIIa1–2 period, Hendrickx Naqada IIC–IIIA] which requires a distinct treatment.

The adoption or lack thereof of the *serekh* distinguishes the kings of these two periods designated as Dynasty 0 and 00; there are major cultural distinctions as well, although not as marked as those between late Naqada II and early III.

The discoveries of the 1990s have shown that the period we have just dealt with is of primary importance for the developments of the Early Dynastic period and Old Kingdom in the same measure in which Naqada IIC–IIIA2 is for the age of “*Dynasties 0*”.

There is a cultural chain uniting all predynastic phases to each other, back to the Amratian and Badarian. The specialisation of the scientific research is slowly showing us more and more links of this chain to the point that the theory of a so called “*Dynastic Race*”, which would have brought a distinctive civilisation to Egypt from Elam or Mesopotamia, has been set aside for some decades.

Recent discoveries have set back in time the age of the earliest indications of kingship and advanced administration (Naqada IId seal impressions from Abydos cem. U: cf. below, n. 104), thus showing that many of the achievements that only twenty years ago we thought originated in the Early Dynastic period began indeed to appear at least half a millennium before!

Conclusions

The Naqada IIIB culture can now be analysed through a considerable number of find-types: pottery and stone vessels, seal impressions, decorated palettes, knife handles, ivories, other gravegoods, desert graffiti, tombs, and later sources.

But this apparent densely populated scenario is somewhat difficult to understand satisfactorily. One of the major lacunae is the lack of known royal cemeteries other than the Abydos B and Qustul L necropolis.

Despite the good picture we are gaining from Hierakonpolis (esp. loc. 6 and 29A) and the data from the Memphis/Fayyum area and the Delta, no other royal tomb of Naqada IIIB1–2 period has been located yet. *Serekhs* continue to emerge from private tombs: as (Hor) Ny-Neith (*Nj-Nj.t*) in the Cairo Museum crates from Zaki Saad’s Helwan excavations (in: Köhler/van den Brink, in: GM 187, 2002, 59ff.: this name, which has

the falcon drawn *beside* the *serekh*, is associated with a jar type common in the period after Horus Ka and before Narmer), or the *serekh* with a *Nb* or *R* sign incised on a sherd from Buto (von der Way, Untersuchungen, 99ff., fig. 22,6). But it is very hard to reconstruct the history of Late Predynastic Egypt without further precious pieces of this complex puzzle. Delta sites such as Tell Farain-Buto and Tell el-Farkha are noteworthy for their urban (-templar) context, so uncommon in Egyptian archaeology.

Artefacts like the knife handles of Gebel Tarif, Gebel el-Arak, Carnarvon, University College and Brooklyn Museum, or the Metropolitan Museum comb and others, are known for a long time.¹⁰² The same is true of the corpus of ceremonial slate palettes; they demonstrate the existence of a still partially obscure world of *visual metaphors* pertaining to the ideology and to the *artistic* expression of well formed leading minds. These were developing the theoretical and practical structure supporting and enhancing the privileges of an elite and of its “royal pivot” through the diffusion of an ideology of kingship and a number of corollaries: monumental architecture, conspicuous consumption, rituals and ceremonies, royal propaganda, myths and legends, and artefacts.

The objects of the transitional periods from Badarian to Amratian and from this latter to late Gerzean and late Predynastic, attest the progressive structuralisation of a previously acephalic society towards larger, more complex and more unequal communities on the path to statehood.

In this optic we must look at the objects of this period which, far from being *pure* artefacts in the sense we intend art, translate and communicate the symbolic languages of rising sovereigns.

The ivory knife handle (very similar to the one from Gebel el-Arak) found in tomb U-503 at Abydos, dates to Naqada IId2. The German excavators of cemetery U have also published some late Naqada I vessels which provide the earliest attestation of motifs common to the later royal iconography (as the earliest example of a chief

¹⁰² For these objects see Vandier, Manuel, vol. 1, pt. 2, 533ff.; Asseberghs, Chaos en Beheersing, passim; Benedite, in: JEA 5, 1918, 1ff., 225ff.; Boehmer, Orientalische Einflüsse, 15–40; Davis, Masking the Blow; Cialowicz, Manches de couteaux, 247–258.

smiting enemies' heads by a mace in U-239).¹⁰³ These schemes, also implicit perhaps in the Naqada tomb 1610 jar-fragment with a red crown relief and pursued in the well known painted representations on the Gebelein linen and in the Hierakonpolis tomb 100, cannot be related to a mere extension of the belief sphere; rather they are principally dependent on the increasingly central and predominant role of the ruler.

Similarly we may speak of the earliest clues to an advanced organisation of a central administrative apparatus which are evidenced by the recently found Naqada IId seal impressions from Abydos U cemetery tombs and further ones from other sites of Naqada IIC date (some from IIC phase are certainly non-Egyptian or mere copies of Uruk IVc Mesopotamian and/or Elamite-Susa I/II-models). They witness a use of seals which is by no means purely decorative and in some cases already hints at possible proto-hieroglyphs!¹⁰⁴

It is therefore obvious that the process of origin and evolution of the most ancient proto-state(s) must be searched for from a period very distant from the age of *Menes*. Recent finds and research have shown that the birth of a complex and specialised administrative organisation is older than the Early Dynastic period. It evolved in connection with the control of the distribution of

materials and products through regional and inter-regional trade.

Therefore Naqada IIIB is not actually the phase in which the foundations of the State were first created, but rather the moment when these bases were definitely enlarged and managed into national proportions, along the course of a progress which was still ongoing during the early dynasties up to the Old Kingdom apogee and the great pyramids.

Of course the prime mover of our deeper knowledge and understanding of this historical period and its products lies always beneath the ground: as with the deciphering of unknown scripts (or with the interpretation of forgotten languages) the principal aid comes from the variety of sources. The more documents we have, the easier our task is.

As expressed above, multidisciplinary approaches to practical and theoretical questions are important in order to see our objectives from different points of view (not only art history, philology, archaeology, but also palaeobotany, geology, anthropology, semiotic, social sciences, history of religions, statistics, ethnology and other disciplines) as indeed it is happening in most recent decades.¹⁰⁵

103 New ivory knife handle from U-503: Dreyer, in: MDAIK 54, 1998, 99, fig. 7, pl. 5; Two Naqada Ic vessels: *ibid.* pl. 6c, 6d-f; also cf. Wilkinson, in: MDAIK 56, 2000; Cialowicz, *La naissance*, 154f. – Also the decorated ivories from the main deposit of Hierakonpolis (Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*, pt. 1, pl. 5–17) can now be compared with precisely dated fragments from tombs U-j and U-i at Abydos (see Dreyer, *Umm el-Qaab*, vol. 1, 149–151, fig. 87, 207.210). Finally note that at least one author has proposed to interpret the enemies-smiting scene on the tomb U-239 vessel as a ritual dance, but without any positive response (Y. Garfinkel, in: *CAJ* 11/2, 2001, 241–254).

104 The Mid-Late Naqada II and Naqada IIIa1–2 cannot be extensively treated here and will be object of another study. For the seal impressions from Naqada IIIa2 tomb U-j: Dreyer, *Umm el-Qaab*, vol. 1, 108–112; for the Naqada IId sealings: Hartung, in: MDAIK 54, 1998, 187–217; *id.*, *SAK* 26, 1998, 35–50 (beginning of complex operations and functions of the economical/administrative subsystems); for seals of Naqada IIC phase: Kaiser, in: MDAIK 46, 1990, 287–299, pl. 68: many of these seals couple three fishes with shrines (+ plant/tree) perhaps already indicating taxes (*jnw*, Gardiner sign K1) from or for temples' estates/properties (Kaiser, in: MDAIK 46, 1990, 298; Hartung, in: *SAK* 26, 1998, 50; *id.*, in: MDAIK 54, 1998, 207f.; Kahl, *Das System*, 154); other seals and sealings of Naqada IIC phase are in: Podzorski, in: *JNES* 47, 1988, 259ff.; Bohemer, in: *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 4 (33), 1974, 495ff.; Hartung, in: MDAIK 54, 1998, 206ff., fig. 11, a, b, g, from Naga ed-Der t. 7304, Matmar t. 3039, Ballas t. 307, and (Hartung, in: MDAIK 54, 1998, n. 35) Naqada tombs 1863 and T5. – For *proto-hieroglyphs* in late Naqada II seals see Hartung, in: MDAIK 54, 1998, 208, n. 44ff.; p. 212, n. 77; p. 215, n. 88. – For the imported

seals of Near Eastern origin see Bohemer, in: *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 4 (33), 1974, 497, 508 (Naqada t. 1863 and T5). – For Susa/Sumer seals: (after P. Amiet corpus) Smith, *The Making*, fig. 1–36; Liverani, *Antico Oriente*, fig. 23, 25, 31. – Finally for other common motifs between ancient Egypt and Iran/Palestine iconography see Teissier, in: *Iran* 25, 1987.

