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65 bis, rue Galande 75005 PARIS

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Archéo-Nil

abs / Marie-Noël Bellessort

7, rue Claude Matrat

92130 Issy-les-Moulineaux

(France)

COURRIEL :

secretariat@archeonil.fr

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#### MAQUETTE

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#### LISTE DES AUTEURS

Elizabeth BLOXAM

Institute of Archaeology  
University College London  
31–34 Gordon Square  
London (United Kingdom)  
e.bloxam@ucl.ac.uk

Wouter CLAES

Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire  
Parc du Cinquantenaire, 10  
1000 Bruxelles (Belgique)  
w.claes@kmgk-mrah.be

Tiphaine DACHY

Université de Toulouse II - Le Mirail  
UMR 5608 - TRACES  
Maison de la recherche  
5, allée Antonio Machado  
31058 Toulouse cedex 9 (France)  
tdachy@univ-tlse2.fr

Maude EHRENFELD

EHESS - Université de Toulouse II - Le Mirail  
UMR 5608 - TRACES  
Maison de la recherche  
5, allée Antonio Machado  
31058 Toulouse cedex 9 (France)  
maudeehrenfeld@gmail.com

Ashraf EL-SENUSSI

Supreme Council of Antiquities  
Faiyum (Egypt)

Chloé GIRARDI

Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier 3  
Montpellier (France)  
girardi.chloe@laposte.net

James HARRELL

The University of Toledo  
Department of Environmental Sciences  
2801 W. Bancroft  
Toledo, OH 43606-3390  
(United States of America)  
james.harrell@utoledo.edu

Thomas C. HEAGY

Chicago (United States of America)  
Heagy1@aol.com

Stan HENDRICKX

Sint-Jansstraat 44  
B-3118 Werchter (Belgique)  
s.hendrickx@pandora.be

Christiane HOCHSTRASSER-PETIT

6, rue des martrois  
91580 Etréchy (France)  
kikihp@yahoofr

Dirk HUYGE

Royal Museums of Art and History  
Jubelpark 10/10 Parc du Cinquantenaire  
1000 Brussels (Belgium)  
d.huyge@kmgk-mrah.be

Clara JEUTHE

Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (Ifao)  
37 El Cheikh Aly Youssef Street  
Munira, Qasr el Ainy  
BP 11562 Le Caire (Égypte)  
cjeuthe@ifao.egnet.net

Adel KELANY

Ancient Quarries and Mines Dept  
Supreme Council of Antiquities  
Aswan (Egypt)

Christian KNOBLAUCH

University of Vienna  
Franz-Klein-Gasse 1  
Vienna 1190 (Austria)  
christian.knoblauch@univie.ac.at

Béatrix MIDANT-REYNES

Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (Ifao)  
37 El Cheikh Aly Youssef Street  
Munira, Qasr el Ainy  
BP 11562 Le Caire (Égypte)  
bmidantreynes@ifao.egnet.net

Norah MOLONEY

Institute of Archaeology  
University College London  
31–34 Gordon Square (London)  
United Kingdom

Aurélié ROCHE

UMR 7044 Archimède – Université de  
Strasbourg – Maison Interuniversitaire des  
Sciences de l'Homme – Alsace  
5, allée du Général Rouvillois – CS 50008  
67083 Strasbourg Cedex (France)  
aurelie.roche1@gmail.com

Adel TOHAMEY

Ancient Quarries and Mines Dept  
Supreme Council of Antiquities  
Aswan (Egypt)

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- 216 Appel à contribution

# Who was Menes?

Thomas C. Heagy<sup>1</sup>

*Traditionally, Menes was considered the first king of Egypt, although who he was or even if he existed at all remains a matter of controversy. This paper takes a comprehensive look at three questions: (1) Given that Menes is not mentioned in a clearly royal context until the New Kingdom, did he really exist? (2) Why was Menes considered the first king of Egypt? (3) If Menes did exist, who was he: Narmer or Aha? To address these issues, three different approaches are used. First, we examine the documentary and archaeological evidence associated with the two fundamental achievements attributed to Menes—the unification of Egypt, and the founding of Memphis—and attempt to determine which known king(s) can be linked to them. Second, we review two documents—the Naqada Label and the Narmer/Mn (Prince’s) Seal—that may link Narmer or Aha with the name of Menes. Finally, we examine three documents—the Palermo Stone and two sealings from the Abydos necropolis—that provide evidence as to which known king is most likely to be the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty and thus the legendary “Menes”.*

*Ménès a traditionnellement été considéré comme le premier roi d’Égypte, bien que son identité et la preuve même de son existence soulèvent encore bien des controverses. Cet article examine de façon approfondie les trois questions suivantes: (1) Étant donné que Ménès n’est pas mentionné dans un contexte clairement royal avant le Nouvel Empire, a-t-il vraiment existé? (2) Pourquoi Ménès a-t-il été considéré comme le premier roi d’Égypte? (3) Si Ménès a bien existé, qui était-il: Narmer ou Aha? Pour répondre à ces questions, trois approches différentes ont été suivies. Tout d’abord, nous avons analysé les preuves documen-*

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1. This paper would not have been possible without the assistance of Elise MacArthur, who translated most of the non-English articles for me and acted as a research assistant; Renée Friedman, who has been a long-standing source of inspiration and encouragement and who read and provided invaluable comments on earlier drafts; and Stan Hendrickx, who first suggested I write this paper and also provided invaluable comments on earlier drafts. I am also extremely grateful for his assistance in preparing the bibliography and references.

*taires et archéologiques associées aux deux réalisations fondamentales attribuées à Ménès – l'unification de l'Égypte et la fondation de Memphis – pour tenter de déterminer quel(s) roi(s) connu(s) peut (peuvent) être lié(s) à ces accomplissements. Nous avons ensuite revisité deux documents – l'étiquette de Nagada et le sceau de Narmer/Mn (dit « du Prince ») – susceptibles de lier Narmer ou Aha au nom de Ménès. Enfin, nous avons considéré trois documents – la Pierre de Palerme et deux sceaux de la nécropole d'Abydos – qui fournissent des éléments de preuve indiquant quel roi connu est le plus susceptible d'être le premier roi de la 1<sup>re</sup> dynastie et donc le « Ménès » légendaire.*

## Introduction

According to New Kingdom sources, Menes was the first king of Egypt. In the Turin Canon, following a list of divine and semi divine rulers, Menes is the first human king mentioned (Redford 1986: 1-18). In the Abydos King List of Seti I—a series of cartouches of the royal ancestors to whom Seti I gives offerings—the first king shown is Menes (Redford 1986: 18-20). The Min reliefs of the Ramesseum also show Menes as the first king (Redford 1986: 34-36). Classical sources also place Menes as the first human king (Herodotus II.4; Manetho, Dynasty I.1, Fr. 7b). But controversy still reigns over who Menes was and even whether there really was a king by that name.

It is helpful to examine three issues. First, did Menes really exist? This question arises because he is not mentioned in a clearly royal context until the New Kingdom, over a thousand years after he was said to have lived. Second, why was Menes considered the first king of Egypt? Third, if Menes did exist, who was he? This question arises because Menes is a personal name<sup>2</sup>, whereas the Early Dynastic kings were primarily known, in the contemporary documents, by their Horus names (Helck 1953: 355-356; Dreyer 2007: 221). The question, then, is which king, for whom we know the Horus name, corresponds to the king with the personal name Menes? The primary candidates for consideration are Narmer and Aha (Baud 1999: 109; Dreyer 2007: 221; Kahl 2007: 7).

In looking at who Menes was, it will be useful to focus on the question using three different approaches. First, we will examine the documentary and archaeological evidence associated with the main achievements attributed to Menes - the unification of Egypt and the founding of Memphis<sup>3</sup> - and attempt to determine which known king (or kings) can be linked to those achievements. Second, look at two documents that may link Narmer or Aha with the name of Menes. And finally, since Menes is considered the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, look at three documents that may provide evidence as to which historically attested king that was.

## Was Menes a myth?

The oldest mention of Menes is often said to be the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty scarab (**Fig. 1**) that shows the name of “Menes” in a cartouche supported by a winged scarab beetle above a kneeling god holding in each outstretched hand a papyrus (or

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2. The personal name is also referred to as the “birth name”.

3. Herodotus (II.99) described the founding of Memphis which he attributed to Min (Menes).

lotus) plant on which the juxtaposed cartouches of Maatkare (Hatshepsut) and Menkheperre (Thutmose III) appear (Hayes 1953: 105; Vercoutter 1990: 1026-1031).<sup>4</sup> Redford (1986: 172) interprets this as an effort by Hatshepsut to legitimize her rule, by associating herself with the founder king. Recently, however, Daphna Ben-Tor has questioned both the date and authenticity of the scarab.<sup>5</sup> If it is a forgery, the oldest document that mentions Menes in a clearly royal context would be the Abydos king list of Seti I.

Because Menes is not mentioned in a clearly royal context until the New Kingdom, several theories interpret the name “Menes” as being something other than the name of an actual ruler; and instead, propose that it is an invention of the New Kingdom (Vercoutter 1997: 429). The most prominent of these theories is that of Derchain (1966). He argues that the name Menes is based on the use of the *mn*-sign to designate “someone” or “so-and-so,” a person whose name is not known. He suggests that if the name of the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty had been forgotten when the king lists were compiled, something would have to be put in its place, hence, *Mn*. Allen (1992: 20) objects to Derchain’s theory on philological grounds: “The term *mn*, ‘so-and-so’ shows neither the final *j* regularly found in the hieroglyphic name of Menes nor the long vowel of its Greek vocalization.” Hornung and Staehlin (1976: 44-45) connect the name Menes with the names of the gods Min and Amun, the word for “herdsman,” and a shortened version of Menkheperre, the throne name of Thutmose III. Allen (1992: 20) rejects all of these on philological grounds. Hornung and Staehlin (1976: 45) also suggest an association between the name Menes and the verb *mn* “to remain” or equivalently “to endure or be permanent”, in essence the meaning of this personal name in use since the Middle Kingdom (Ranke 1935: 149.29), if not earlier. Allen (1992: 21-22) proposes an alternative theory, that the name Menes is derived from the name of the city of Memphis, *mn-nfr* in Egyptian, which Menes is said to have founded.

Assmann (2002: 39) suggests that Menes was not a single person, but “a purely memorial figure,” a “conflation” of a number of actual kings, a view already taken by Allen (1992: 19). The extent to which more than one king was involved in the unification and the founding of Memphis will be discussed later; but even if the achievements of Menes should be credited to more than one historical king, we cannot dismiss the possibility that one of those kings was named “Menes.”

The most important reason why Menes should be taken to be the real name of the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty is that the king lists say it, and they are remarkably accurate about later 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty kings. There is a precise correspondence between the Horus names of the last four kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty in the contemporary documents and their *nbtj* and/or *nsw-bity* names as they appear in the king lists (Kitchen 1999: 533; Cervelló-Autuori 2005: 39-41; Dreyer



**Fig. 1**

Faience scarab with the cartouches of Menes, Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (Dynasty 18), Metropolitan Museum of Art 26.7.150 (drawing by Elise MacArthur, after Newberry 1907: pl. VI.104).

4. Wildung (1969: 20) discusses several other scarabs with Menes’ name on them but dismisses them all as forgeries. He also mentions this scarab, housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (26.7.150) but does not consider it because its date and provenance are uncertain (Wildung 1969: 6, n.11).

5. Daphna Ben-Tor, personal communication. Ben-Tor’s arguments against dating the scarab to the reign of Hatshepsut are based on its features and design: the scarab’s back, head, and sides differ from the early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty corpus, including other scarabs of Hatshepsut, and the design depicting a kneeling figure holding two lotus flowers is not otherwise attested during this period. If the scarab was not manufactured during Hatshepsut’s reign then its authenticity must be seriously doubted since Hatshepsut was not commemorated in later times.

2007: 224). Djer, the third king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, is the earliest 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty king whose name is preserved on the Palermo Stone (the Cairo fragment); the names of his predecessors being lost due to the stone's fragmentary condition. We can verify his personal name, in addition to his Horus name: "The name It(t) appears enclosed within a cartouche, an anachronistic solution for the First Dynasty, but normal for the writer and 'adapter' of the Old Kingdom. ... Now, this name coincides perfectly with that appearing in the Abydos list (missing in Turin): It(t)." (Cervelló-Autuori 2005: 41). Thus, for five of the eight kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, we can use contemporary sources, or in the case of Djer, an Old Kingdom source, to determine with certainty the personal names corresponding to the Horus names of each king (Cervelló-Autuori 2005: 39-41; Dreyer 2007: 224). While nothing but a contemporary source would prove the identification of Menes, it seems implausible that the keepers of the annals on which the king lists were based would accurately report five of the eight kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, but forget the most important one, that of the founder king, Menes.

