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## Relocating De Morgan's Royal Tomb at Naqada and Identifying Its Occupant

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### INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the Royal Tomb at Naqada, an elaborate niche-façade mastaba structure found by Jacques de Morgan in 1896 (De Morgan 1897: 147-202). This was the first time that the monumental architectural style of the First Dynasty was encountered. As such, the tomb and the associated objects found by De Morgan, subsequently supplemented by finds found during the re-excavations of the Royal Tomb by Borchardt in 1898 and by Garstang in 1904, made quite an impression, not only their quality and quantity but moreover their historical significance. Among these finds was a label with the *serekh* of King Aha and the possible Nebty name Mn (De Morgan 1887: 167). Another interesting label had a so-called *Neith-serekh* topped with the symbol of the Goddess Neith and the signs *Hetep* and *Uy* within the name compartment (De Morgan 1887: 169). Both finds have attracted much attention (Massoulard 1949: 269-351; Emery 1961: 47-49). This tomb was deemed lost with only the published information on its architecture available (Kahl and Engel 2001: 8). The Washington State University / WSU *Predynastic of Egypt* Project led by F. A. Hassan, which consisted of surveying and targeted excavations in the Naqada region, re-located the Royal Tomb during its 1981 survey season. Initial findings on the tomb's re-location are presented here as part of a re-evaluation and publication of the WSU project (Hassan, van Wetering and Tassie et al. In Prep.).

### DISCOVERY AND (RE-)EXCAVATION OF THE ROYAL TOMB

Jacques De Morgan carried out several extensive investigations along the Nile Valley between 1892 and 1897. At a time when new building activities were still small-scale and mostly confined to Cairo and large towns, his survey of the low desert edge between Cairo and Esna is of extraordinary importance to Egyptian archaeology (Gran-Aymerich and Gran-Aymerich 1994; Hendrickx and van den Brink 2002; Lorre 2007). In 1897, De Morgan worked on the west bank in the area between modern el-Ballas and modern Danfiq and found there many sites with material difficult to date. Two years earlier Petrie and Quibell had worked in the same area and investigated two town sites with associated cemeteries which they initially dated as post-Old Kingdom (Petrie and Quibell 1896). De Morgan showed, however that the most recent types of 'New race' objects occurred in his Royal Tomb of the early First Dynasty and thus that the 'New Race' sites predated the First Dynasty. Much to the chagrin of Petrie, De Morgan was proven right and this stimulated a life-long animosity between Petrie and his French colleagues (and in particular J. de Morgan).

Two mud-brick tombs and a concentration of smaller graves were found on a spur or hillock between two wadi drains with later graves, seemingly dated to the Roman period, in the vicinity (De Morgan 1897: 147, 159) (Fig. 1). De Morgan provides the location of the site on his map but unfortunately he did not make clear that the site northwest of modern Naqada is his Khattara site and that the site southwest is the actual location of the cemetery containing the Royal Tomb (De Morgan 1897: 38-39). The elaborate niche-façade mastaba structure was identified as a Royal Tomb and investigated, whereas the other mastaba structure was too disturbed to be extensively investigated but according to De Morgan, this tomb is contemporary with the Royal Tomb (De Morgan 1897: 159). He also dates the cemetery with smaller graves, north of the two mastaba tombs to the Early Dynastic period (De Morgan 1897: 159; Hendrickx and van den Brink 2002: 360).

The superstructure of the Royal Tomb consists of 16 small shallow chambers [A to P] around 5 larger and deeper chambers [1 to 5, south to west] of which the middle one [3] is the largest and can be identified as the burial chamber (De Morgan 1897: figs. 518-519). These five inner chambers are interconnected by portals (De Morgan 1897: 154). The outer chambers seem to have been storage rooms (De Morgan 1897: 164) although, according to Kahl (*et al* 2001: 174), these are only architectural features and did not contain any grave goods. These rooms are the result of erecting inner support walls after the funeral took place and before the roof was put on (Kahl *et al* 2001: 174). The non-ceramic objects in outer room C are, according to

Kahl (*et al* 2001: 174), the result of tomb robbery. Pottery was found in rooms A and B as mentioned by De Morgan (1897: 163). However, his statement that nothing was found in the other outer rooms except fragments of uninteresting pottery (De Morgan 1897: 164) seems to indicate that the outer rooms functioned as storage rooms for lower status objects. This seems to indicate that the objects of precious material found in room C were indeed redeposited there as the result of robbing activities. The structure had a low bench around its outer walls and, at a distance of about 2.8m an enclosure wall (Kahl *et al* 2001: 174).