105 Egyptology has been often criticised in the past for its markedly conservative character. It has remained for a long time a basically philological discipline, because of the overwhelming importance the writing and texts had in the '800; the predynastic studies are in this sense a world apart, because only archaeological fieldwork can explain writingless cultures. More than twenty years ago Egyptology began to be more open to other disciplines and this has had a positive effect of regeneration: K. Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization*, 1976; K. Weeks (ed.), *Egyptology and the Social Science*, 1979; M. A. Hoffman, *Before Pharaohs*; Trigger, *The Rise*; Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*; Baines, *Origins* and articles by Tefnin and others, are all examples of a new vitality of Egyptological studies which, through innovative minds and inspired thoughts, are heavily influencing the present generations of scholars. – Also very important is the increased variety of countries which now participate in the excavations and studies: not only France, Germany, the United States and England but also Egypt, Poland, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Italy, and Australia. – It is a pity that an inverse path than this one of multidisciplinary approach seems to affect the interrelations between Egyptian Predynastic/(Early-)Dynastic and Palaeolithic studies for which a far lesser collaboration has been evidenced in the recent years in comparison with the past (S. Hendrickx, *Considerations*, in: Krzyzaniak et al. (eds), *Interregional*, 409–416).

Therefore the first need is always for further archaeological investigation.

Related to this aspect is the necessity for an equal consideration of the territory: until recently the Delta was a big question mark which a scholar did not hesitate to define "a closed book". Kaiser, Helck, Kaplony, Bietak, Wildung, Hoffman, von der Way, van den Brink, Dreyer, Kroeper, Köhler, Hartung, Krzyzaniak and many others have contributed to open that book ...

Nowadays, Middle Egypt, between Badari and Gerzeh, is the least known part of the Nile valley.¹⁰⁶

There is a number of further question marks, such as the meaning of some enigmatic representations on C- and D-ware vessels, on early seals and seal impressions, on carved ivories, palettes, knife handles, mace heads and their relative and absolute chronology. The purpose of potmarks, the origin of writing in late Naqada II and early Naqada III, the horizontal stratigraphy and new planning of whole cemeteries, foreign commercial contacts, the so-called *Mesopotamian influences*, various chronological problems and correlation with Near Eastern phases, the colonisation of Southern Palestine by Dynasty 0 kings, as well as the crucial matters of the stages and modalities of the progressive (northwards and southwards) expansion of Naqada (II) culture and many aspects of the process of State formation in Egypt remain to be better understood.

Studies and tools available in this field of research quickly increase in number. The outstanding effort through which Hendrickx has achieved the publication of an Analytical Bibliography covering the whole Egypto-Sudanese Predynastic and Early Dynastic period, counting more than 7400 entries in the 1995 paper-edition must be highly appreciated. The author of this paper has also published addenda and updates in the French journal *Archéo-Nil* and he freely distributes his database which, during the year 2001, has reached 10,000 entries (cf. Hendrickx, Analytical Bibliography).

In the area of Linguistic studies we must evidence two general lines: on one side the pioneering studies of A. Er-

man, A. Ember, T. Hodge, W. Vycichl, M. Cohen, J. Greenberg, have opened the way to the important insight in phonology and etymology; comparative linguistics are being approached by W. Schenkel, A. Loprieno, T. Schneider, H. Jungraithmayr, G. Takacs and others. Although these have not so much to do with our field, an interesting use of *linguistic archaeology* has been done in the last years by some authors,¹⁰⁷ and these studies acquire further interest if corroborated by parallel research in the area of anthropology/ethnology and history of religions of the Egyptians' neighbours in Eastern Sahara, Sudan, and Central Africa, aiming to evidence the basic "pan-African cultural substratum" from which Ancient Egypt sprang.¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, the more classic Egyptological studies in the archaic Egyptian inscriptions and epigraphy by P. Kaplony¹⁰⁹ (which have been the basis for the comprehension of the earliest titles, charges, institutions, documents and, consequently, the archaic state administration and society) have been complemented by the recent very useful work of J. Kahl.¹¹⁰

Needless to rehearse, the main contributions to our knowledge always come from excavations.

Several archaeological campaigns in sites of Upper and Lower Egypt, but also Western and Eastern Deserts, Sudan and Southern Palestine, are providing new data on which to rely for further syntheses. In particular the horizons of study concerning the Delta and the relations between *Egypt and the Levant* (van den Brink/Levy [eds], 2002) are rapidly expanding (cf. Andelkovic, in: CCdE 3/4, 2002).

It is difficult to understand a culture by means of only some of its aspects; we have no transparent documentation of the political, social, economical and religious systems of the earliest state. We have only a few clues, which must be carefully analysed and interpreted in order to shed more light through the mist and the mysteries of this fascinating age.

Some of the hypotheses we accept today might be disappointed in the future. There is still a long way to go: but the main point is that we are already walking it.

106 Cf. Bard, in: JFA 21/3, 1994, 265–288; id., in: JARCE 24, 1987, 81–93; Köhler, in: GM 147, 1995, 79ff.

107 Cf. Anselin, in: CCdE 2, 2001; id., La maat, images, hieroglyphes et mots du pouvoir, in: CCdE 2, 2001, 53–78; id., in: CCdE 1, 2000, 71–119; see also other works in these papers' bibliographies.

108 Cervellò Autuori, in: CCdE 2, 2001; but already H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the gods*, Chicago 1948.

109 Cf. Kaplony, IAF; id.; IAFS; id., KBIAF; also see the other entries for the same author in bibliography.

110 Kahl, *Das System*. The same author is currently preparing a Wörterbuch of the archaic Egyptian language.

Appendix – Perspectives of study and further researches

The Decorated Palettes: some chronological and interpretative considerations¹¹¹

The best evidence about the conception of the world and its phenomena during the period in object is provided by a number of decorated artefacts belonging to the classes of knife handles (generally in ivory but seldom in gold and other materials), small ivory objects (combs, labels, cylinders and spoons) and especially by the carved slate palettes. The purposes and ideological conceptions which underlie their representations are still ambiguous to our minds; but it is clear that they mirror the *historical processes* which Egyptian society/state was passing through during the transition from late Naqada II to early Naqada III (rather than reflecting particular historical events as was once believed).

My aim here is not that of a detailed discussion of these corpora, but rather a series of general chronological and interpretative considerations and notes on some palettes (which will be further developed in a future article).

It is understood that the scenes which appear on these objects cannot be totally detached from the paintings on the Amratian and Gerzean C- and D-class pottery.¹¹² Many of the features and motifs which characterise the early Naqada III iconography suddenly disappeared with the First Dynasty: this was surely an

effect of the selection realised through the mechanism of *decorum*.¹¹³

On the other hand several characters originally of the Naqada culture did pass the filter of the dynastic cultural reform(ation); nonetheless it could be dangerous and misleading to try to understand predynastic ideology (and its achievements) using the *measure* of dynastic culture.¹¹⁴

The first approach, as Cialowicz has indicated,¹¹⁵ is the global analysis (and synthesis) of the whole corpora of bidimensional decorations indicated above (and possibly from different points of view as in n. 114); this could substantially increase our possibilities to find more clues and paths towards the comprehension of these representations and their effective purposes.

As noted above, most of these objects have been either found through illicit excavations, or purchased on the clandestine market for private collections and Museums. Hence their provenance is often unknown: no direct evidence remains to fix a date apart from stylistic criteria (n. 156).

There are only a few exceptions of objects which have been properly excavated and are dated with relative certainty; it is from these objects that any chronological discussion must start: the Abu Zeidan (tomb 32) knife handle in Brooklyn and the fragmentary handles from Abydos U-503 and U-127 have a defined archaeological context. Also the newly found Minshat Ezzat palette (see n. 101) as well as the Narmer and the Oxford

111 In the present appendix I am limiting the bibliographic references for each objects discussed to a few, recent sources. – General discussions on these objects: Legge, in: PSBA 22; 26; 31; Peet, in: JEA 2, 1915, 88–94; Scharff, *Altertümer*; Kantor, in: JNES 3, 1944, 110–136; Smith, HESPOK, 110ff., 126ff.; Schott, Hieroglyphen; Vandier, Manuel, vol. 1, pt. 2, 570–600; Petrie, Slate palettes; Fischer, in: *Artibus Asiae* 21, 1958, 64ff.; Baumgartel, *Cultures*, vol. 2; R. Weill, *Recherches sur la I^{re} Dynastie ...* BdE 38, 1/2, esp. vol. 1, 172ff. and vol. 2, 169–274; Asselberghs, *Chaos en Beheersing*; Ridley, *The Unification*; Cialowicz, *Les palettes*; Baines, in: *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993, 57–74; Davis, *Masking the Blow*; Vercoutter, *L'Égypte*, vol. 1, 180–190; Midant-Reynes, *Préhistoire*, 223–229; Cialowicz, *La naissance*, 176–196.