Based on the king lists whose accuracy in the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty is confirmed by contemporary sources from the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, we can conclude that Menes really was the personal name of the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty.

## Why was Menes considered the first human king of Egypt?

Egyptian kingship was not invented with Menes. Important aspects of Egyptian kingship predate the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty. Elaborate burials, as signs of more than local power, go back to Naqada IIB and even earlier, as illustrated by the discoveries in HK6 at Hierakonpolis (Friedman 2008; Friedman et al. 2011). The size and content of tomb U-j at Abydos suggest control of a large region encompassing Upper Egypt and possibly part of the Delta in Naqada IIIA1 (Dreyer 1998; 2011; Hendrickx 2011: 77-78). Early versions of the *serekh* (the palace façade symbol) are known from the beginning of Naqada IIIA2 (Hendrickx 2001: 91-93)<sup>6</sup> and the *heqa*-scepter goes back to Naqada IID.<sup>7</sup> The classic scene of the king smiting the enemy, known throughout Egyptian history, has its first antecedents on Naqada I White Cross-lined pottery (Dreyer, et al. 1998: figs. 12-13; 2003: fig. 5; see also Hendrickx & Eyckerman 2010: 122-127). These examples illustrate that the development of Egyptian kingship was a long and gradual process.

Retrospectively, the first register of the Palermo Stone shows the names, though unreadable, of Predynastic kings of Lower Egypt and the determinatives of Predynastic kings of Upper and Lower Egypt (Wilkinson 2000b: 85) (Fig. 2). However, from the archaeological sources, we know the names of at least two Predynastic kings: Iry-Hor<sup>8</sup> and Ka (probably Narmer's immediate predeces-

6. For a discussion of the origins of the *serekh*, see Jiménez Serrano 2003; 2007b; Hendrickx 2001; 2008: 71, n.22.

7. A fragment of a *heqa*-scepter was found in tomb U-547 in Abydos (Dreyer et al. 1996: 21), while a complete example was found in tomb U-j (Naqada IIIA1) (Dreyer 1998: 146, n° 200, Abb. 85, Tf. 36).

8. Wilkinson (1993) questioned the existence of king Iry-Hor, but his position has not been generally accepted.

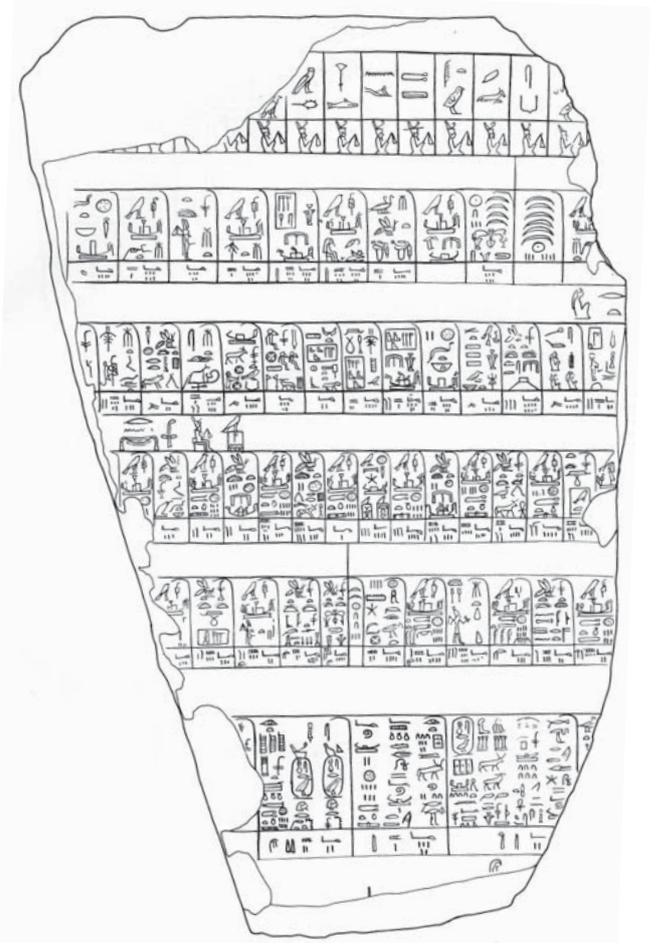
sors). Both are well attested and will be discussed in the section on Unification. Scorpion of the Scorpion Macehead may also be an early king, but whether or not he really existed is unclear (Baines 1995: 114).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the ancient Egyptians drew a line in history. Although it was not called the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty until much later, they decided that Menes was to be their first historical king and all the kings before him were relegated to obscurity.

Even if we accept the theory that the Palermo Stone originally contained the names of kings of Upper Egypt as well as Upper and Lower Egypt combined, we are left with a stark contrast between the Predynastic kings and the dynastic ones. The Predynastic kings are given only one compartment each, and the information (based on the surviving records for the kings of Lower Egypt) is limited to a single name and the determinative for king of (in these cases) Lower Egypt. By contrast, the kings of the dynastic period are given one compartment for each year of their reign, recording the event after which the year was named and the height of the Nile that year, along with a banner giving both the Horus name and the personal name of that king (Wilkinson 2000b: 60-81). By the New Kingdom, in the Turin Canon, the names of the Predynastic kings were forgotten, being replaced by “Demigods” and “Spirits of the Dead”. While these deities may represent a remembrance of distant ancestors (Kaiser 1961), there was a very big difference between the way they were remembered and the way dynastic kings were documented. In the case of the Abydos king list, there is no reference to the Predynastic kings at all.

The earliest direct evidence of this demarcation in time is in the New Kingdom with the advent of the king lists. However, the king lists had to be based on earlier documents. As previously discussed, we can verify the accuracy of the personal names and sequence of five of the eight kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty on the New Kingdom king lists. This means they must have been based on documents that were contemporary or close to contemporary with the lives of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty kings.

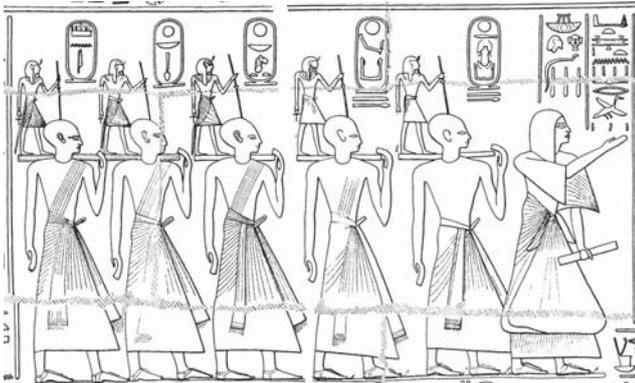
Two questions arise from this. Why draw a line? And why Menes? Why, for example, was Den (the fifth king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty) not chosen? Den was the first king known to have used the title *nsw-bity*, the dual king (Kaplony 1980: 642), and the first king to wear the double crown (Goebes 2001: 323).

Or why not Ka, the king immediately before Narmer? He was buried in Cemetery B in Abydos next to Narmer and Aha, and he was the first Thinite king to have his name in a *serekh* (Hendrickx 2001: 94). He is attested in sites from Tell Ibrahim Awad (in the northeastern Delta) to Abydos in Upper Egypt (Wilkin-



**Fig. 2**  
The Palermo Stone, recto (Wilkinson 2000b: fig. 1; courtesy of Toby Wilkinson).

9. Dreyer (1998) has suggested a line of even earlier kings based on the findings in Abydos tomb U-j. His views are no longer generally accepted (see Kahl 2003; Breyer 2002), but if they did exist, their power was probably restricted to the Abydos region, while others (e.g. “King Crocodile”, Dreyer 1992) ruled over other regions.



**Fig. 3**  
Min reliefs of  
Ramesses II, showing  
priests carrying  
standards and royal  
statues, Ramesseum  
(Epigraphic Survey  
1940: pl. 213;  
courtesy of the  
Oriental Institute  
of the University  
of Chicago).

graphy. The coronation of the king included a ritual of reenacting the unification as shown on the Palermo Stone beginning with Djer,<sup>10</sup> and continued into the New Kingdom and beyond. From the time of Den, the fifth king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, the king wore the double crown, which combined the white crown of Upper Egypt with the red crown of Lower Egypt. From the time of Semerkhet, the seventh king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, in addition to the older Horus and *nsw-bity* names, the *nbtj* name was added, another reference to the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt via their respective protective goddesses (Wilkinson 1999: 203-205; von Beckerath 1999: 12).<sup>11</sup> Neither Herodotus nor Manetho says that Menes unified Egypt.<sup>12</sup> However, there is evidence that in the New Kingdom he was credited with this accomplishment. In the mortuary temple of Ramesses II there is a scene that shows priests carrying statues of kings labeled by their names in cartouches in front of them (Fig. 3). The first three kings are Menes, Mentuhotep II, and Ahmose. Mentuhotep II and Ahmose are, respectively, the unifiers of Egypt after the First and Second Intermediate Periods, and founders of the Middle and New Kingdoms. It follows, therefore, that Menes was considered the first unifier of Egypt (Kahl 2007: 4). Given that the concept of unification was so important in ancient Egypt, it is likely that Menes' association with unification was the primary reason he was considered the first king.<sup>13</sup>

son 1999: 57-58) and he is the earliest king attested in Helwan, the earlier of the two primary cemeteries of Memphis (Köhler 2004: 306-307). He is also attested in Tel Lod in southern Canaan (Jiménez Serrano 2007: 370, table 8).

The answers to both questions are probably related. The most likely explanation is that it was the achievements attributed to Menes that set him apart from his predecessors, in particular, the political unification of Egypt.

The concept of the unification was of the greatest importance in royal Egyptian thought and icono-

10 . Wilkinson 1999: 210; Kahl 2007: 5. Lorton (1987: 37) suggests that the unification symbol was introduced to the Palermo Stone retrospectively and was not attested until the reign of Khasekhem near the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty. However, the unification formula is attested on a stone vessel of Anedjib (Lacau & Lauer 1959: 11, n° 33, pl. 7), sixth king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty. The Anedjib vase shows a clear "Uniting Upper and Lower Egypt" sign group and Kahl (1994: n. 1589: 46, 281, 504) lists the Anedjib inscription as the earliest example.

11. The two ladies symbol (*nbtj*) is known from the reign of Aha, appearing for the first time on the Naqada label (Cervelló-Autuori 2005: 44-45; Fig. 15 this article), but does not appear on that document as part of a *nbtj* name. More recently, incisions on a clay cylinder seal from Naqada IIIA2-B levels at Tell el-Farkha have been interpreted as representing a *serekh* and the *nbtj*, but whether it preserves a *nbtj* name remains highly conjectural. (See Ciałowicz 2011: 24-25, fig. 17:2).

12. Cf. Herodotus II. 4, II. 99. Manetho, Dynasty I.1: Fr. 6; Fr. 7a; Fr. 7b.

13. Frankfort 1948: 15-18; contra Helck (1968: 24), who attributes Menes' status as Egypt's first king to the beginning of written annals, as does Baud (1999:116). Kemp (1995: 686) says: "...the practice of keeping year-by-year hieroglyphic annals did not start until the reign of Menes, who thereby became the first of the dynastic Kings". Lorton (1987: 35-36), on the other hand, argues that Menes might have been designated as the first ruler of the historical state because he founded Memphis.

## Unification: State formation and violence

According to tradition, the Egyptian state was formed out of two Predynastic kingdoms, Upper and Lower Egypt. Kaiser (1961: 40) states that the concept of the Egyptian state was expressed throughout all periods in countless sources as a union of two previously separate individual kingdoms (see also Kemp 1995: 680; Hartung 2008: 485). According to Köhler (2011: 123): “This idea of Egypt’s division into two lands...is deeply embedded in royal ideology.... In the past, it has often been suggested that territorial unity was therefore the result of warfare and territorial competition between two parts of the country, as is often narrated in ancient Egyptian mythology.” This view, based in part on the discovery of the Narmer Palette, was shared by Egyptologists until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jiménez Serrano 2008: 1120).