The grave assemblage is very extensive but poorly listed and published with only objects of outstanding interest and general pottery types shown in drawings. De Morgan left many objects at the site that he deemed of little interest (Kahl *et al* 2001: 172). The burial chamber had an ivory label (the Men-label), small ivory vessels, some inscribed with the names *Rechit* and *Neith-Hetep*, a sealing with the name *Rechit*, and fragments of a large ivory coffin-like object as well as other high status finds (De Morgan 1897: 161-162). Large amounts of ceramic vessels and stone vessels were found in the other chambers as well as ivory objects and copper objects, stone palettes, and precious beads (De Morgan 1897: 160-164).

The inscribed objects<sup>1</sup>; labels, seals and vessels mention a number of names including Narmer and Aha. The most frequently mentioned name (after King Aha) is *Rechit* which De Morgan identified as one of the names of the King buried in this tomb (De Morgan 1897: 165-170). The most striking inscription is the *Neith-serekh*, this seems to belong to Queen Neith-Hetep and will be discussed below.

In 1898 the Royal Tomb was re-investigated by L. Borchardt, resulting in an article with an impressive architectural plan of the tomb (Borchardt 1898) but it should be taken into account that the re-investigation took only one day. It is frequently indicated in the report that the work was carried out fast, assumptions were made based on small exposures and that certain things could not be checked due to lack of time (Borchardt 1898: 87, 90). The investigation by J. Garstang in 1904 is poorly published and difficult to analyse although an investigation of Garstang's field documentation in Liverpool might solve some of the outstanding issues<sup>2</sup>. It is doubtful whether either Borchardt or Garstang investigated the entire tomb structure.

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1 Inscribed objects have been analysed by Kaplony (1963) who, unfortunately, based his research on sketches by Newberry and not the publication by De Morgan and as such there are discrepancies between Kaplony's drawings and the actual inscribed objects (Kahl *et al* 2001: 177-note 51).

2 Communications between F.A. Hassan and Chris Ellis in the early 1980's indicated that the latter was carrying out such an investigation, seemingly as thesis research, but this research does not seem to have been published.

A re-investigation of the published and unpublished material from the Royal Tomb in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (De Morgan excavations), Liverpool (Garstang excavations) and other museums (London, New York, Oxford & Cambridge) was carried out between 1989 and 2000, and has resulted in a report article (Kahl *et al* 2001) and a few research articles (Kahl 2000; Engel and Kahl 2002; Engel 2003) as well as a colour booklet (Kahl and Engel 2001).

#### **WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY (WSU) SURVEY AND RE-LOCATION OF THE TOMB**

The WSU *Predynastic of Egypt* Project (1978-1981) led by F. A. Hassan was a large-scale investigation of the sites on the west bank of the Nile in the Naqada region. This project consisted of a systematic field walking survey of the concession area with extensive excavations conducted at the settlement site Kh3, with small-scale excavations at cemetery site Kh2, settlement site *South Town* and settlement site Kh5 (Hassan, van Wetering and Tassie *et al.* In Prep.). A one kilometre wide transect was surveyed from the edge of cultivation to the limestone escarpment, and another transect was run along the low desert margin bordering the edge of cultivation. The north-south strip was 22 km long from Power Tower 92 south of Danfiq to Power Tower 202, just north of Ballas<sup>3</sup>. A 400 meters wide survey track was decided upon because the transect perpendicular to the floodplain opposite Menchia (south of modern Naqada) and additional spot checks in the region failed to discover any Predynastic remains outside of 400 meters spacing from the edge of cultivation. Conveniently, the power towers are spaced at regular intervals of 200 meters apart. It was therefore decided to take advantage of this arrangement in laying out a grid for the survey. Blocks of 1 x 1 km represented the basic grid units of the survey area. The blocks were labelled after the first Power Tower from the South and with an alphabetic designation from West to East e.g. I-157. Since the edge of cultivation runs in a southwest-northeast direction following Power Tower (PWT) 122, the blocks were realigned to that direction (Hassan, Hays and Gallagher *n.d.*). The information obtained included archaeological data on prehistoric and historic sites, topography and geomorphology, surface geology and soils, plants, water sources, and land-use. All sites encountered during the survey were recorded and these records are currently being pre-

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3 In preparation of the 1982 season which was to carry the survey south of Power tower 92, the area where the Wadi Imran enters the floodplain was investigated and archaeological sites were recorded (Hassan and van Wetering *et al.* In Prep.). The 1982 season did not proceed due to lack of funding.

pared for publication (Hassan, van Wetering and Tassie et al. In Prep.). The objects from the WSU Predynastic of Egypt Project (so-called Naqada study collection) held at University College London were investigated and registered by Dr. G. J. Tassie and the author before being returned to Egypt in 2010 (Tassie and van Wetering 2011; Tassie *et al.* 2010). Ceramic fragments from site PWT.122 were analysed, but these do not add any new information to the body of evidence already published.