112 There are evident links also between the paintings on Naqada II vessels and those on the Gebelein cloth in Turin (Naqada IIb) and on the tomb 100 of Hierakonpolis (IIc). – C- and D-ware (respectively Naqada I and II) decorations have been subject to numerous interpretative attempts: Vandier, Manuel, vol. 1, 261–296 (C-ware), 329–365 (D-ware); Midant-Reynes, in: SAK 14, 1987, 205–207; id., *Préhistoire*, 164f., 180f.; Needler, Brooklyn Museum, 183ff., 202ff.; F. el-Yahki, in: BIFAO 85, 1985, 187–195; Williams, *Decorated Pottery*; Payne, *Ashmolean Museum*, 57ff., 98ff.; Hendrickx, in: CdE 67, 1992; id., in: CdE 73, 1998, 203–230; id., in: CCdE 1, 2000; id., Checklist of

Predynastic “Decorated” pottery with human figures, in: CCdE 3/4, 2002, 29–50; Cialowicz, *La naissance*, 152–166; Y. Garfinkel, *Dancing or fighting?*, in: CAJ 11/2, 2001, 241ff. – Also cf. the important considerations of E. Finkenstaedt cit. in n. 150.

113 Baines, in: *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993.

114 We must be very cautious in comparisons of predynastic and dynastic representations (and beliefs in general). – Sometimes this may result in risky methodological approaches which are easily criticisable: see Westendorf, in: SAK 6, 1978; M. du Buisson, in: BIFAO 68, 1969, 63ff. On the opposite cf. the review of Davis' book, *Masking the Blow* (however intriguing and, in several spots, useful and innovative) by Cialowicz (in: BiOr 52, 1995, 625–631). The theories of modern psychology, semiotic, aesthetics, iconology, and anthropology may be of aid in comprehending some of the criterions and dynamics embedded in ancient Egyptian royal propaganda, decorum and display; but these disciplines could also mislead our understanding and lead us astray: this happens whenever we become completely subject to their principles and theories instead of simply adopting/using them for the perspectives and objectives which they should be helpful in. Further profitable uses of semiology/semiotic respectively applied to early Egyptian art and writing: Tefin, in: CdE 54, 1979, 218ff.; id., in: *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993, 7–22. Vernus, in: *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993, 75ff.

115 Cialowicz, *Les palettes*, 81.

palettes have been excavated by archaeologists, but there are indeed some interpretative problems: the former has been found in a tomb of an official of Den in the Delta; I suppose that these decorated palettes, which are presently assumed not to have been produced anymore in the First Dynasty, must have been a kind of antiquariate or heirloom in a quite later tomb than the Dynasty 0 period.¹¹⁶

The Hierakonpolis palettes, from the Main Deposit of the temple of Horus of Nekhen, were then a kind of ex-voto buried in a cachette several years (when not some centuries) later than the period of their manufacture; notwithstanding the notes of Green and the re-analysis of Adams, the context of the Main Deposit remains highly enigmatic and impossible to reconstruct.

With the exception of the Narmer palette, there is only one other, Metropolitan Museum of Art 28.9.8, which has an anonymous, or rather plain, *serekh*.¹¹⁷

Probably some of the later palettes also bore *serekhs* but these are not preserved owing to the fragmentary conditions of those masterpieces.¹¹⁸

Returning to the MMA palette, we must notice that this object has some archaic (or regional style?) features alongside the apparently more recent element of the *serekh*. A similar consideration can be made about the decoration of the Minshat el-Ezzat and Hunters palettes (see below).

We can divide the late predynastic decorated palettes into two main groups (as most scholars have usually done): those with animal representations and those on which humans play a major role.

In the palettes of the first group human figures are generally not represented at all: interestingly on one of the rare exceptions, the Oxford palette, the flute-player is wearing an animal mask (or rather a whole animal skin); also the much earlier ostrich palette in Manchester depicts, behind the three ostriches, a man with raised arms wearing a bird mask.¹¹⁹

The lack of archaeological context for these objects, not only prevents a certain chronological definition, but also complicates the question of the destination of palettes; we can not be sure that they were exposed in temples, in royal-, private-tombs or elsewhere.¹²⁰ Certainly the palettes of the second group (Beirut, Brooklyn-Cairo, Warrior, Battlefield, Plover, Bull, Tehenw and Narmer palette) had already been “appropriated” by the kings, and were high status objects of royal propaganda¹²¹ which show recurrent motifs as the king in battle, triumph, punishment of prisoners, celebrations, processions, in few words the apotheosis of kingship.

All these scenes were once “read literally”, hence considered the chronicles of real events and thought to report the very political unification of Egypt in the case of the Narmer palette.

116 A similar pattern can be hypothesised for the Main Deposit of Hierakonpolis, where an ivory bears the name of Horus Den: Whitehouse, HK ivories, 77; id., King Den in Oxford, in: Oxford Journal of Archaeology 6, 1987, 257–267.

117 Cf. above and n. 98, 101. The difference between anonymous *serekhs* (with empty name-compartment) and plain ones (with only the palace façade motif) is after van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects, 140ff. – In Egypt and Lower Nubia (cf. above) the *Serekh* appears in (mid Naqada IIIA1–?) early Naqada IIIB (n. 47).

118 It can be hypothesised with a certain degree of confidence that *serekhs* already functioning as individual sovereigns’ labels had been originally carved on the unpreserved portions of the Battlefield, Plover, Bull and Tehenw palettes and perhaps also on the Mungat fragment and on the three fragments with (friezes of) warriors and offering bearers: Petrie’s Beirut fragment (Louvre; Petrie, Slate palettes, no. C12), Cairo-Brooklyn fragments (Needler, Brooklyn Museum, 332f.), Warrior fragm. in Metropolitan Mus. (Hayes, Scepter, fig. 23). The early Naqada IIIB material, as the MMA palette with *serekh* must, could exhibit plain *serekhs* (or isolated rosettes which might perhaps be graphical variants of the palm tree as discussed below; for the attestations on Lower Nubia incense burners and seals, cf. pt. II); but late Naqada IIIB palettes (Kaiser’s Stufe IIIB2) certainly contained names like those of Egyptian rulers discussed in pt. II. – Dreyer suggests to read a late Gerzean ruler’s name on the “Min Palette” (BM 35501, Naqada IId); cf. above.

119 The standing human figure incised on the corner of a rectangular palette from Tarkhan t. 1579 (Petrie, Tarkhan II, 10, pl. 6

and 24). Also see the similar head on the Qustul L23–38 vessel (n. 84; Williams, Decorated Pottery, 8f., fig. 1). – For the motif of humans portrayed with bird mask (?) and upraised hands cf. n. 47.

120 Use of Ceremonial maces: Whitehouse, HK ivories, 79, 81; Cialowicz, Têtes de massues, 54ff. Ripple-flake knives: Midant-Reynes, in: SAK 14, 1987. Min colossi: Kemp, in: CAJ 10, 2000; Williams, in: JARCE 25, 1988; Narmer palette: Lehner, The Complete Pyramids, 1997, 73. Palettes (traces of Kohl): Fischer, in: Artibus Asiae 21, 1958, 64. – Noteworthy are the objects tied at the belt of the Hunters on the homonymous palette: Keimer (BIE 32) identified them as shields made out of turtle carapace; there are certain (“degenerated” types of) turtle-palettes which have quite the same shape (Petrie/Quibell, Naqada, pl. 48,59–61). However whether shield or palette their occurrence in such a context of ritual hunt remains a unexplained riddle. Shields were not in fact used in dangerous fauna hunt; on the contrary palettes might have been used before the hunt, owing to their hunt-propitiating representations and the practical use in the preparation of eye-paint and, possibly, body paint (which have direct relations with hunt and war).

121 Although this does not imply that they were accessible to the masses: only the high priests and officials would have seen and understood their iconography: but how much more important would have this been in the light of their function? – For valuable positivist considerations on the Oxf., Manchester and late-group palettes cf. Finkenstaedt, in: ZAS 111, 1984. – Palettes purpose according to past and present studies: Cialowicz, Les palettes, 11ff., 59ff.; Davis, Masking the Blow, 17ff.