More recently scholars have viewed the unification as a gradual one, divided into two phases, first a (material) cultural unification and then a political unification (e.g., Wilkinson 2000: 377; Bard 2000: 63; Midant-Reynes 2000: 238). The unification of the material culture is thought to have been completed by early Naqada III, but this does not mean political unification was achieved at the same time.<sup>14</sup>

Two basic questions with respect to political unification are: (1) To what extent did it involve military activity? and (2) when did it occur, or, more precisely, when was it completed? The Narmer Palette seemed to answer both questions: it was a military operation that was completed by Narmer. The military assumption was well expressed by Aldred (1980: 31): “The union of these ‘Two Lands’ for the first time was probably effected very much in the same manner as subsequent reunions in twentieth, sixteenth and eighth centuries BC—an aggressive king from the harsher more unified South defeated the local rulers of the North and made himself master of the entire country.”

The problem with this view is that only one of the sites excavated in Lower Egypt may show a destruction layer<sup>15</sup>, and there is little evidence of physical violence in the graves of this period. In view of this and of the apparently gradual nature of the material culture unification, a number of scholars have concluded that the political unification was achieved without major conflict (e.g., Wildung 1984: 269; Hartung 2008: 485; Köhler 2011: 123). There is nevertheless evidence for a violent component of the unification. Predynastic iconography is filled with images of conflict, war, and its aftermath (Campaño 2004: 689-690; Hendrickx & Eyckerman 2010). This is further emphasized by the collection of maceheads found at Hierakonpolis. Probably dating to the late Predynastic period, it includes the four great, decorated maceheads, and 241 smaller maceheads (Bussman 2010: 54-57, 427). While the excavation of Ma’adi in Lower Egypt does not show a destruction layer, there is evidence of

14. Based on excavations at Minshat Abu Omar among other sites, Köhler (2008) rejects the concept of a cultural unification in which the Naqada culture replaced the culture of Lower Egypt. Instead she argues that “...the regions of Egypt developed gradually, organically and from within, each depending on its geographic and ecological settings... This ease of access to neighbors [via the Nile River] allowed for trade, communication, exogamy, and the diffusion of ideas and technologies, which explains why some material aspects are so uniform” (Köhler 2008: 532). Buechez & Midant-Reynes (2011) counter this with a discussion of the dramatic changes in burial practices in Lower Egypt, a cultural aspect most resistant to change, among other features at the time of the cultural unification.

15. For a possible destruction layer at Tell el-Farkha, see Ciałowicz 2011b: 57.

a sudden abandonment of the site in Naqada IIC, which may suggest military activity.<sup>16</sup> According to Carneiro (2012:14) “autonomous political units, be they tiny hamlets or huge empires, never willingly surrender their sovereignty. They must be compelled to do so. To be sure, it is true that while the surmounting of political autonomy was generally achieved by military means, cases are on record in which a large and powerful state, confronting a smaller, weaker one, found *intimidation* sufficient to achieve its expansionist goals.” Altogether this evidence, and the inherent implausibility of the political elites of Lower Egypt allowing themselves to be ruled by the king of Upper Egypt without any military resistance, leads us to the conclusion that military conflict and intimidation were important parts of the process of political unification (Baines 1995: 102; Kemp 1995: 685-686; Campagno 2004:700).

When the Narmer Palette (Figs. 4 and 5) was discovered at Hierakonpolis in 1898 (Quibell 1898: 81-84, pl. XII-XIII; 1900: 10, pl. XXIX), it was considered a historical document showing the defeat of Lower Egypt by Narmer and the unification of Egypt.<sup>17</sup> More recently, however, it was often been viewed as purely symbolic,<sup>18</sup> and to see it as representing a historical event has been considered “old fashioned” (Wilkinson 1999: 68). However, the discovery by Günter Dreyer in 1993 of a year label of Narmer (Dreyer et al. 1998: 138) depicting the same event as that on the Narmer Palette clearly indicates that both documents refer to an actual event (Dreyer et al. 1998: 138-139, fig. 29; Dreyer 2000).<sup>19</sup> This means it did not have a solely symbolic meaning, but that does not necessarily mean that the event depicted was meant to represent the unification.

The verso of the Narmer Palette (**Fig. 4**) is dominated by the image of Narmer wearing the white crown of Upper Egypt in the classic pose of “smiting the enemy.” The prisoner he is about to smite kneels almost naked in front of him. To the right of the prisoner’s head are two hieroglyphs, a harpoon and a lake, which have been read as the place name of the Harpoon Nome (Schott 1950: 22; Vandier 1952: 596; Gaballa 1976: 16; Midant-Reynes 2000: 243), the north-west-most Nome of the Delta, adjacent to Libya (Helck 1974: 207, map 4). Alternatively, the phonetic values of the hieroglyphs have been understood as a personal name, “Washi” (Gardiner 1957: 7; Kaiser 1964: 90; Dreyer 2005: 254). Facing the king, above the prisoner, is the falcon god Horus, who holds a rope that passes through the nose of a human head. The head is attached to the “land” hieroglyph from which six papyrus plants grow. The usual interpretation of this scene is that Horus delivers the land of the papyrus (i.e., the Delta) to the king. Jiménez Serrano (2002: 82) reads it as “Victory over the papyrus people.”

16. Rizkana & Seeher 1989: 83-85.

17. Already by Quibell (1898: 82) and afterwards for example by Hayes (1953: 31); Emery (1961: 41-43) and Gardiner (1961: 403-404). Later proponents of a historical interpretation include among others Gaballa (1976: 17); Aldred (1980: 35); Helck (1982: 349) and Redford (1986: 133). Recent authors basing their historical interpretation on the Narmer year label include Davies & Friedman (1998: 35); Dreyer et al. (1998: 139, 166); Logan (1999: 270) and Hendrickx & Förster (2010: 841).

18. Schulman 1991-1992: 85; Baines 1995: 117-118; Köhler 2002: 505; O’Connor 2002: 6; 2011; Raffaele 2003: 99 and Wengrow 2006: 204.

19. This is presently accepted by a substantial majority of the scholars (e.g. Davies & Friedman 1998: 35; Baud 1999: 113; Logan 1999: 270; Wilkinson 1999: 68; Jiménez Serrano 2002: 82; Hendrickx & Förster 2010: 841). However, contra O’Connor 2002: 6; Wengrow 2006: 204; Baines 2008: 23.

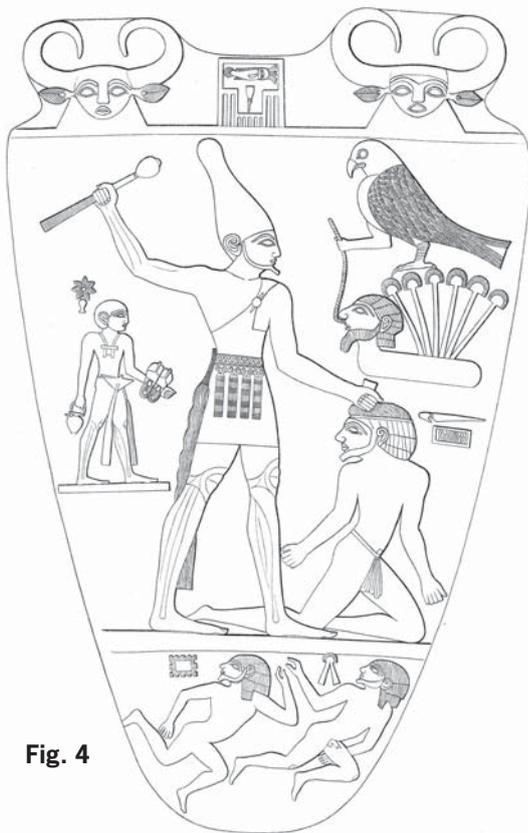


Fig. 4

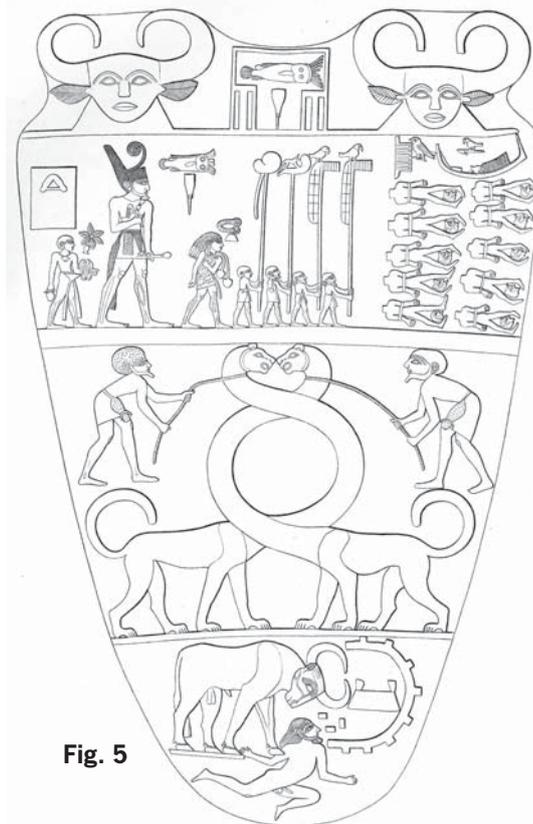


Fig. 5

Fig. 4

The Narmer Palette, verso, Hierakonpolis (Quibell 1898: Tf. XIII).

Fig. 5

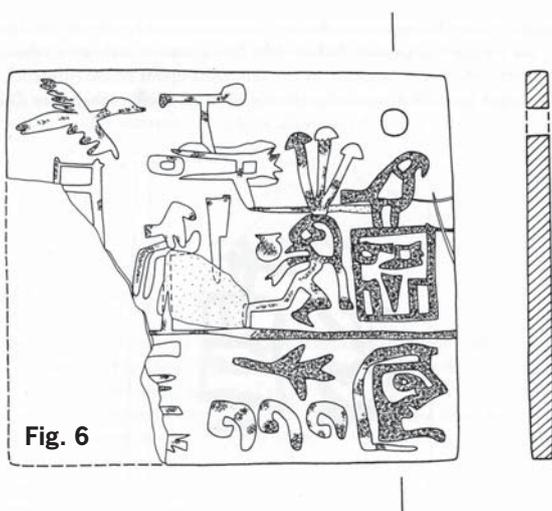
The Narmer Palette, recto, Hierakonpolis (Quibell 1898: Tf. XII).

On the recto of the Palette (Fig. 5), in the first register, Narmer is shown wearing the red crown of Lower Egypt marching in a procession to two rows of decapitated prisoners, above which are four symbols: a door, a *wr*-bird, a boat with upturned ends, and a falcon on a harpoon. There are a number of differing interpretations of these symbols,<sup>20</sup> but they all involve some combination of the Harpoon Nome, Lake Mareotis (which is in the Harpoon Nome) and/or Buto, which is in the Nome next to the Harpoon Nome. Regardless, they all refer to the west Delta.

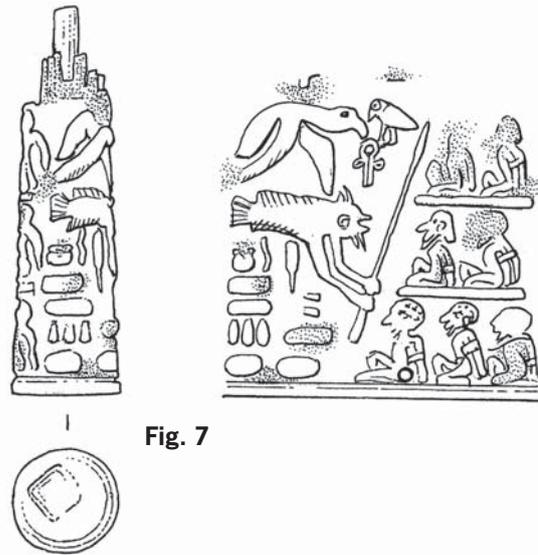
On the Narmer year label (Fig. 6), the event represented designates the most significant event of the year, making it the earliest year label found in Egypt (Dreyer 2000; 2005: 255).<sup>21</sup> On the upper right side is Narmer's name in a *serekh*. The year event is indicated to the left of the *serekh* by means of a catfish (king Narmer) with arms, one of which swings a mace while the other clutches a fallen enemy by a clump of papyrus growing out of his head. Below the catfish is a chisel, completing the name of Narmer. The fallen enemy is determined by the *nw*-pot hieroglyph, similar to the one on the Narmer Cylinder (Fig. 7). The

20. According to Schott (1950: 23) and Kaiser (1964: 90), they mean the "Great Gate of Horus the Harpooner (of Buto)" while Gaballa (1976: 17) reads them as "the 'Great Door' at Buto". Midant-Reynes (2000: 246), suggests "great gate of Horus the harpooner," which she says may represent Buto. Dreyer (2005: 254) interprets it as "The Grand Gate of the Harpooning Horus". Finally, Helck (1982: 349, n.4) interprets it as a reference to (Lake) Mareotis.

21. Baud (1999: 116), describes the Narmer label as a "factual", but not an "annual" label. However since it also records a shipment of oil in its bottom register like most year labels, it is hard to imagine its purpose other than to mark the date this oil was received.



**Fig. 6**  
The Narmer year label, Cemetery B, Abydos (Dreyer et al. 1998: 139, Abb. 29; courtesy of the DAIK).



**Fig. 7**  
The Narmer cylinder, Main Deposit, Hierakonpolis (Whitehouse 2002: 434, fig.4; courtesy of the DAIK).

*nw*-pot sign can be read as a phonetic complement for *ṯhn.w* (Libya), while the papyrus plant on the head of the enemy shows that he represents the Delta<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, the year event on the label is “the smiting of the *ṯhn.w* papyrus people” which corresponds to the people of the west Delta referred to on the Narmer Palette (Dreyer 2005: 255).

The Narmer Cylinder (Fig. 7), found at Hierakonpolis (Quibell 1900: 7, pl. XV; Whitehouse 2002: 434, fig. 4) shows Narmer in the form of a catfish with human arms, smiting three registers of bound prisoners who are identified as Libyans (*ṯhn.w*). As on the Narmer year label, a chisel below the catfish completes the king’s name.

On the respective sides of his palette, Narmer is the first king known to be represented wearing the crowns of both Upper and Lower Egypt.<sup>23</sup> This changes the report of simply a military victory into a claim of completing the unification and becoming the first king of a united Egypt.

This historical interpretation is strengthened by the importance Narmer put on the event. We know he considered it an important event because of the impressiveness of the Narmer Palette, because he named a year after it, and because at least two other important objects of his reign were devoted to it: the ivory cylinder (Fig. 7) and the inlaid box of which fragments were found in the area of Narmer’s tomb at Abydos (Dreyer et al. 2003: 86-88; Dreyer 2005: 255-

22. Morenz (2002: 84-85) agrees that the defeated enemy represents the “Papyrus Land” but is not convinced that the presence of the *nw*-pot indicates the word for Libyan.

23. Arkell (1963) argues in favor of Scorpion of the Scorpion Macehead being the first king to wear both the white and red crowns. This is based on the fact that the Scorpion Macehead shows the king wearing the crown of Upper Egypt, while on the King’s Macehead (Adams 1974: 3, Plate 1&2), which Arkell attributes to Scorpion, a king wears the crown of Lower Egypt. However, his reconstruction should be rejected (e.g., Jiménez Serrano 2002: 51). It has also been argued by Gautier & Midant-Reynes (1995: 110) and Ciałowicz (2001: 198-200) that on the Scorpion Macehead there is another image of the king wearing the crown of Lower Egypt; however, both scholars’ findings are based entirely on hypothetical reconstructions, which differ in the location and context in which the red crown wearing king should be placed. Ciałowicz refers to Gautier and Midant-Reynes’ reconstruction as “pure fantasy,” but he provides no greater proof for his theory than theirs.

257, fig. 4a-h) (**Fig. 8**). In addition, the Narmer Macehead probably refers to the event's aftermath (**Fig. 9**).<sup>24</sup> There is no other example in the Early Dynastic period of an event being given this level of importance. The two statues of Khasekhem and the large stone vessels from Hierakonpolis come the closest (Quibell 1900: pls. XXX-VI-XL),<sup>25</sup> and these in fact seem to have been modeled on Narmer's documents.

## Unification: The red crown and white crown

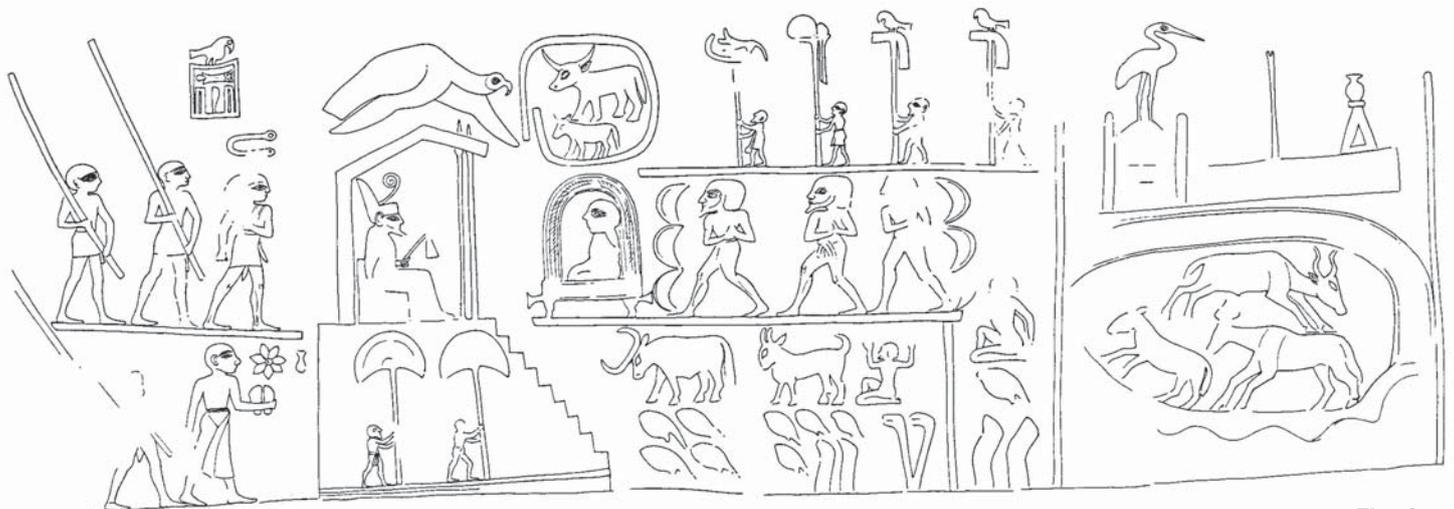
To some extent, Narmer was considered the first king of a unified Egypt because he said he was, and the propaganda aspect of the Narmer Palette should not be underestimated. However, the Palette as a report of unification rests on the crowns Narmer is shown wearing. Their value in this respect has recently been questioned by Kahl (2007) following his study of the titles *nsw* and *bity*.

According to Kahl: "the division of the country into two parts already observed in royal theology and ruling politics of the Predynastic period must have had an ideological foundation" (Kahl 2007: 12). Hence the white and red crowns, at the time of the Narmer Palette,



**Fig. 8**

Inlay fragments from box of Narmer (Dreyer 2005: 257, Fig. 4a-h; courtesy of Günter Dreyer).



**Fig. 9**

Narmer Macehead (Bard 1992: 298, fig. 1; courtesy of Oxbow Books).

24. The Narmer Macehead was discovered in Hierakonpolis in 1898 (Quibell 1900: 8-9, pl. XXV, XXVIB). The Macehead shows three captives being presented to the king who wears a red crown. The caption refers to 120,000 captives, 400,000 cattle, and 1,422,000 goats. The ceremony appears to take place in Buto, located in the west Delta. The location of Buto is indicated by a shrine with a heron on it (Wilkinson 1999: 69; Hendrickx 2001: 95). Helck (1968: 23, n.1) describes the scene as a celebration, in Buto, of the victory represented on the Narmer Palette. Schott (1950: 22) describes it as a celebration of a victory over Buto. It has also been interpreted as a *sed*-festival by Vandier (1952: 602-605) and Jiménez Serrano (2002: 52-53). Millet (1990: 58), interprets the scene as a giant year label reading: "Year of the Festival of Appearance of the King of Lower Egypt; (First Occasion of) Counting." See Jiménez Serrano (2002: 52) for a summary of other interpretations.

25. On the stone vessels and statues, the enemies are shown as vanquished human figures with papyrus plants growing from the tops of their heads (indicating the Delta) and are identified as "rebels". (Wilkinson 1999: 91-92; McNamara 2011).



**Fig. 10**

A tax document of Iry-Hor, Tomb B2, Abydos (Kaiser & Dreyer 1982: 234, Abb. 10d; courtesy of the DAIK).

do not represent Upper and Lower Egypt but have purely ideological meaning (Kahl 2007: 24).<sup>26</sup>

But this is a *non sequitur*. Upper and Lower Egypt have obvious geographic and ecological identities that are independent of political structure. Friedman (2003b: 57) emphasizes the cultural differences: “In the Delta of Lower Egypt, different influences and different climate conditions led to the creation of a culture with distinct pottery, architecture and beliefs suggesting that the ancient conception of Egypt as the ‘Two Lands’ was based on more than geography and a love of symmetry.” Buchez and Midant-Reynes (2011) discuss in detail differences between Lower Egyptian and Naqadan pottery and burial practices during the Naqada II period, and come to the same conclusion.

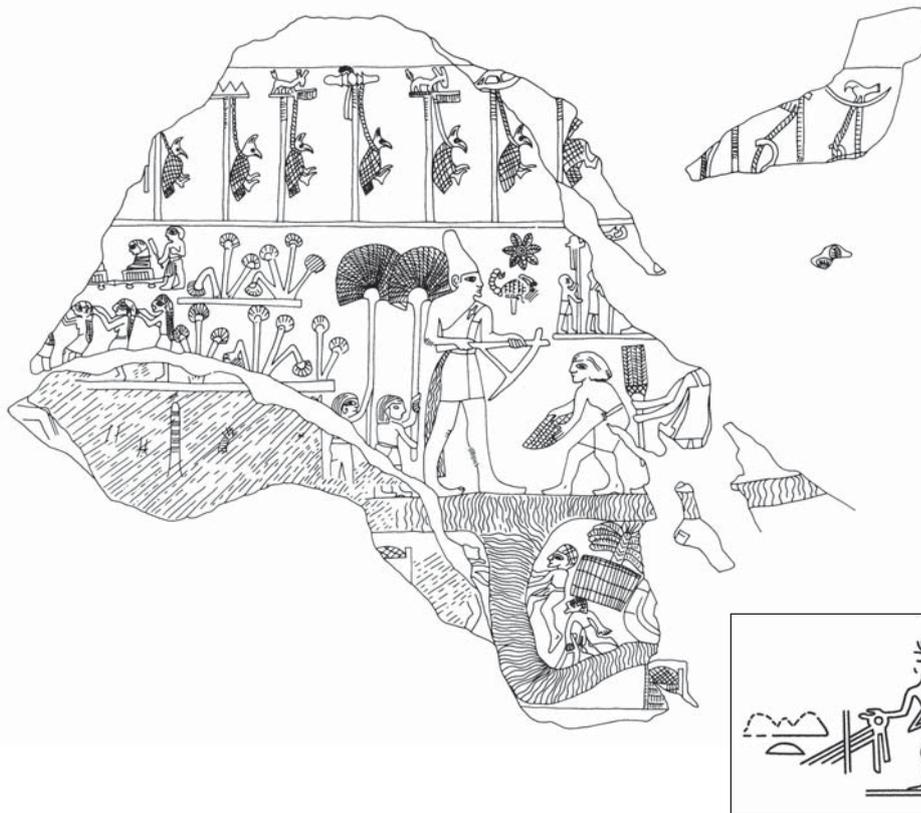
Kahl (2007) treats symbolic and geographic meanings as mutually exclusive, but there is no reason a given symbol cannot have both. The tax documents of Iry-Hor, Ka, and Narmer show specific references to taxes from Upper and Lower Egypt (Fig. 10).<sup>27</sup> Kahl (2007: 13) argues that the references on these documents to Upper and Lower Egypt have a ritual rather than a geographic meaning “because Upper and Lower Egypt, as useful administrative units would have proved too vague...” This seems inconsistent with a statement in the same article that Memphis was at the “exact” interface of Upper and Lower Egypt (Kahl 2007: 15). Even if Upper and Lower Egypt were not administrative units, those geographic designations could have been used to indicate the origin of goods used to pay taxes. This requires only that the geographic designation was considered significant. The possibility of additional meaning in rituals does not change that.