But recently the ideological and symbolical reading (Baines, Schulman) has gained more relevance, therefore the representations are credited with no actual value as historical sources.

There are also scholars who continue to propose more concrete interpretations; Millet has compared the so-called monuments of unification (cf. n. 3) with the later year-labels, thus arguing that the palettes would record (like rock graffiti, too) relevant, memorable events.¹²²

The discussed Narmer label, found in Abydos cemetery B in 1998, clearly represents the earliest known evidence of a label to which a notion of time is attached;¹²³ even if the *mpt* year-sign will appear only later in the reign of Djeter, the labels of Aha show ceremonies, rituals, bark processions, or sacrifices and no similar piece had been hitherto found for the reign of Narmer.

The problem which this piece apparently brings up is that it could turn out to be a counter-proof for the symbolical interpretation of the Narmer palette; ascertained that the latter cannot actually represent the definitive unification, it might commemorate a victory over the Libyans, as the Hierakonpolis ivory (with the *nar*-fish beating kneeling prisoners), and as the same cited label. It would seem strange that labels, which were mostly attached to oil jars, did specify a merely symbolical event beside the indication of the Horus name of the ruling king, his functionary and the type of product.

How can this problem be resolved? I think that both palette and label could have also a commemorative purpose, but not in the sense generally accepted; if the event on the label had been a real one, and had happened during that year, this would have caused an obvious problem: it would have been impossible to name a future year, and the name of a current one would have been subject to change if a more relevant event had happened during its course. This would have created easily imaginable bureaucratic and logistic problems.

The most secure way to name a year would be by means of important ceremonies or feasts, of which it was previously known when they were being celebrated (Shemsu-Hor, Heb-Sed, Festival of Gods). It is possible that important military victories would also have been celebrated not only soon after they were obtained, but in the future (e.g. the modern U. S. Independence day and the like).

So the evenemential indication on the ivory or wooden oil labels did name one or more events of the year in which the labelled product was made, but these were not facts of actual chronicle, but rather feasts and commemorations of (past-) real events or (symbolic, abstract and out of time-) conceptualised successes which would be objects of ritual reactualisation during that year.¹²⁴

Another label of Narmer¹²⁵ is much simpler, only reporting the commodity, its quantity and perhaps its

provenance; others from the Naqada tomb name queen Neithhotep and a commodity or its quantity.¹²⁶ The oldest tags known have been recently published by G. Dreyer¹²⁷ (Naqada IIIa2, c. 3250 B.C.) and form an interesting corpus, being the first attestation of writing in Egypt. On the jars the name of the king (in ink) could relate to his estates, whereas the incised tags do name royal domains, establishments' or workshops' departments and toponyms of towns and regions.

The question is somewhat more complex for objects such as the votive palettes, decorated ivories and mace heads (see below); we prefer to accept that their basic function was in the sphere of propitiation of victory in warfare or success in the hunt by means of the evocative and beneficial power intrinsic to the representation of generic exploits of this kind (*sympathetic* or imitative magic; see n. 124). The animal processions on ivories (and Naqada IID–IIIC1 seals) seem to obey to a blatantly different conceptual design than the palettes do, because of the apparently more *pacifist* status of their narrative and symbolism (as opposed to the violent – e.g. hunt and sacrifice – aspects prevailing on animal palettes of early Naqada III).¹²⁸

122 For a similar comparison see Williams, *Decorated Pottery* (fig.31). In any case almost all the scholars do agree on the fact that both the scenes carved on palettes and ivories are by no means purely decorative embellishments.

123 I.e. an important event occurred in the year in which the label was confected; for the notion of time (but in the sense of before–after) and space on the palettes of the first group cf. Davis, *Masking the Blow*, 99ff.

124 As for the Heb-Sed, it can be assumed that the re-creation of positive conditions (birth, accession, victory) was of a highly beneficial efficiency (for imitative magic) either when the event was replicated in feast or when fixed in “art”. – Events: Redford, *King-lists*, 86f. (*the scribe ... was he to record major events, or to name the years in which he wrote?*); Baud, in: *Archéo-Nil* 9, 1999. Labels: Godron, *Études sur l'Horus Den*, 1990, 171f.; Vandier, *Manuel*, vol. 1, 827ff.

125 Petrie, *RT*, pt. 2, pl. 10,1 (= pl. 2,4; = Kahl, *Das System*, Quelle 95).

126 Kahl et al., in: *MDAIK* 57, 2001; Kahl, *Vergraben*, fig. 14f.; Dreyer, *Umm el-Qaab*, vol. 1, 139, fig. 83a.

127 *Op. cit.*; for the discussion of the meaning of the hieroglyphs on tags: *ibid.*, 145 (*Herkunftsangaben*).

128 Anyhow this must depend on the different mixture and need for a narrative-like or symbolic-like scene. A Knife handle has, per se, a *concealed violence*, for the role that the knife can have in war or sacrifice. Furthermore the character of representations may reflect regional/stylistical fashions or have other circumstantial reasons as is the case of C-ware styles (n. 150); the fragmentary handles from Abydos t. U127 and 503 are nice, telling about important exceptions (?): the motifs of animal/ human rows and animal/human hunts are here already attested (in late Naqada II). – In my opinion, the most convincing interpretation for these motifs is that proposed by Benedite (in: *JEA* 5, 1918,

The knife handle from U-503 (n. 103) is remarkable because it offers a firm idea of the state and typology of the relief in Naqada IIc; the same is true for the three handle fragments from U-127 (cf. Dreyer, in: MDAIK 49, 1993, 27, pl. 6d–f).

This latter has rows of offering(?) bearers, prisoners, and animals; the former has a man with harpoon and another one with a rope on the boss side, and animals (lion, goat, dog, ostrich) on the other side.

It clearly resembles the slightly later palettes (Hunters) and the Gebel el-Arak knife handle; this in turn has motives which are a development of the HK tomb 100 paintings (Naqada IIc).

The Gebel Tarif gold handle does not represent humans, so it *might* be earlier;¹²⁹ it has the rosette and a griffon, this being virtually the same as that on the Oxford palette verso. The rendering of animal skins has been correctly paralleled with the one on the golden handle from Seyala; the similar way to obtain cross-hatching on the same precious material (independently from the techniques used and the ritual objects involved) must certainly indicate a close regional and temporal unity in the craftsmanship of both the pieces. In turn the boss side of the knife handle shows the intertwined serpents and rosettes which recur on Berlin and Petrie Museum ivory knife handles.¹³⁰

Certain elements that recur on the palettes may help to set them in a chronological order: we have already divided them into two groups; there is indeed a phase in which it seems that the palettes began to be fashioned out of the canons of the previous period (rampant animal on the edge framing an internal depiction with

prowlers and preys carved on both sides). Before the period of the second group of objects (*human concerns*), there are at least three palettes which are difficult to order in the sequence: the Minshat Ezzat (M. Ez.), the Hunters (Hunt.) and the Metropolitan Museum palettes (MMA). They are all carved on one side only; the MMA palette has the traditional design with rampant animals (partially erased and lost) but also the *serekh*, which never appears before (cf. above and n. 98, 101); Fischer (n. 41) recalled the attention on the fact that the *serekh* does not include a royal name (e.g. *Djer* or *Men* as it could have been easily suggested) but only the niches and the top of the palace-façade (he compared it with the similar motif on the partially preserved Abydos stela of Narmer or Aha). Thus this could be a Naqada IIIB king's name.

The Hunt. palette, has some archaic hieroglyphs: a double bovine protome (two standing bovines foreparts in the same body) and the Per-Nw (Per Nesper) shrine of Lower Egypt.¹³¹

All these palettes retain the early palette characteristic of “pearled-eyes”: the eyes of the beings are all hollowed to receive an inlaid little pearl such as preserved on the Oxford palette. The later palettes (second group) already have the typical Egyptian eyes.¹³²

The M. Ez. has an eccentric shape, with the giraffe back framing the upper side of the piece, the palm tree in a non symmetrical position, the serpopards forming the grinding circle with their necks, in a variant which will be of inspiration for the later (?) motif on the Narmer palette recto.¹³³

The M. Ez. also portraits, near the bottom, a curious animal (surely a hare) with very long ears and clawed paws; the same animal appears on the Hunt. palette,

225f.) and supported by Hayes (Scepter, 28, geographical confederations) melted with the recent intuitions by Kemp (Ancient Egypt, 46ff., *containment of the unruly*; id., in: CAJ 10, 2000, 236, symbols or deities of the rising elites), Finkenstaedt (ZAS 111, 1984, 109, pseudo-writing of toponyms), Cialowicz (Manches de couteaux); G. Dreyer has recently exposed the first clues for a connection with localities cited on the tags from cem. U (i.e. Elephant + mountain = Ab-Dw, Abydos; perhaps originally linked to a King Elephant) in: Umm el-Qaab, vol. 1, 139; cf. Anselin, in: CCdE 2, 2001, 119ff. – Other mammals and birds, which were later symbols, names or hypostasis of towns' and nomes' tutelary gods (or shrines and kings names), do appear in the ivories' animal rows (cf. palettes below and n. 143). – It can be supposed that the origin of these files resided in the archaic pastoral mentality and its concept of richness and power display; but a link can also be attempted with the O. K. cattle counts and especially with the enumeration of booty on the Annals (i.e. Snofru in Libya: Cairo 4, line 2,2 = Urk. I, 237, 13 and in Nubia: *ibid.*, 236, 10 = Palermo 6.1).