Kahl (2008: 343) argues further that since the red crown (like the white crown) is first attested in Upper Egypt (i.e., on the sherd from Naqada grave 1610 (Payne 1993: cat. no. 774), neither crown could have had geographic significance in the Predynastic period. Kahl goes on to say that the crowns need not have had a geographic significance in the Early Dynastic period either, and that on the Narmer Palette in particular they need not have referred to Upper and Lower Egypt. Instead, Kahl assigns ideological meaning to the crowns based on the meanings he attributes to the titles *nsw* and *bity*: he says the white crown refers to the martial activities of the king, and red crown refers to the king’s collecting and accumulating activities. This interpretation seems to work for the Narmer Palette, but not for other documents of this period.

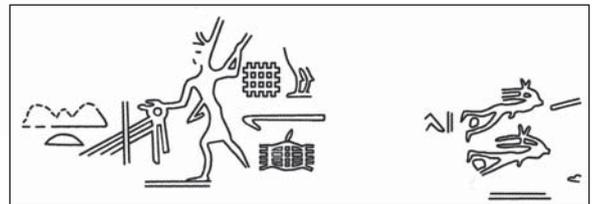
The Scorpion Macehead shows the king opening a canal, clearly not a martial activity although he is shown wearing the white crown (Fig. 11) (Quibell 1900: 8-10, pl. XXV, XXVIC; Whitehouse 2009: 19-25). On a seal of Den found in Abydos (Fig. 12), the king is shown slaying enemies the way he would harpoon a hippopotamus—clearly a martial act, but he is shown wearing the red crown (Müller 2008: 480, fig. 3). These examples suggest that Kahl’s interpretation of the meaning of the white and red crowns does not hold up. Nevertheless, the failure of Kahl’s ideological interpretation does not demonstrate that the crowns had a geographic meaning.

26. Menu (1997: 34) also attributes a symbolic meaning to the two crowns. She associates ritual scenes with the red crown and dynamic or violent scenes to the white crown. But she also says that starting with the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (after Narmer) the crowns also carried the traditional geographic significance.

27. Kahl only lists a tax document for Iry-Hor for Lower Egypt, but one for Upper Egypt has also been found, cf. Dreyer et al. (1993: 56, fig. 12).



**Fig. 11**  
Scorpion Macehead (Quibell  
1900: 9-10, pl. XXVIC).



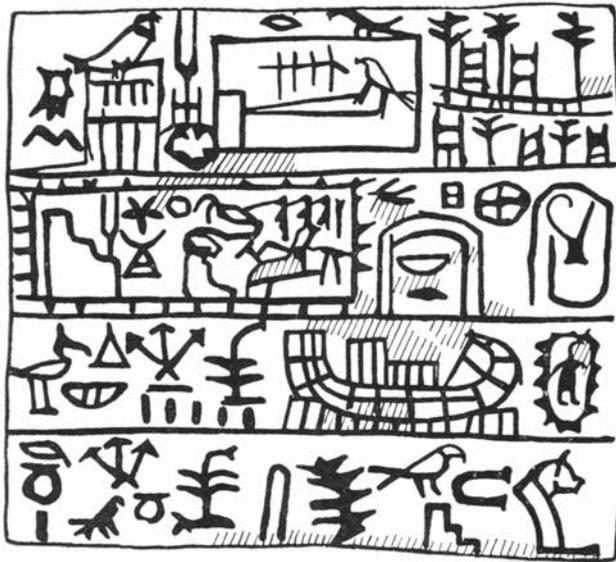
**Fig. 12**  
Den sealing  
(Müller 2008: 480,  
Abb.3; courtesy  
of Vera Müller).

The likely scenario for how the white crown evolved to become the crown of Upper Egypt is straightforward. Two of the three late Predynastic attestations of the white crown whose locations are known (Qustul and Nag el-Hamdulab) are from south of Hierakonpolis and can be associated with this early power center (Wilkinson 1999: 194, 285; Friedman 2003: 59; Hendrickx et al. 2012). The third, the Scorpion Macehead, was found in Hierakonpolis.<sup>28</sup> Although Hierakonpolis was not the winner of the struggle to lead Upper Egypt, it was not the loser either (Wilkinson 2000: 393; Hendrickx & Friedman 2003). Indications of Hierakonpolis' importance include the adoption of the god Horus of Nekhen as the patron god of kingship and the quantity and nature of the objects buried in the Main Deposit (Wilkinson 2000: 393; McNamara 2008; Hendrickx et al 2011). It would be natural, therefore, for the white crown to represent the kingship of Upper Egypt.<sup>29</sup>

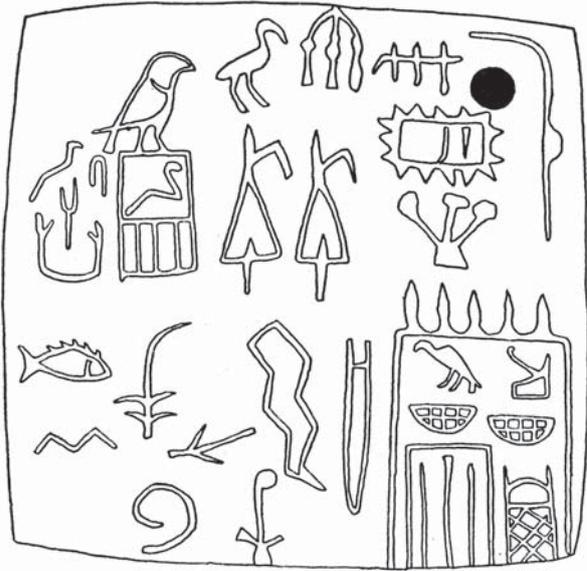
Two labels, of Djer and Djet, respectively, show that in their reigns the red crown represented Lower Egypt. The first is from Abydos and shows a trip by Djer to Buto to visit a shrine of the red crown (Amélineau 1904: pl. XV.19) (**Fig. 13**). The second is a label of Djet from Saqqara (Emery 1954: 102, fig. 105, pl. XXXVb) (**Fig. 14**). In the lower right corner is a rectangular structure topped with a *khekher* frieze. Within it are two shrines, above one is the vulture Nekhbet, above the other, in the place of the cobra of Wadjet is the red crown,

28. Quibell 1900: 9-10, pl. XXVIC.

29. Although none can be tightly dated, several ivory figurines from the Hierakonpolis Main Deposit also bear the white crown (Quibell 1900: pls. VII-VIII), as apparently does the seated figure on the Hierakonpolis Knife Handle, whose iconography suggests a date in the early Naqada III period (Whitehouse 2002).



**Fig. 13**  
The Djer label from Abydos (Emery 1961: 59, fig. 20; courtesy of Penguin)



**Fig. 14**  
The Djet label, Tomb S3504, Saqqara (Emery 1954: 102, fig. 105; courtesy of EES).

thus identifying the red crown with the patron goddess of Lower Egypt. In addition, the shrine it labels is a clear image of the *pr-nw*, the shrine of Buto, again associating the red crown with a symbol of Lower Egypt (Cervelló-Autuori 2005: 45). It is significant that the Narmer Palette is the first document in Egypt’s history to show the king wearing both the white and red crowns. The Narmer Palette, the Narmer Macehead, and the King’s Macehead are in fact the first documents in Egyptian history showing the red crown actually being worn at all. The enormous gap in time (400-500 years), between these documents and the first appearance of the “red crown” modeled in relief on the Naqada sherd<sup>29</sup> coupled with the fact that on the sherd it is shown in isolation, suggest that it may not be a red crown at all on the sherd, but bears a resemblance only by coincidence, or that it depicts something not yet identified, that later turned into the red crown.

The iconography of unification was established during and immediately prior to the reign of Narmer (Kemp 2006: 92-93; Hendrickx & Förster 2010). The Narmer Palette is the outstanding example of it, and so are the Narmer Macehead and the King’s Macehead. In keeping with the important principle of dualism, if there were a crown for the king in his capacity as king of Upper Egypt (the white crown), there had to be a crown for the king in his capacity as king of Lower Egypt. If none existed, it would have to be invented. It is possible that this is the way the red crown became associated with Lower Egypt, not through a long tradition, but by an expeditious decision<sup>30</sup>.

29. The estimate of 400-500 years between the documents of Narmer and Scorpion in Naqada III C1 and the Naqada sherd dated to Naqada IIA is based on Hendrickx (2006: 92, table II.1.7). Two petroglyphs from Wadi Qash have been described as showing a figure wearing a red crown, e.g., by Midant-Reynes (2000: 182-183, fig. 8B), and Wilkinson (2003: 80, figs. 23 and 24), based on the chalked photographs of Winkler (1938: pls. XIII.2 and XIV.2). However re-examination of both examples show that neither have the necessary features. Color photographs provided by Renée Friedman show that the apparent appendage to the “crown” of the figure in Winkler pl. XIV.2 is actually a crack in the rock. In the case of the figure in Winkler pl. XIII.2, the appendage to the “crown” curls in the wrong direction and is out of proportion (too large) to the rest of the “crown.” It may also be a crack rather than actually part of the petroglyph.

30. Frankfort 1948: 20.

In conclusion, the evidence supports the traditional interpretation that the white and red crowns on the Narmer Palette represent Upper and Lower Egypt, and that jointly they represent the unification of Egypt under Narmer.

## Unification

Despite the evidence of the Narmer Palette, three theories have been proposed that Egypt was politically unified before Narmer. The first holds that Egypt was unified under Ka and Iry-Hor (Ka's predecessor), the evidence being jars of Iry-Hor and Ka with the inscription "taxes from Lower Egypt" and "taxes from Upper Egypt" (Dreyer et al. 1993: 56; Kahl 1994: 99-104) (**Fig. 10**). Kaiser and Dreyer (1982: 260) conclude that according to their own documents, late Predynastic rulers such as Ka (and by implication, Iry-Hor) ruled over the whole of Egypt. For Ka there is additional evidence in the presence of his *serekhs* in Lower Egypt at Tell Ibrahim Awad and Kafr Hassan Daoud, both in the eastern Delta, and in Helwan near Memphis.<sup>31</sup> Ka is also attested in Tel Lod in south Canaan.<sup>32</sup> Iry-Hor is attested in Lower Egypt at Zawiyet el-Aryan north of Saqqara and at Tell el-Farkha in the eastern Delta.<sup>33</sup> He is also attested in Tel Lod in south Canaan.<sup>34</sup> The use of "Lower Egypt" for administrative purposes in the documents of Iry-Hor and Ka does not mean that those kings controlled the entirety of Lower Egypt, only that they had a presence in Lower Egypt, and controlled enough of it to make the distinction between Upper and Lower Egypt useful in the recording of the receipt of taxes.

While Iry-Hor is attested in two locations in Lower Egypt, and Ka is attested in three, Narmer, by contrast, is attested in seven sites in Lower Egypt<sup>35</sup> and in six locations in southern Canaan.<sup>36</sup> This suggests a change from mere presence during the reigns of Iry-Hor and Ka to possible dominance during Narmer's. The wide attestation of Narmer in the southern Canaan is almost certainly related to his presence in Lower Egypt. According to Levy et. al. (1995: 26) "Narmer's expansion into Canaan appears to have been predicated upon his establishment of hegemony over the Delta region." He could not have ventured so far east of the Nile until its northern part was secured. It is also of importance to note that the Egyptian presence in southern Canaan was a highly structured enterprise, resulting in a tiered organization of which the fortified settlement at Tell es-Sakan seems to have been the focal point (Miroschedji 2002; Braun & van den Brink 2008). Such a structure can only be elaborated under the direct control of the Egyptian court and considering the number of Narmer *serekhs* found in southern Canaan, this level of control must have culminated in his reign. Again, this confirms the critical moment the reign of Narmer must have represented in the eyes of his contemporaries and in Egyptian tradition<sup>36</sup>.

31. Jiménez Serrano 2007: 370, table 8.

32. Jiménez Serrano 2007: 370, table 8.

33. Jiménez Serrano 2007: 369, table 7. For the name of Iry-Hor from Tell el-Farkha see Ciałowicz 2011b: 63-64, fig. 6.15.

34. van den Brink 2001: 78, Group 14.

35. Jiménez Serrano (2007: 372-373, table 9) shows Narmer's *serekh* at six sites, and Bakr et. al. (1996: 278) report a Narmer *serekh* at Kafr Hassan Dawood.

36. Jiménez Serrano 2007: 372-373, table 9.

36. According to Manetho, Dynasty I.1, Fr. 7a, "He (Menes) made a foreign expedition and won renown."

If we accept the theory, discussed earlier, of a gradual unification process, then the presence or even domination by Iry-Hor and Ka of the East Delta and the region that would later become Memphis is consistent with a scenario in which Narmer completed the unification by conquering the West Delta, as shown on the Narmer Palette<sup>37</sup>. There is also other evidence that Iry-Hor and Ka were not rulers of a united Egypt in the form of two *serekhs* of a “Horus Crocodile” found in Tarkhan in Lower Egypt (Dreyer 1992: 259-260).<sup>38</sup> This ruler is not attested in Abydos, nor is there space among the double-chambered tombs for him in Abydos. According to Dreyer (1992: 260), he was a contemporary of Iry-Hor or Ka and ruled a portion of Lower Egypt as a competing ruler and/or usurper to the Abydene rulers. Other *serekhs* have also been found in Lower Egypt with names of non-Abydene “kings,” including Ny-Hor and Hat-Hor, who may represent rivals to the Thinite line (Kaiser & Dreyer 1982: 264-268; van den Brink 2001: 37-42; Kahl 2001: 105-106)<sup>39</sup>. How these data are to be reconciled with the first register of the Cairo fragment of the Palermo Stone, which contains determinatives for the kings of Upper and Lower Egypt (a seated man wearing the double crown) (Wilkinson 2000b: 183), remains problematic.

In 1961, Kaiser proposed a theory of unification in Predynastic times based on a reconstruction of the Palermo Stone similar to that already made by Breasted (1931: 719-720). According to Kaiser, the references on the Palermo Stone, the Turin Canon and Manetho to Predynastic kings and semi-divine rulers are all variants of the same historical tradition extending back far before Menes (Kaiser 1961: 39ff). His analysis of the Tura cemetery, showing the dominance of Upper Egyptian material culture 100-150 years before the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (Kaiser 1964: 108-125; Needler 1984: 30-31), led him to suggest that the Narmer Palette recorded not the unification of Egypt, but its reunification. However this theory was based on the assumption that cultural unification meant political unification. Since that time he has refined a model of gradual transformations in time and space beginning in Naqada IIC, which can be characterized as migrationist, attributing each change in material culture to population movement and colonization (Kaiser 1990; 1995; Buchez & Midant-Reynes 2011). The question of people movement and colonization of the Delta is still under debate (see Buchez & Midant-Reynes 2011; Mączyńska 2011). Except for the ambiguous documents discussed earlier for Iry-Hor and Ka, there is no contemporary evidence for a ruler of a fully united Egypt before Narmer. The Palermo Stone undoubtedly records a tradition of some kind, but in the absence of relevant archaeological evidence, it is difficult to understand what<sup>40</sup>. In conclusion, although Narmer did not unify Egypt in the sense formerly thought, there is strong evidence that he completed the last stage of the unification by conquering the west Delta and claimed for himself in very prominent ways the symbolic role of unifier of Egypt. This is the same role attributed to Menes, which suggests that they were the same person.

37. Based on evidence from Tell el-Farkha, Ciałowicz (2011b: 64) suggests that Egypt was a single state “long before Narmer’s accession to the throne.” While Tell el-Farkha may have been incorporated into the Naqada political entity before Narmer’s reign, it does not mean that the entire Delta was.

38. MacArthur (2010: 92) proposed reading the name “Trussed Goose” (the “Dreaded One”).

39. Helck (1987: 90) questioned the names Ny-Hor and Hat-Hor, suggesting that they are versions of Narmer’s name. van den Brink (1996: 150-154, Table 5) analyzed vessels with early inscriptions and concluded that those attributed to Ny-Hor and Hat-Hor were earlier than those unambiguously attributed to Narmer.

40. Wilkinson (2000b: 62) refers to Kaiser’s Predynastic kings as “mythical.”

## Memphis

According to Herodotus (II.99) and tradition, Memphis was founded by Menes. There is no direct archaeological evidence for the early history of Memphis. The available, indirect evidence, however, suggests that Memphis was founded before Menes (whether Narmer or Aha) and that the capital (the residence) moved there subsequently. The primary source of this is the cemetery at Helwan, which was one of the two cemeteries of Memphis (the other being North Saqqara). It was located directly across the Nile from Memphis and contained graves whose owners ranged in status from common people to a prince and two princesses (Wilkinson 1996: 349). According to Köhler (2004: 307-310), the site was in use in Naqada IIIA (before Iry-Hor) and its occupants included relatively wealthy individuals—which leads to new questions about the rise of Memphis as an administrative center. Cylinder sealings with anonymous *serekhs* dating to Naqada IIIA/B show there was a high court official performing administrative functions in Memphis well before Ka (Köhler 2004:307). But this does not necessarily mean a united Egypt, for the anonymous *serekhs* could refer to any ruler of Upper or Lower Egypt. The first Abydene king attested at Helwan is Ka, for whom two graves containing jars with his *serekhs* inscribed on them were found (van den Brink 2001: 52-54).

Wilkinson (1999: 339) dates the settlement even earlier—to late Naqada II. He suggests that Helwan may have started out a provincial cemetery and been co-opted by Memphis when that city was founded. If that were the case, it would substantially reduce the value of the cemetery in dating the foundation of Memphis. Alternatively, Wilkinson (1996: 347-348) suggests that the graves that pre-date Narmer may represent burials of those who built the first city of Memphis: “Rather than founding Memphis, Menes/Narmer may simply have been the first king to have his residence there.”

Narmer is attested at Helwan but not Saqqara, where the highest elite were buried.<sup>41</sup> Aha was the first king under whose rule a monumental mastaba was built in North Saqqara (S3357) for one of his officials (Emery 1939; Hendrickx 2008: 72-73). Dreyer (2007: 228) agrees that Aha did not found Memphis, but argues that he transferred the residence there. It is possible that the myth of founding Memphis is really based on moving the political capital to the city.

Assuming a gradual unification of Egypt, with the last stage being the conquest of the northwestern Delta by Narmer, there is every reason to believe that the Memphite area was conquered before Narmer, and that the strategic value of the location was realized and acted upon. This logic is consistent with the evidence from the Helwan cemetery. Narmer’s role in this process, however, is unclear. It is possible that as with the unification, he did not begin the construction of Memphis, but completed it. Based on the evidence of the Saqqara mastabas, it is likely that Aha moved the residence to Memphis.

According to Manetho (Dynasty I.2: Fr. 6; Fr. 7a; Fr. 7b), the second king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty was Athothis, who built a palace in Memphis. This might be equivalent to moving the capital to Memphis, which would mean Aha was Athothis, and Narmer was Menes. However, our inability to assign the “founding” of Memphis to any one king leaves this an event that does not strongly support either Narmer or Aha as Menes.

41. Jiménez Serrano 2007: 372-373, table 9. Although a stone vessel inscribed with Narmer’s name was found buried underneath the Step Pyramid in Saqqara as part of an heirloom collection (Regulski 2011: 696-697), this has no bearing on Narmer’s presence in the Memphite region during his reign.

## The Naqada label

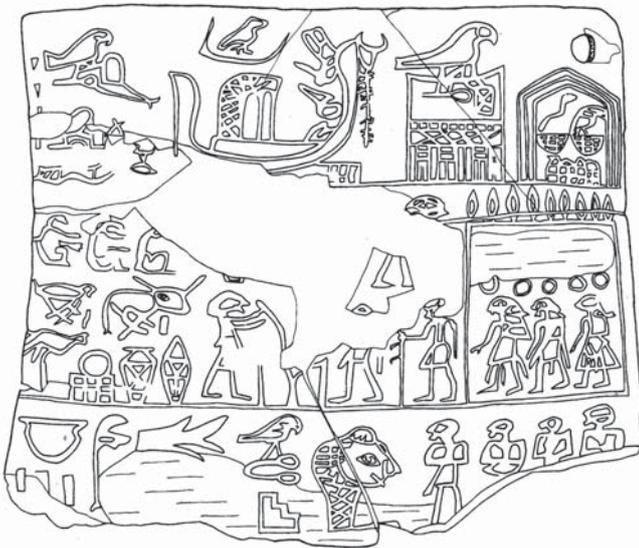
An important recent discovery (Tallet & Laisney 2012: 385-387) in Southern Sinai suggests a third possibility for the founder of Memphis, Iry-Hor. The authors found a rock inscription which includes the name Iry-Hor below two symbols that they interpret as *inb hd*, “White Walls”, or Memphis. Unfortunately the symbol for “walls” is incomplete – one side is missing, and there is no indication that this is due to abrasion. Moreover, Iry-Hor is not attested at the site of Helwan, which lies just across the Nile River from the site of Memphis. Consequently, although the inscription is intriguing, its interpretation is unclear.

The famous Naqada label was discovered in the great mastaba tomb at Naqada by Jacques de Morgan in 1896 (Fig. 15).<sup>42</sup> The tomb was originally thought to be that of Menes and is often still referred to as the “Tomb of Menes”, but it has since been attributed to Neith-Hotep (Wilkinson 1999: 70). The year after its discovery, Borchardt (1897) wrote an article arguing that the label showed that Aha was Menes. In the top register, on the right, is a triple enclosure with a triangular roof. Inside are a vulture and a snake, each sitting on a basket, assumed to represent the *nbty*, or “Two Ladies,” the goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet. Below them is a low rectangular sign divided into two rows, each row containing six squares. The rectangle is topped by alternating triangles and rounded protrusions. To the left of the triple structure is the Horus name of Aha in a *serekh*. And again to the left of this are two Horus names of Aha, but not in *serekhs*.

Borchardt (1897: 1056-1057) interpreted the symbols in the triple enclosure as being the *nbty* name of king Mn or Menes. Since it was next to the Horus name Aha, he concluded they were the same person; hence Aha was Menes. This interpretation was followed by Emery (1961: 37). The problem is the triple enclosure itself, which Grdseloff (1944: 281-282) argued represents a funeral shrine. If the symbols in the enclosure are the *nbty* name of Menes, the image on the label must represent Aha burying his predecessor; hence Narmer was Menes. Edwards (1971: 14) regarded the theory that the enclosure represents a funeral booth as “more plausible,” and Cervelló-Autuori (2003: 50) has also described it as a funeral chapel. Kinnaer (2003: 26) argued against this theory on the basis that the *nbty* name is never used for a dead king.<sup>43</sup> Helck (1987: 152) and Dreyer (2007: 222) concluded that the enclosure is not a funeral tent in view of a similar sign on a label of Djer,<sup>44</sup> which is clearly not a funeral tent.

**Fig. 15**

A reconstruction of the Naqada Label based on parallel ivory and wood label fragments found at Naqada and Abydos (Kahl & Engel 2001: 12, Abb. 10; courtesy of Jochem Kahl).



42. The first four fragments of the tablet were found and published by de Morgan (1897: 165-167, fig. 549). During renewed excavations by Garstang (1905), an additional piece was found along with a fragment of another label with the same content. By combining the information from the fragments of both labels, he was able to reconstruct the appearance of the original labels (Garstang 1905: 61-64, fig. 1-2). The rendering of the label shown in Fig. 15 of this article has been further revised by Kahl & Engel (2001: fig. 10), especially the upper left side.

43. Against Kinnaer’s view is the fact that 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty tags with the *nbty* names of Semerkhet and Qa’a were found in their tombs, presumably crafted for the dead kings for inclusion in their burials; see Petrie 1900: 23, pl. XVII.26; Dreyer et al. 1996: 75.

44. Helck (1987: 152), cites two labels of Djer. The closest comparison is the one from Abydos (Scharff 1929: 171, fig. 92).

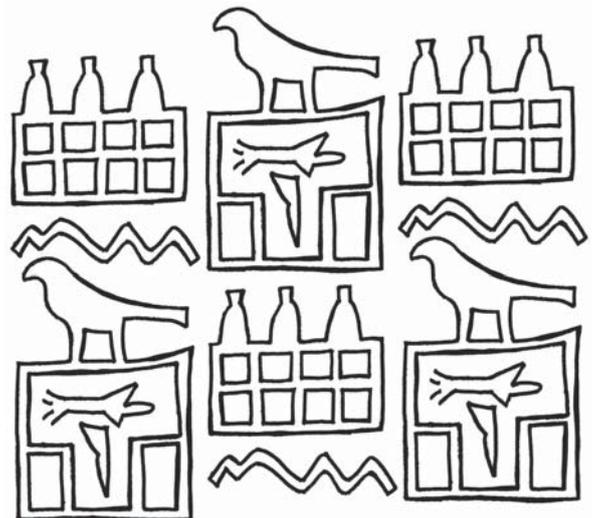
A more fundamental issue is whether *nbtj mn* is the *nbtj* name of a king or the name of the shrine (the triple enclosure). There are two arguments against it being a king's name. First, except for this example, a *nbtj* name is not attested until Semerkhet, the seventh king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (Kaplony 1980: 642; Wilkinson 1999: 203; Cervelló-Autuori 2003: 50-51).<sup>45</sup> To believe that Menes was the *nbtj* name of either Narmer or Aha is to believe that the title came into existence at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty and then fell into disuse during the reigns of the next four kings, only to reappear in the reign of Semerkhet. Second, the *nbtj* name on the Naqada label would be the only known example of a *nbtj* name written in a tent-like or chapel-like construction.