129 The exceptions cited above and in the previous note could also be taken as a proof that the earliest rows of humans (tribute/gift

bearers or prisoners) were at least contemporary with animal rows and hunting scenes with man and beasts.

130 Cf. Boehmer, *Orientalische Einflüsse*, 15ff.; Smith, *The Making*, 235ff. Note that the dates proposed for the Sayala tomb 137.1 vary from Naqada IIIA1 to early Naqada IIIB (cf. Jimenez-Serrano, *Two Proto-kingdoms*). – For the use of the crosshatching technique see the left giraffe hindparts on the small palette in Berlin Samml. (20171).

131 This has been proposed to indicate the location of the ritual hunt, (a channel in) the Third nome of Lower Egypt (Vandier, *Manuel*, vol. 1, pt. 1, 578; the symbols of West and East on poles resemble the later 3rd and 14th Lower Eg. nomes). – For this palette see also Cialowicz, *Les palettes*, 55ff., 66ff. Innovative semiology-based hints in Tefnin, in: *CdE* 54, 1979.

132 See R. Weill, *Recherches sur la Ire Dynastie ... BdE* 38, 1/2 (1961) esp. vol. 1, 172ff. and vol. 2, 169–274. – Fischer, in: *Artibus Asiae* 21, 1958, 87; the only exceptions are the Mungat and Oryx p., but Fischer explains this as due to the “Eastern Delta style” of both the palettes (both bought at Hihya).

133 This motif of Susian origin is thought to allude (on Narmer p.) to the reached forceful union of the Two Lands (n. 4).

near the grinding circle (n. 152). The importance of this palette (independently from its dating to Naqada IIIB/Dynasty 0 or IIIC2/Den's reign) is that it may provide a sort of key to the interpretation of the motif of long necked serpopards and especially that of giraffe and palm tree. The former appears in a curious variant, the necks shaping a double circle saucer in form of an "8", the upper circle being smaller than the lower one;¹³⁴ but, above all, the theme of the giraffe beside the palm is not central here: there is only one animal (on the left of the tree) and it stands in a rampant posture towards the palm (as the rampant *Oryces* facing each other on the Cairo and Brooklyn palettes) which is entirely on the right side of the palette. This may be a clue indicating that the motif of the palm and giraffes was adopted here irrespective of its older (?) original meaning (or ignoring it at all). Or it may be, as I think, that the symbolic essence of the icon was still comprehended, but the underlying ideological or circumstantial basis that it mirrored was changed and therefore the (de)sign was accordingly modified.¹³⁵

There is a possibility that the theme had to do with the symbolic view of the world, the Two Lands and the king (tree); the link for palm and ruler is tentatively provided by the late predynastic use of the *rosette* as a symbol of royalty (Scorpion II, Narmer).¹³⁶ An early dynastic circular rosette, which is distinctively a palm tree partly seen from above (the trunk is shown in profile)

was published by Z. Saad.¹³⁷ This would suggest that the rosette (at least in its later adoption whether or not also on the early Naqada III decorated ivories with animals rows), was in fact a stylised palm.¹³⁸

H. S. Smith has shown that the rosette represented the idea of the king;¹³⁹ perhaps the same concept was expressed by the palm tree seen in profile.¹⁴⁰ On the verso of the Louvre palette¹⁴¹ the scene seems to be stylistically on the earlier side of the typological sequence; also the palette shape can be considered an older form than the Oxford palette (Oxf.).¹⁴² The Louvre palette verso displays the palm tree along its central vertical axis, on both sides of the tree are the giraffes, each one surmounted by a Lycaon. The rampant bodies of these savage canines span all the height of the giraffes' necks, their paws are over the giraffes' heads and their own heads occupy the same position as the Hathor/Bat heads on the Narmer palette, above left and right. The Lycaons face each other, their snouts are separated by the palm branches. Symmetrical to the Lycaons two domestic (flopp ears) dogs are positioned, heads upside down, behind the back and legs of the giraffes, their paws under the heels of the two herbivores; the two dogs have their snouts near the roots of the palm tree.

Whatever the symbolic message of this carving the central element must be related to the ruler or to a place-name;¹⁴³ the herbivores might allude, already in the dualistic manner, to the Two Lands of Egypt.

134 This necks crossover motif recalls both that on Narmer p. recto and the Gebel Tarif, Berlin and UC knife handles with intertwined serpents. An interesting possible link is provided by the MMA p. where the circular saucer is a snake. – The general religious association of the serpent with a chthonic or Earth god could be developed in the case of the MMA palette: the circular saucer would be, rather than a solar symbol, an indication of the Earth. In a world-model (n. 145) interpretation of the palettes of both the groups, there seems to be a kind of pyramidal architecture with gods, king and lower actors in play; the circle was destined to receive mineral and earth to be powdered, thus elements with strong connection with the land and soil. Thus in some palettes its function might be that of creating a sort of dimensional or spatial division (Earth and Underground levels e.g. in Louvre p.), while on others (Hunt. p.) it separates the quietness of animal rows from the violent Lion hunt (the lion is shown once again, but dead, at the low vertex of the palette).

135 Note that the unusual character of the scene concerns the uniqueness, asymmetry and posture of the giraffe; the two canines behind it call for a confrontation with the animals/signs on the Helwan seal (n. 47), Berlin and Vultures palettes, Qustul t. L19 painted vessel (no. 21) and especially with the canines, felines (but also star/rosette and *Nar* fish) ending/controlling animal rows (U 503, Brooklyn, Gebel Tarif, Seyala, Carnarvon, HK ivories, Davis comb); n. 139.

136 Cf. n. 50.

137 Saad, SASAE 14, 23. Cf. Williams, Decorated Pottery, 33.

138 But cf. Cialowicz, in: SAAC 4, 1992.

139 Smith, The Making, 244ff. (Cf. n. 50); see in particular the suggestions of Williams, op. cit., passim. – Cf. n. 135; Kemp, in: CAJ 10, 2000, fig. 14 (control signs at the end of animals' rows on decorated ivories), 231–236.

140 See Williams, op. cit.; for the motifs of palm and giraffes on palettes cf. Cialowicz, in: SAAC 4, 1992; Schott, Hieroglyphen, 8; 16; 99, thought that the message of this figurative device was the prediction (*sr*; also = giraffe) of years of peace. See n. 145. – For other similar motifs see Cialowicz, in: SAAC 4, 1992; for an occurrence on a seal from Helwan cf. supra, n. 47.

141 Louvre E 11052; cf. Cialowicz, Les palettes, 47ff. 80.

142 Cf. the table of Kaiser, in: ZÄS 91, 1964, 110, fig. 6; however the fact that, in the same figure, the Hunters palette is considered an earlier type than the Louvre and Oxf. p. is questionable. Equally criticisable is the opinion of Cialowicz (Les palettes, 47f., 80) for whom the Louvre p. presents an abbreviated set of characters, ergo it must be dated after the more complex and complete Hunters p. (similarly on the Knife handles' animals rows: id., Manches de couteaux).

143 It is probable that the association of chiefs and/or their seats is stressed. Therefore this would report us to the supposed parallel meaning of the animal friezes on Naqada IID and later handles (n. 128) and seals; the *control points* of the former (which close or break the sequences of animal of the same species) could express sovereignty of some individuals on certain territories; icons such as the Hathor/Bat emblem on the seals/palettes/vase are very like-

The savage and domestic canines should be (celestial and chthonic) deities and/or powers bound to the hunt;¹⁴⁴ they are probably also tutelary, responsible and guarantor of the state or message encoded by the giraffes and palm. It is interesting to note their position on the M. Ez. palette *behind* the giraffe.

The two pairs of canines framing the edge of the palette appear on the recto too; here the central circular saucer forms another, purer and stronger axis of symmetry than the tree on the other side.¹⁴⁵

Asselberghs thought that palettes were a sort of image or model of the world (cf. n. 145), its rules and features documented through symbols. Cialowicz insists on their role as propellers of magical forces in the hunt; Tefnin shows the dualistic aspects in his semiologic analysis of the image and spaces on the Hunt. palette, elucidating the opposite roles of the easy hunt of herbivores for sustenance purposes and the dangerous ritual hunt of carnivores.¹⁴⁶

The serpopard on the Louvre p. faces one of the two overturned hounds; none of them seems to be dead; on the Hunt. palette the serpopards benefit the gazelle sacrifice, while there seems not to be any venatic activity represented on the Louvre palette. Even the lion, certainly alive, is here antithetic to the long necked feline; they could signify different aspects or status of sovereignty (living ruler and ancestors, or Earth gods?). The topping bird, an ibis or a Senegal Jabiru,¹⁴⁷ is perhaps, by analogy with later palettes, the name of the ruler to whom the palette would be dedicated or the place name which the scene referred to (see n. 143).¹⁴⁸

The *serekh* on the MMA palette does not seem to have been carved in a later period than the rest of the scene; if it were not for this element I would have classified this palette as an abnormal one of the first group.¹⁴⁹

Instead it forms with the other two a kind of intermediate phase between the two groups, before the definition of the new style in which the human figures prevail.

What might have caused this change? Generally the artists have more freedom to invent new forms in periods of political crisis; in this case it could be a regional variant. Apart from the Oxford palette all the animal palettes seem to come from the Delta, whereas the ones of the second group, except for Narmer, are generally hypothesised to be from Abydos. But most of the c. 30 decorated palettes are unprovenanced, so any geographical consideration only serves to introduce an unknown element. Sadly any attempt to pursue the way of local styles¹⁵⁰ is hampered by the cited lack of archaeological context for most of the palettes.

Other interesting animals, apart from the serpopards, lycans and lions, are the ostriches and the flop-ears and curly tail dogs; three ostriches are on the Manchester palette, two are on the British Museum "Geese" palette fragment, and one is atop the Oxford palette;¹⁵¹ also in a central, but lower position, is that on the Hunters palette, like the one on the Abydos U-503 knife handle (MDAIK 54, 1998, 99). I have already expressed the opinion that these, as the hare, might label names of particular places, rulers, war/lineage patron deities or numinous entities.

ly place-names (Hartung, in: MDAIK 54, 1998) or indicators of a mythical or real locus. Cf. n. 104, 131, 135, 139. – For the Bat head: Hendrickx, Bovines, 292, 310 (list of attestations). – A further support for the place name-theory is offered by the parallel proto-glyphs on the Hunters p. (n. 131), by the iconographic rebus-like label on Narmer p. and the crenellated towns on the Bull p. fragment (all set nearby the upper corners of the palettes).

144 Cf. Cialowicz, *Les palettes*, 58ff.; Baines, in: *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993; Kemp, in: *CAJ* 10, 2000, 236.

145 For a theory which credits these circular shapes as archaic Solar Eyes of the god: Westendorf, in: *SAK* 6, 1978; the author also compared the ungulates with the later myths' *Sonnenfende*, and their hunt with the mythical struggle of the cosmic forces (see criticism in n. 114). – The associations with the concept of axis-mundi or with the true axis of the Egyptian territory, the Nile river, are almost automatic when observing the bidimensional palm motifs; but these cannot be demonstrated. Indeed any attempt towards a cosmographical based interpretation (n. 134) of some of the palettes would be welcome (Baines, in: *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993, 59; Asselberghs, *Chaos en Beheersing*, 285f.).

146 For the Hunt in Egypt cf. Altenmüller, in: *LÄ* III, 221ff.

147 Interpretative references in Cialowicz, *Les palettes*, 47.

148 The same would be true for the Oxf. palette's Ostrich, top rec- to. Cf. also Williams, *Decorated Pottery* (L19–21; L23–38).

149 Abnormal for the fact that it is carved on one side only; but it could have been reused as Asselberghs proposed; and other notable exceptions to the double face carving are the Hunt. P., and the M. Ez. These palettes, and probably the slightly later (?) ones with friezes of men (cf. n. 118). These seem to make up a subgroup of middle Naqada IIIB date which separates the first group (Louvre, Oxford) from the second (Vultures, Bull). – An interesting consideration about the Hunt. P. is the lack of serpopards and griffins, the absence of framing animals and the mentioned double character of the hunt (Tefnin, in: *CdE* 54, 1979); ritual/dangerous (with bows) and for sustenance (?) with lassoes. By the way of this p. I must criticise the opinion of Cialowicz (*Les palettes*, 56, 69; id., in: *SAAC* 5, 1992; cf. Davis, *Masking the Blow*, 99ff.) for whom the Lion seems to appear suddenly and unawaited on the scene (the lassoed antelope could also have been a live or dead bait for lions).

150 As E. Finkenstaedt has done with C-ware (id., in: *ZÄS* 107, 1980, 116ff.; *JARCE* 18, 1981, 7ff.; *JARCE* 22, 1985). – The Delta provenance for most of the palettes with animals was first advanced by Fischer (in: *Artibus Asiae* 21, 1958, 77). Cf. n. 100.

151 Cf. Hendrickx, in: *CCdE* 1, 2000, 21–52; he focuses on D-ware paintings on which the birds generally believed to be *flamingos* should more probably be regarded as ostriches.

The hare recurs in the Hunt. and M. Ez palettes (centre-below); the same animal is depicted on a C-ware vessel.¹⁵² The flop ears dogs have often a collar, thus they are domestic animals possibly related to the royal pack of hounds or royal entourage (élite).¹⁵³

The transformations in the subjects of the palettes reflect the passage from a culture which expresses the manifestations of *numina* and deities' power in the virtues of animals, into one which acknowledges always more space and power to the human figure, embodied by the king.¹⁵⁴

This latter was going to become the centre of later representations, with the scenes of the aftermath of battles: tributes, dead bodies, prisoners, triumph of the winner, victory celebrations, and sacrifices.

The violent or triumphal aspects of the kingship are pre-eminent in the second group of palettes, whereas those of the first group are centred on the metaphors of the world and its rule¹⁵⁵ through the adoption of: 1) symbolic (zoomorphic) motifs and 2) the magically propi-

tiatory power of the *narration* of venatorial activities (sustenance and ritual hunts).

I have only sketched some paths which we must follow to first systematise the corpus of late predynastic decorated palettes in a relative chronological order; this will be followed by more interpretations on their symbolical functions according to the similar representations on knife handles, labels, seals/seal impressions and other decorated artefacts.

There is an entire series of peculiar traits in the shape, decoration, fashioning of body parts, organisation of space, and use of proto-hieroglyphs, as well as actions and actors implied in the scenes.

Through a study which elements proceed along a similar way than that undertaken by Cherpion for the Old Kingdom tomb decoration we could be able to ascertain the succession of pieces in a more precise manner, thus becoming also capable of ordering the other objects with carved scenes.¹⁵⁶

152 Payne, Ashmolean Museum, no. 424 (Naqada I); Osborn, *The Mammals*, 42–45.

153 For dogs representations in this period cf. Baines, in: *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993; Hendrickx, in: *CdE* 67, 1992; also see: J. O. Gransar-Desmond, *Histoire du chien en Égypte: les origines*, in: *CCdE* 3/4, 2002, 51–74; Osborn, *The Mammals*. – Their presence on knife handles, combs (cit. in n. 135) and palettes (Oxf., Hunt., MMA, Mungat) must be evidenced, especially for the meaningful role they have on the latter two fragmentary palettes, where they are being suckled by the rampant Lycaons. This metaphor is quite enigmatic and recalls ancient and modern mythical and folkloristic themes; its meaning must certainly involve but also surpass the proposed dualistic opposition between the wild/uncontrolled and the tame/domestic/ordered (Baines, in: *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993). – Strangely enough the hints towards possible relations between paintings on Naqada I–II vessels, palettes and ivories carvings with archaic myths, legends and folk tales have never been much pursued or acknowledged, despite relevant elements such as the discussed suckling theme and the fabulous animals (n. 133) (Baines, in: *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993). A comparison with other cultures induces to further reflections upon this possibility (cf. classic Maya painted vessels, Schele/Freidel, *A Forest of Kings*, chap. 2, fig. 2, 4: cosmic model; *ibid.*, n. 28: Corpus of figures depicting Xibalbà, the Underworld).