The most likely conclusion is that the triple enclosure is a shrine and that the symbols inside it represent the name of the shrine. Schott (1950: 113) came to this conclusion, translating the name as "The Two Ladies Endure." Helck (1953: 354-355), Wilkinson (1999: 203), Cervelló-Autuori (2005:45) and Dreyer (2007: 222) agree with this conclusion. While Kinnaer's specific interpretation differs from Schott's and those who followed him, he agrees on what is the main point for this paper: "We can indeed conclude that the Naqada label has no impact at all on the debate surrounding the existence and identity of Menes" (Kinnaer 2003: 30). This conclusion is now widely accepted (e.g., Dreyer 2007: 222; Kahl & Engel 2001:14).

## The Narmer/*Mn* seal impression

The Narmer/*Mn* seal impression, discovered in Abydos (Petrie 1901: 30, 51-52, pl. XIII.93) (Fig. 16) has played a major role in the Menes debate. It is sometimes referred to as a "prince's seal", but that name presupposes the outcome of the inquiry. The Narmer/*Mn* seal impression shows the Horus name of Narmer in a *serekh* alternating with the *mn* and the *n* signs.<sup>46</sup>

Some early observers assumed that the seal meant Narmer was *Mn* (Menes) (Petrie 1923: 6; Newberry 1929: 46-50). Helck (1953: 356-359), on the other hand, proposed that *mn* is a prince's name and hence that Menes was Narmer's successor, Aha. Kaplony (1963: 486) and Dreyer (2007: 222-223) came to the same conclusion. This interpretation is based on an analysis of other seals of similar design of Aha, Djer, and Djet. By concluding that they all show the names of princes, these scholars surmise all royal seals of this type show the names of princes (hence the term "prince's" seals). Since the Narmer/*Mn* seal is of the same type, they conclude that the name *mn* on that seal is also a prince's name.



**Fig. 16**

A reconstruction of the Narmer/*Mn* seal (drawing by Elise MacArthur, after Gardiner 1961: 405, fig.13).

45. Note that the *nbtj* name as attested in the reign of Semerkhet occurs in conjunction with the *nsw-bity* name of the king (Wilkinson 1999: 203-204). *Nbtj* was not an independent title until the reign of Qa'a.

46. Unlike the Naqada label, the *mn*-sign (Y5) of the Narmer/*Mn* seal is accompanied by its phonetic complement, "n" (N35). This is consistent with how the name Meni is shown in the New Kingdom king lists and makes it more likely that it represents the name Menes although it is still missing the reed leaf (M17) for "j".

The first three seals considered by Helck show the *serekh* of Aha in combination with three different names (Helck 1953:356-359; Cervelló-Autuori 2005: 44). All three names have been found on other objects not combined with Aha's Horus name, and from this Helck suggests that they are the names of private persons, not Aha's personal name. He then concludes that only someone as important as a prince would merit mention on a seal next to the *serekh* of the king.

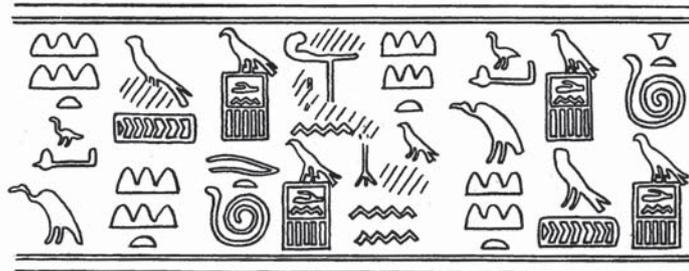
Helck then jumps from these observations on the Aha sealings to the conclusion that all names on such seals must be private names of individuals other than the king (Helck 1953: 357-358). This conclusion does not necessarily follow, and, in fact, is contradicted by two seals of Den.

The first Den sealing is from Saqqara (Emery 1958: 68-69, pl. 79.18) (Fig. 17) and shows his *nsw-bity*<sup>47</sup> name (without titulary) four times alternating with his *serekh*, along with god's names and other titles (Kaplony 1963: 1118, pl. 53, fig. 196; Cervelló-Autuori 2005: 43-44, fig. 11). The second Den seal is from Abu Rawash (Montet 1946: 205-213, tomb XII, pl. XIV; Kaplony 1963: 1117-1118, pl. 52, fig. 195; Cervelló-Autuori 2005: 44, fig. 11) and is almost identical to the first.

Cervelló-Autuori (2005: 42-45), upon examination of the seal impressions of Djer and Djet, concludes that, in addition to the seal impressions of Den, all pair the Horus name of the king with his personal name; hence the Narmer seal does the same thing. His conclusion is that Narmer was Menes. However, this conclusion seems no more definite than Helck's that Aha was Menes.

There are three seals of Aha with personal names, none of which can be identified as either the king's personal name or the name of his successor. The Djer and Djet seals may show the personal names of those kings, but given the similarity in names we cannot rule out the possibility that one or both actually show the name(s) of a prince.<sup>48</sup> Only the two Den sealings definitely show the king's personal name with his Horus name. In conclusion, the Narmer/*Mn* seal does not provide an answer to the question: Who was Menes?

**Fig. 17**  
Den sealing,  
Saqqara (Emery  
1958: pl. 79.18;  
courtesy of the  
EES).



47. Emery 1958: 68; von Beckerath 1999: 39. The fact that this is the Den's *nsw-bity* name is shown by the inscriptions on four stone vases from the Step Pyramid. The vases show a list, in order, of the *nsw-bity* names of differing numbers of kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, including Den, in each case with the *nsw-bity* title above the name (Cervelló-Autuori 2008: 889, n. 3-6). Six others show the name without the title (Cervelló-Autuori 2008: 889-890, n. 1-2,7-10). The *nsw-bity* name of Den shown on the Abydos King List and the Turin Canon differs from the form of the name shown on contemporary documents because of graphic deformation which might have been caused by hieratic signs poorly written and incorrectly read (Godron 1990: 19).

48. Kaplony (1963: 435-437, 533) interprets the Djer and Djet sealings as showing the personal names of the kings' successors.

## The Palermo Stone and its associated fragments

The Palermo Stone and its associated fragments, most prominently the Cairo Fragment, come from a much larger annals stone of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Clagett 1992: 47).<sup>49</sup> The original annals recorded the reigns of kings from before the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty to the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Wilkinson 2000b). The inscriptions are arranged in a series of rectangular compartments, each compartment (starting within the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty) representing a single year in the reign of a king, inscribed with the principal events of that year (Clagett 1989: 47). During the first three dynasties, the annals consist almost exclusively of events that gave their names to the years (Clagett 1989: 48; Baines 2008: 23).<sup>50</sup>

As discussed earlier, the reconstruction of the first register is still very controversial, but there is no doubt that Djer (1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty) is listed in the second register (Wilkinson 2000b: 90), and it is commonly thought that the king who begins the second register should be the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty—i.e., Menes. Unfortunately, that portion of the annals is missing, and none of the remaining fragments mention Narmer, Aha, or Menes. This does not, however, stop scholars from drawing conclusions based on reconstructions. According to Wilkinson (2000b: 72): “All reconstructions (with the exception of Petrie 1916) have assumed that the annals began (on the recto) with Aha.” Baines (1995: 125) and others including O’Mara (1979: 17), interpret this as evidence that Aha was the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty.

According to Clagett (1989: 47), “... none of these constructions is entirely convincing, for they are all based in some significant degree on unproved and implausible assumptions.” Kahl (2006: 101) agrees: “... reconstructions of the Annals differ widely and must be considered highly speculative.” The possibility cannot be ignored that Narmer’s reign was also recorded in the annals.

It has also been argued that the annals began with Aha because his reign marked the beginning of the practice of keeping annals (Kaiser 1961: 53; Malek & Forman 1986: 29). However, the year label of Narmer (**Fig. 6**) shows that annals began in Narmer’s reign. According to Dreyer (2007), the event recorded by the Narmer year label occurred late in his reign and began the practice of annals recording.<sup>51</sup> If this is the case, Narmer’s annual entries on the Palermo Stone would take up relatively little space and there would be room in the second register for both Narmer and Aha.<sup>52</sup> This possibility and the general uncertainty about any reconstruction of the Palermo Stone make it impossible to conclude whether Narmer or Aha was listed first, and therefore which of them was Menes.

49. For a discussion of possible alternative dates see Wilkinson 2000b: 23–24.

50. In the Second Dynasty the dating system was based on a biennial cattle census. See Baud (1999: 115) and Wilkinson (2000b: 64).

51. Dreyer (2007: 228) qualifies this by saying: “complete annals upon which the division into dynasties was based, began first with Aha”.

52. Hornung et al. (2006: 23) say that the recent discovery of the year label of Narmer makes it possible that both Aha and Narmer were recorded on the same row of the annals (in their article they say it would be the first row, but that is a typographical error, as confirmed by Rolf Krauss via personal communication; it should read the second row). Clagett (1989: 99, n. 5) says that “... it could well be that both reigns appear on the second line of the Stone to the right of the Palermo fragment.”

## The Abydos necropolis sealings

Two of the most important objects in the “Who was Menes?” debate are the impressions of two cylinder seals from Abydos (Dreyer 1987; Kaiser 1987; Dreyer et al. 1996: 72-73, fig. 26, pl. 14b-c). Sealings of the first were found during the clearance of the tomb of Den (**Fig. 18**). The reconstructed seal contains the Horus names of five kings in order (Narmer, Aha, Djer, Djet, and Den), followed by Queen Meryt-Neith and her title, *mwt nsw*, “Mother of the King.” Assuming Narmer was the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, these are the first five kings of that Dynasty. The kings’ names are not in *serekhs*, but each is headed by a Horus falcon. The name of the funerary god Khentyamentiu precedes the names of the first three kings, but not the names of the last two (Djet and Den). According to Kaiser (1987:115), the seal is not a king list but an administrative document for the funerary cult, but whatever its purpose, it is a list of kings and can be utilized as such.

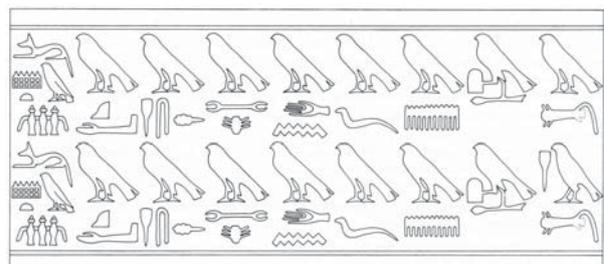
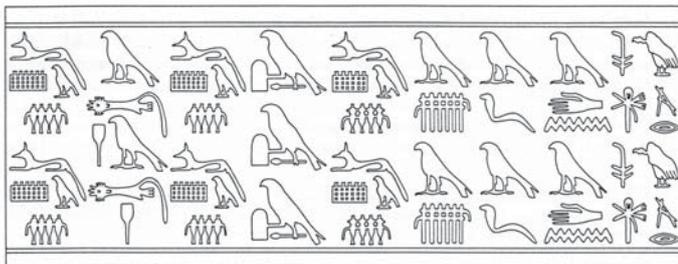
The crux of the issue is the role of Khentyamentiu: what is meant, and why are three names preceded by it, but not the other two? According to Dreyer (1987:41), Khentyamentiu represents dead kings for whom mortuary cults no longer existed and whose names may have been forgotten. He suggests that the instance of Khentyamentiu between Aha and Djer is for Athothis I (see below) and that between Narmer and Aha is for Scorpion (of the Scorpion Macehead) despite the fact that Scorpion is not attested at Abydos, and Athothis I is not attested anywhere. He also suggests that the first Khentyamentiu represents Iry-Hor and Ka.

Cervelló-Autuori (2005: 34-35) proposes that the mention of Khentyamentiu might not be an allusion to the god of the necropolis, but to the funerary god with whom the kings assimilated when they died. He suggests that “Khentyamentiu Horus-Narmer” on the seal is equivalent to “Osiris Unis” in the Pyramid Texts. This theory is appealing, but also problematic because it suggests that Djet and Den were both alive and reigning at the time the seal was produced. To resolve this problem, Cervelló-Autuori proposes that they were coregents. As evidence of the existence of coregency in the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, he refers to the Qa’a-Semerkhet label, which has the *serekhs* of both kings (Cervelló-Autuori 2005: 35, fig. 3; see also Dreyer et al. 1996, 73-74, pl. 14.d.)

Kaiser (1987: 118-119) has an alternative theory that he argues convincingly: the seal was re-carved. According to Kaiser, the original seal ended with Djet, and Khentyamentiu preceded each king’s name. Upon the death of Den, it was re-carved to add his name, and the Khentyamentiu in front of Djet’s name was removed to make room. He compares the original part of the seal (Narmer, Aha, and Djer) with the new part (Djet and Den) and shows there is a distinct difference in the style of carving. Goedicke (1993: 73) agrees with Kaiser’s conclusion.

**Fig. 18**  
The Den  
necropolis seal  
(Dreyer 1987: 36,  
Abb. 3; courtesy  
of the DAIK).

**Fig. 19**  
The Qa’a necropolis  
seal (Kaiser 1987:  
118, Abb. 2;  
courtesy of the  
DAIK).



Impressions from the second seal were found in the tomb of Qa'a. It shows all eight kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty in reverse order (from Qa'a back to Narmer), plus Khentyamentiu at the beginning (Fig. 19). Since there is universal agreement that there were eight kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, and that Qa'a was the last king, this would seem to settle the issue as to who was the first king. Kinnaer (2001: 80-81), Köhler (2002: 499), and Cervelló-Autuori (2005: 33) all think that it does. Dreyer (2007) among others, however, does not.

## Athothis I

Despite the evidence of the necropolis seal of Qa'a, the issue of Athothis I remains open. This is not the Athothis of Manetho<sup>53</sup>, but a “placeholder” for the unknown name of a king (inserted between Aha and Djer by those who hold that Aha is the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty) to account for the number of eight kings traditionally attributed to the 1st Dynasty (Helck 1956: 8-11; Dautzenberg 1983: 33; Dreyer 2007: 225-228). Of course, if one believes that Narmer was the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, then the need for Athothis I disappears.

Evidence for the existence of Athothis I is purported to be on the Palermo Stone. Although no name corresponding to Athothis I is present, there does appear to be a gap between the entries that are believed to represent the end of Aha's reign and the beginning of Djer's. If not the result of a scribal error, the gap implies either an interregnum between the reigns of Aha and Djer (Wilkinson 2000b: 93-94) or a reign for Athothis I of either 45 days or 1 year and 45 days (Helck 1987: 100, n.5; Baud 1999: 134; Dreyer 2007: 225;).

The strongest evidence for Athothis I is the discovery of tomb B40-50 in Abydos, which lies between the tombs of Aha and Djer. However, tomb B40 was found empty with no sign of ever having been used. Tomb 50 has traces of two or three coffins having originally been present, but no indication of a royal burial, almost no artifacts and no inscriptions except one tablet with numerals (Bestock 2009: 18-19). Nevertheless, Dreyer (1999: 111) attributes tomb B40-50 to Athothis I because of its size and location. He suggests that B40 was constructed for Athothis I, but the king died before it was finished and no one was buried in it. Tomb 50 may have been built for his retainers but was subsequently used to bury the king (see also Bestock 2009: 20-22).

To believe in the existence of “Athothis I” requires the belief that after his death, by the time of the reign of Den, he was already forgotten (or deemed unimportant), but remembered (and considered significant) by the Old Kingdom annalists (although they don't seem to have remembered his name, just the length of his reign), and then forgotten again by the time of Manetho. Not only is Athothis I ephemeral but implausible.

If we reject Dreyer's theory of Athothis I, we must still explain tomb B40-50. One possibility is that it was originally built for Narmer and abandoned when B17-18 was built for his burial. Arguments in favor of this are: 1) it is a two chamber tomb like those of Iry-Hor, Ka and the ultimate tomb of Narmer; 2) it is located in line with the tombs of Iry-Hor and Ka; and 3) it has the same orientation as the tomb of Ka (B7-9). On the other hand, B40-50 seems to be larger than B17-18 but the fact that we see only the construction pit of B40 is

53. The Athothis of Manetho is the personal name of a king who reigned either 57 years (Manetho, Dynasty I.2: Fr.6) or 27 years (Manetho, Dynasty I.2: Fr. 7).

misleading since it would have been far smaller when its brick lining was completed. Also problematic are the subdivisions in B50 which are not present for Narmer's "second" tomb, B17-18. Another option, given its greater size and sophistication, is that B40-50 was a second project of Narmer, but was not finished at the moment Narmer died, for which reason the original (smaller) tomb B18-19 was used. However, the orientation of the tomb warns against this. The orientation of B40-50 is identical to that of Ka, while the orientation of B17-18 is identical to Aha. Although no definitive answer can be proposed regarding the owner of B40-50, its orientation makes it unlikely that B40-50 was built after Aha's tomb was constructed, making it very unlikely that it belonged to Athothis I.

Even if we accept the existence of Athothis I, there can be no denying that having been forgotten already by the reign of Den, he stayed forgotten, and did not appear in any of the New Kingdom king lists or Manetho, and therefore is not included in the list of the eight kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty. Thus, the putative existence of Athothis I does not contradict the conclusion demonstrated by the two necropolis sealings: Narmer was the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty.

## Conclusion

By tradition, Menes is considered the first king of Egypt. Although it has been proposed that Menes was a mythical figure, the fact that the names of four of the eight kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty can be confirmed by contemporary documents, and a fifth by an Old Kingdom document, make it unlikely that the compilers of the New Kingdom king lists would be right about five of the eight kings of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, but ignorant about the most important, the founder king, Menes.

Determining whether Menes was the personal name of Narmer or of Aha has occupied much of this paper. The establishment of Memphis, the Naqada label, the Narmer/*Mn* (Prince's) seal, and the Palermo Stone, all fail to prove whether Narmer or Aha was Menes. The Abydos Necropolis sealings, on the other hand, provide direct, near contemporary evidence in favor of Narmer as well as indications of something even more significant. The unification documents also provide contemporary evidence in favor of Narmer.

By the death of Den, the fifth king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, in approximately 2950 BC,<sup>54</sup> Egyptian officials had made a decision. They had decided to begin the list of kings, included in the royal mortuary cult at Abydos, with Narmer. It is important to realize that this was a decision, not an inevitability, as earlier kings were present at the Umm el Qaab and it is unlikely that they were already forgotten. If we accept Kaiser's theory that the Abydos necropolis seal found in the tomb of Den was re-cut and was originally made for Djjet, then the decision was made at least a generation earlier. We have evidence that this decision was confirmed at the death of Qa'a, the last king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty.

Over a thousand years later, in the New Kingdom, the Horus name Narmer was forgotten, but his personal name, Menes, was remembered. In all the king lists of that period he is named as the first king, and over a thousand years after that, when Manetho composed his history, Menes is again listed as the first king. But Menes was not just the first king of Egypt; he represents a line drawn in history. In fact, he represents the beginning of history for the ancient

54. Interpolated from Hendrickx 2006: 92, table II 1.7.

Egyptians. We now know that there were kings before Menes, but none of the Predynastic kings for whom we have any archaeological evidence is shown on the funerary sealings, the king lists, or with confidence on the Palermo Stone. In the mind of the ancient Egyptians, the defining achievement of Menes was the unification of Egypt. As we have seen, this was actually a process achieved gradually by several kings, but Narmer completed it. As important as his military victory was, his ideological achievement of claiming the unification as well as creating the visual vocabulary to display his kingship over Upper and Lower Egypt were even more important. This is demonstrated by the Narmer Palette, which shows on its respective sides the same king wearing the red and white crowns for the first time. That the event was a significant victory is shown by the fact that it was celebrated not only on the Narmer Palette, but also on the Narmer year label- probably inaugurating the practice of annals keeping - the Narmer Cylinder, and the Narmer Box, with its aftermath probably celebrated on the Narmer Macehead. There is no comparable set of documents in the Early Dynastic Period. Narmer's claim to the unification, which is traditionally associated with Menes, is further evidence that Narmer was Menes, the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, and the first king the ancient Egyptians chose to remember.

In conclusion, the preponderance of the evidence indicates that Menes was Narmer.

## Appendix

The debate between the advocates of Narmer vs. Aha could not begin until archaeologists discovered the existence of those two king's names in 1896 (Morgan 1897). It only took a year after that for Borchardt (1897: 1054-1058) to conclude that Menes was Aha. The debate has continued vigorously since then with many participants, and no consensus despite the passage of time and the discovery of substantial new evidence. The Table below doesn't intend to be complete, but illustrates how long the discussion has been going on and the number and variety of participants. Authors are mentioned only once, unless they published both opinions, presumably because they changed their minds. Remarkably in this rather long list (69 different authors), there are only three such authors, Petrie (1900; 1923), Sethe(1905; 1930), and Hendrickx (2001; 2013). In all three cases their first opinion was Aha, and the second Narmer. It is quite striking that most German language authors advocate Aha, and most English language authors conclude for Narmer. Many authors, not included in this list, say that nothing can be said for certain between Narmer and Aha. Others say that Menes did not exist, so arguing about who he was is meaningless.

Advocates of Narmer as Menes, or equivalently as the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (in order of date published), include:

|                      |                        |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Petrie 1923: 6       | Hayes 1953: 31         | Lloyd 1988: 10         |
| Newberry 1929: 46-50 | Yadin 1955: 1-2        | Fischer 1989: 61       |
| Sethe 1930: 178      | Gardiner 1961: 403-404 | Rice 1990: 96          |
| Grdseloff 1944: 281  | Lauer 1966: 167-172    | Schulman 1991-1992: 93 |
| Faulkner 1947: 104   | Edwards 1971: 14-15    | David & David 1992: 86 |
| Frankfort 1948: 7    | Aldred 1980: 34        | Vercoutter 1992: 200   |
| Vandier 1952: 599    | Trigger 1983: 70       | Kitchen 1999: 533      |

- |                        |                           |                          |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Dodson 1995: 204       | Köhler 2002: 499          | Hassan et al. 2006: 697  |
| Menu 1997: 31, n.6     | Morenz 2002: 88           | Kahl 2006: 94            |
| Kemp 2000: 223         | Friedman 2003b: 57        | Jiménez Serrano 2007: 72 |
| Cialowicz 2001: 28-29  | Raffaele 2003: 111, n. 3  | Warburton 2009: 293      |
| Kinnaer 2001: 81       | Grajetzki 2004: 14-15     | Quirke 2010: 65          |
| van den Brink 2001: 58 | Cervelló-Autuori 2005: 37 | Teeter 2011: 8           |
| Vinson 2001: 494       |                           | Hendrickx 2013: 271      |

Advocates of Aha as Menes, or equivalently as the first king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (in order of date published), include:

- |                           |                          |                         |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Borchardt 1897: 1054-1058 | Kaiser 1961: 54, 60-61   | Shaw 2000: 480          |
| Petrie 1900: 5            | Wildung 1969: 4-5        | Hendrickx 2001: 101     |
| Sethe 1905: 34            | Kaplony 1975: col. 94-96 | Partridge 2002: xxii    |
| Amélineau 1907: 193       | Barta 1981: 18           | Höveler-Müller 2005: 34 |
| Meyer 1913: 132-135       | Dautzenberg 1984: 13     | Dreyer 2007: 228        |
| Newberry 1929: 41         | Needler 1984: 27         | Bestock 2009: 5         |
| Müller 1938: 49           | Lorton 1987: 34          | Whitehouse 2009: 2      |
| Scharff 1939: 40          | Baines 1995: 125         | Bussman 2010: 461       |
| Helck 1953: 354           | Gundlach 1998: 19        | Anđelković 2011: 31     |
| Emery 1961: 36-37         | Logan 1999: 261, n. 1    | Seidlmeyer 2011: 25, 30 |
|                           | Bard 2000: 70-71         |                         |

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