154 Cialowicz, *Les palettes*; Baines, in: *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993, 59 (quoting Hornung): "... *the change in representational form betokens a change in the perceived positions of animal and human in the cosmos. In the earlier period people would have seen animals as superior to them and would have focused their representations on them; later, people acquired an anthropocentric and theocentric view that encouraged them to organize their represented world around human figures.*"

155 In both the meanings of the word *rule*: as "norms and principles of its order" (lat. *regula*, *lex*) and as "domain".

156 N. Cherpion, *Mastabas et Hypogées d'Ancien Empire. Le problème de la datation* 1989; *Kunst des Alten Reiches*, SDAIK 28,

1995; obviously I am referring to the criterion-system, not to the use of kings' names. The stylistical-artistical study do remain the main ways which the analysis of these objects' development can be started from (cf. N. Grimal [ed.], *Les Critères de datation stylistiques à l'Ancien Empire*, BdE 120, 1998). – In the case of palettes there are many criteria which can be considered as relevant for establishing a relative chronology; (A) general features of the palette: 1) shape type; 2) depth of the relief; 3) one or two sides carving; 4) rampant animals' heads, ears or horns sculpted in the round; 5) saucer (type: circular, serpent-shaped, serpopard necks-framed, rectangular); 6) heads made separately (Mungat). (B) single characters of the representations: 1) hollowed eyes for inlaid; 2) facial vein; 3) rendering of (bushy) tails, 4) of pelt spots, 5) of manes; 6) animals' shoulder (skin) flexion wrinkles; 7) comb-like paws (not only in felines). (C) presence of: 1a) live animals: giraffe, lycaon, jackal, domestic dogs (two different species), antelope/gazelle species (oryx, ibex, hartebeest, lyra horned ...), ostrich, wading birds, Guinea fowl, vulture, falcon, plover, other birds, hare, crocodile, serpent, insect; 1b) dead animals (hunted lion, sacrificed gazelle); 2) palm tree, other plants; 3) artefacts (tools, weapons, standards, boats, vases, packs/bags, rope, collar, flute, mooring post, sheaths, beard, bull tail, sandals, crown, mace); 4a) ruler (attire, muscles/veins, posture, relative size); 4b) hunters (hair, eyes, beard, penis sheath, posture); 4c) soldiers; 4d) prisoners; 4e) priest; 4f) dead men (in hunt, warfare, sacrifice); 5a) animal gods/deities; 5b) mixed animal species; 5c) fantastic animals (serpopard, griffin); 6) (proto-)hieroglyphs (Hunt. p.: east/west standard, double protome/shrine); 7) true hieroglyphs (name, title, *serekh*); 8) meaningful differences in the relative size of humans/animals; 9) register lines; 10) axial and/or graphically symmetrical elements (and dualistic traits or concepts); 11a) localisation of the scene in a certain place or 11b) time; 11c) indications of possible temporal sequences in the narrative scenes. (D) actions of the animals: 1) rampant; 2) hunt; 3) in rows; 4) suckling; 5a) licking/ (pre-)devouring other animals; 5b) devouring men; 6a) attacking other animals; 6b) attacking men; 6c) attacking

This is the first step in the comprehension of the symbolic value of the iconography of the dawn of the Egyptian state, so distant in time from the oldest fully religious and mythical texts, those Pyramid Texts which

are equally very enigmatic despite being more than a thousand years later than the period, kings and the culture which have been partially described here.

things (walls, towns). (E) actions of humans: 1a) sustenance hunt (herbivores); 1b) ritual hunt (lion); 2) battle; 3) sacrifice; 4a) rows of offering bearers; 4b) rows of warriors; 4c) proces-

sion; 5) celebration; 6) dance; 7) playing flute. (F) actions of objects: standards provided with 1a) hands holding a rope; 1b) hands holding prisoners.

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- See also the website *Early Dynastic Egypt* <http://members.xoom.it/francescoraf/>

Chronological table of Late Predynastic Egyptian rulers/serekhs, tombs and various objects (Naqada IIIB/early IIIC1 period). Most of them are quoted in the text, but for new serekhs (as Double Falcon from Abydos, T. I. A., Palmahim Q.) cf. van den Brink, in: Archéo- Nil 11, 2001, passim. For "vdBrink jar types" cf. van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), Aspects. The arrangement of most of the artefacts in the last column is proposed in a very tentative way and is questionable. The Lower Nubian tombs have been shifted to slightly later dates than those proposed by B. Williams (Qustul, 1986). Some of the rulers arranged in sequence in the Abydos and Memphite Region columns might have had contemporary reigns (in different regions of the Nile Valley). Pe-Hor (jar fragment from Qustul L2) might also have been an Upper Egyptian king (van den Brink has proposed that it could be a badly scratched Iry-Hor's name: cf. text and n. 85). The references to serekhs from the various sites are only indicative and not exhaustive, especially in the later examples. Finally, only the Lower Nubian and the Abydos tombs are assumed to have been royal burials; the others are high élite burials which have yielded objects with royal names (cf. text).

c. 3250 (3200?)	(Kaiser) Naqada IIIb1	Sayala 137,1 (earlier?)	DOUBLE FALCON (Adaima)	(ink anonymous serekhs) tomb U-t	Plain serekhs (Abusir el-Meleq 1021, 1144) Plain serekh (Helwan 1371H2) DOUBLE FALCON (Turah / Ezbet Luthy)	Plain serekh (El-Beda) DOUBLE FALCON (Tell Ibrahim Awad, El-Beda, N. Sinai) ?-NEITH? (El-Beda) *NY-HOR? (Buto)	Plain serekh(s) (Wadi el-Arish prev. 'Rafiah') DOUBLE FALCON ?(Palmahim Quarry)	▲ Sayala mace-handle MMA palette (29.8.9) (earlier or later?) jars vdB type I jars vdB types IIa-b Qustul L24 burner Small palette Berlin Samml. 23301 Qustul L23 vessel Qustul L11 burner ? Hierakonpolis ... knife-handle (Oxford E4975) jars vdB types III-IVa MMA Knife-handle (early to late IIIB)..... Battlefield palette (earlier?) Hierakonpolis ... carved ivories (Naqada IIIA2-C2) Tarkhan t. 1023 carved ivory spoon Bull palette HK Maceheads Tehenu palette Plover palette
3200 (3150?)	(Kaiser) Naqada IIIb2	Qustul L24 (earlier?) Qustul L23 Qustul L11 Sayala 142,1 Qustul L19 Qustul L22 Qustul L5 Qustul L2 PE-HOR Gebel Sheikh ... Suleiman ?	HK loc.6, 10 PE-? (Armant, Site 34) HK loc.6, 1 SCORPION II (Hierakonpolis Macehead)	tombs U-u, U-x tombs U-v, U-w, U-y HEDJW-HOR? *IRY-HOR (B1/2) *NY-NEITH? KA (B7/9) SCORPION II?	Anonymous serekh? (Helwan 160H3 seal) *NY-HOR (Turah 64, 89) *HAT(Y)-HOR (Tarkhan 1702) *HEDJW(-HOR)? (Turah 54, 313) *IRY-HOR (Zawiyet el-Aryan) CROCODILE (?) (Tarkhan 315, 1549) *NY-NEITH (Helwan 257H8) KA (Tarkhan 261, Helwan 1627H2, Helwan 1651H2)	*NY-HOR? (Tel Lod) ? (M.A.O. 160,1) KA (Kafir H. D. 1008, Tell Ibrahim Awad)	▲ MMA palette (early to late IIIB)..... Battlefield palette (earlier?) Hierakonpolis ... carved ivories (Naqada IIIA2-C2) Tarkhan t. 1023 carved ivory spoon Bull palette HK Maceheads Tehenu palette Plover palette Narmer palette Narmer macehead	
c. 3090 (3050?)			NARMER (Hierakonpolis)	NARMER (B17/18)	NARMER (Tarkhan, Turah, Helwan)	NARMER (M.A.O., K.H.D.)	NARMER (colonization apex)	

Naqada IIIB (early IIIC1) plain, anonymous and personalized serekhs with other possible indicators of chieftains' and sovereigns' names, from Upper and Lower Egypt, Lower Nubia and Southern Levant (found on various types of objects, especially on pottery jars). Note that some of these compounds could either be general indicators of sovereignty (as plain and anonymous serekhs) or not be royal names at all, with a completely different purpose and meaning (as no. 19, 26, 32). No. 11, 17, 32, 37 are very hard to set in a precise chronological order (cf. text); also the general sequence and assemblage of the serekhs must not be interpreted as reflecting true successions stricto sensu (except those from the Abydos tombs of Iry-Hor, Ka and Narmer). The serekhs are not to scale; most of them are from inscriptions or artefacts containing further hieroglyphs and/or images which have been excluded. Some single serekhs/names of uncertain status have not been included, as for that of 'Djehwty-Mer' (?) from Tarkhan t. 412 (cf. Petrie et al., Tarkhan I, pl. 31, 71).

Abbreviations:

MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15 = Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, 211–269, esp. 262–269 (n. 193ff.), fig. 14, 15.

vdBrink 1996 = van den Brink, in: Spencer (ed.), *Aspects*, 140–158.

For the other references cf. the Bibliography.

Note: the inscriptions on jar or jar fragments are (pre-firing) incised, unless specifically stated.

- 1–2: Abydos, Umm el-Qaab, tomb U-s ink inscr. anonymous serekhs on cyl. jars (Dreyer, in: MDAIK 55, 1999, fig. 4a).
- 3–4: Abydos, Umm el-Qaab, tomb U-t ink inscr. anonymous serekhs on cyl. jars (Dreyer, in: MDAIK 55, 1999, fig. 4b).
- 5: Abusir el-Meleq t. 1021 jar (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,9)[sic].
- 6: Abusir el-Meleq t. 1144 jar (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,10)[sic].
- 7: Wadi el-Arish (previously believed to be from Rafiah) jar (Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, 269, fig. 16,2).
- 8: Wadi el-Arish (previously believed to be from Rafiah) jar (Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, 269, fig. 16,1).
- 9: El-Beda jar (Clédat, in: ASAE 13, 1914, 119ff., fig. 5); name reading beside the plain serekh: (Bark?)-NEITH (?).
- 10: DOUBLE FALCON; 10a–c: El Beda jar fragments (Clédat, in: ASAE 13, 1914, 119ff., fig. 4, 3, 6; 10b is from a complete jar, *ibid.*, pl. 13); 10d: Turah SS Ezbet Luthy (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,4); 10e: Sinai (*ibid.*, fig. 14,5). For more serekhs of king (?) DOUBLE FALCON cf. van den Brink, in: *Archéo-Nil* 11, 2001 (group 2a–c).
- 11: Metropolitan Museum Palette (MMA New York, 28.9.8; Fischer, in: *Artibus Asiae* 21, 1958, 82ff., n. 34, fig. 19); uncertain datation; for similar palettes from later (Naqada IIIc1–2) contexts cf. the Minshat el-Ezzat palette (quoted in the text and in n. 101) and the palette fragment Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, 228, fig. 6 (lycaon tail, upset?).
- 12: Seal impression from Siali, Lower Nubia (Williams, Qustul, 168, fig. 58a).
- 13: *HAT(Y)-HOR; Tarkhan t. 1702 jar (U. C. London 16084; vdBrink 1996, tab. 1,9; pl. 26a).
- 14: NY(-HOR); 14a: Turah t. 16g9 (T64) jar (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,7); 14b: Turah t. 19g1 (T89) jar (*ibid.*, no. 8).
- 15: NY-HOR [or NAR(MER)?] Ezbet Tell jar fragm. (vdBrink 1996, tab. 1,21; *id.*, in: *Archéo-Nil* 11, 2001, n. 38).
- 16: Anonymous serekh?; steatite cylinder seal from Helwan t. 160H3 (Köhler, in: *GM* 168, 1999, 49ff., fig. 1).
- 17: Metropolitan Museum Knife-handle, recto: boats procession (Williams/Logan, in: *JNES* 46, 1987, 245ff., fig. 1).
- 18: Qustul t. L24 incense burner; boats procession towards a shrine (Williams, Qustul, 142, fig. 55, pl. 34).
- 19: Qustul t. L23 painted vessel; complex scene with animals, tree and a shrine (?) palisade (Williams, Qustul, pl. 84).
- 20: *IRY-HOR; 20a–g: Umm el-Qaab, Abydos jar fragments (20e complete jar) (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,13, 14, 15, 22, 21, 19, 16 respectively); 20h: same site, Kaiser/Dreyer, in: MDAIK 38, 1982, 234, fig. 10d; 20i: seal impression from Zawiyet el Aryan, nearby tombs 86–89 (Kaplony, IAF, vol. 3, fig. 13).
- 21: *HEDJW-HOR (?); 21a: Turah t. 15g2 (T54) jar (vdBrink 1996, tab. 1,18); 21b: Eastern Delta jar (Metropolitan Mus. 61122; Fischer, in: *JARCE* 2, 1963, fig. 1); 21c: Turah t. 17L7a (T313) jar (vdBrink 1996, tab. 1,19).
- 22: P-Elephant (?); 22a–b: Armant site 34 graffiti (Wilkinson, in: *JEA* 81, 1995, fig. 1a–b).
- 23a–b: Qustul t. L11 'Archaic Horus' incense burner (Williams, Qustul, pl. 33).
- 24: Plain serekh from Minshat Abu Omar t. 1210.21 jar (vdBrink 1996, tab. 1,11).
- 25: Plain serekh from Minshat Abu Omar t. 520.3 jar (vdBrink 1996, tab. 1,12).
- 26: Qustul t. L2 pot-mark on jar (Williams, Qustul, pl. 78a).
- 27: PE-HOR? Qustul t. L2 pot-mark (?) (post firing incision) on jar fragm. (Williams, Qustul, pl. 77).
- 28: HORUS CROCODILE (Shenyw, *The Subduer*)? 28a: Tarkhan t. 315 ink inscribed cylinder jar (Kaplony, IAF, vol. 3, pl. 1); 28b: Tarkhan t. 1549 ink inscribed cylinder jar (*ibid.*, pl. 2); 28c: Tarkhan t. 414 seal impression (*ibid.*, fig. 18); the relationship between ink inscriptions and seal impression has been postulated by G. Dreyer (in: *Horus Krokodil*).
- 29: ? Minshat Abu Omar t. 160.1 jar (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,34). For the various interpretation of the name cf. text.
- 30: HORUS KA; 30a: Helwan t. 1627H2 jar (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,23)[sic]; 30b: Helwan t. 1651H2 jar (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,24)[sic]; 30c: ink on jar fragm., Abydos, t. B7/9 (Petrie, *Abydos pt. 1*, pl. 2,15); 30d–j: Abydos, Umm el-Qaab t. B7/9 jar fragments (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,27, 29, 31, 28, 32, 26, 33 respectively).
- 31: HORUS KA (?) Adaima, carbon inscr. on jar fragm. (Grimal, in: *BIFAO* 99, 1999, 451, fig. 1); uncertain reading.
- 32: *HWT-HOR (?) Wadi Um-Balad jar fragm. (Ch. Köhler, in: *Castel/Köhler/Mathieu/Pouit*, in: *BIFAO* 98, 1998, 57ff., fig. 12); uncertain reading: might be Hor Aha, Djer or another later ruler's (or royal domain) name.
- 33: *NY-NEITH; Helwan 257H8 jar (Köhler/van den Brink, in: *GM* 187, 2002, fig. 2,2).
- 34: Royal Macehead from Hierakonpolis (Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*, pt. 1, pl. 26a; Adams, *Ancient Hierakonpolis*, pl. 1).
- 35: SCORPION (II), Macehead from Hierakonpolis (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford E3632; Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*, pt. 1, pl. 26c; photo after: S. Donadoni, in: *Le grandi Scoperte dell'Archeologia*, vol. 1.33, 17, De Agostini, Novara).
- 36: HORUS NARMER; 36a: Umm el-Qaab, Abydos (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,40); 36b: same site, seal impression from tomb B17/18 (Dreyer, in: MDAIK 43, 1987, fig. 3); 36c: Zawiyet el-Aryan t. Z401 (?) jar fragm. (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,37); 36d: Tarkhan (?) ink inscr. cylinder jar (Kaplony, IAFS, fig. 1061); 36e: seal impression from Tarkhan t. 414 (Kaplony, IAF, vol. 3, fig. 25); 36f: Tarkhan t. 414 jar (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,35); 36g: Tarkhan t. 1100 jar (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,39); 36h: Hierakonpolis jar fragm. (MDAIK 38, fig. 14–15,43); 36i: (recto of) Narmer palette from Hierakonpolis (Cairo Museum JdE 14716, CG 32169; Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*, pt. 1, pl. 29; photo after: S. Donadoni, in: *Le grandi Scoperte dell'Archeologia*, vol. 1.33, 14); 36j: Hierakonpolis cylinder (Kaplony, IAF, vol. 3, fig. 5).
- 37: Anonymous serekh, Gebel Sheikh Suleiman graffito (Murnane, in: *JNES* 46, 1987, 282ff., fig. 1A); uncertain date.