During the 1981 season, site PWT.112 was encountered (Fig. 5). The site was easily recognisable due to the activities of the University of Alexandria there in the days / weeks prior to the arrival of the WSU survey team. The University of Alexandria team, under the direction of Dr Rashid el-Naduri, had dug within the royal tomb structure, thus exposing the internal structure and leaving many ceramic fragments scattered in and around the tomb structure. The WSU team collected ceramic surface finds and ceramic finds from within the tomb structure as well as taking charcoal samples from within the tomb structure. These finds are currently being analysed, together with finds from other sites surveyed by the WSU team (Hassan, van Wetering and Tassie et al. In Prep.). The architectural remains of two tomb structures were investigated and measured. The larger tomb measuring 54 m by 27 m. was only later identified as De Morgan's Royal Tomb (Fig. 1-2).

A comparison between the plans (Fig. 1) shows a marked difference in tomb architecture: an annex on the western side not previously alluded to, the irregularity of the walls (especially the southern wall), and the lack of niche-façade. The lack of niche-façade on the walls of the main structure can be explained by erosion whereby the walls as seen in the WSU survey map are the lower part of the structure: the bench or platform on which the niche-façade walls were situated. The irregularity of the walls is striking and contrasts greatly with the published architectural maps. It should be taken into account that in the early years of Egyptology, walls and structures were often planned as being more regular in shape, or straighter, than they actually were. It would seem that this type of artistic license was taken in the drawing of the plans of the royal tomb at Naqada by De Morgan and Borchardt. However, the annex on the western side of the structure is more difficult to explain: it might be a later addition (post-early First Dynasty) and as such recognised by the early excavators and ignored. On the other hand, the annex might not have been noticed by the early excavators who spent little time on the excavation and made assumptions about the entire structure; thus the annex could be contemporary with the main structure. It might also be that the walls of the annex never protruded above ground. Another possibility might be that the WSU team mistook the enclosure wall of the Royal Tomb as part

of the structure. The nature of the annex can only be resolved by re-excavation of the cemetery which could also provide answers as to the relation between the mastaba tombs and the nearby graves dated to the same period. Satellite images (GoogleEarth) revealed in 2007 that the cemetery is still accessible and has not been covered with modern buildings or agriculture. Numerous pits, however, are visible, which implies that the area of Early Dynastic tombs and Roman tombs has been severely disturbed either by robbery or *sebakhin* activities (Fig. 3).

### **THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF EARLY EGYPT (FIRST DYNASTY) AND THE ROLE OF THE ROYAL FAMILY**

This section provides the socio-political background at the time when the Royal Tomb at Naqada was built and its occupant lived. The focus is on the reigns of King Narmer and King Aha when the political entity spanning the Early Dynastic Period and the Old Kingdom<sup>4</sup> came into being. After an overview of the state formation in early Egypt, the role of the (extended) royal family within the political system / state administration is examined.

#### ***The formation of the Old Kingdom State, and the reigns of King Narmer and King Aha***

The state formation leading to the establishment of the first Egyptian state is a confluence of different processes which brought about a strong centralised nation-state in the Nile Delta and the Nile Valley (up to the island of Elephantine, First Cataract). The protracted expansion of the Thinite polity (Predynastic – early Protodynastic periods) is the central process. This process seems initially to be driven by the Thinite need to establish political hegemony in its core-area (northern Upper Egypt) and, in general, to be driven by the desire / need of the Thinite rulers to control the flow of prestige goods from the North (Lower Egypt and the Southern Levant). This resulted in a powerful Thinite polity (during the Naq. IIIA-B Period)

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4 The Early Dynastic Period and the Old Kingdom are here perceived as a single period of centralised rule whereby the state came into being at the beginning of the First Dynasty and ended at the end of the Eighth Dynasty. The defining characteristic being that there is only one king ruling over the whole of Egypt (Nile Valley from the First Cataract northwards and the Nile Delta) whereas it does not matter if that king is strong or weak as long as he is recognised as sole king by local potentates. As such, the term Early Dynastic Period is problematic as it subdivides a unified political period into separate time-spans. From a purely political point of view, the Old Kingdom state started with the First Dynasty, it is preceded by the Protodynastic Period – in which multiple polities existed in the territory that would become the Old Kingdom state – and it is succeeded by the First Intermediate Period – in which central rule was no longer recognised in the south of the former Old Kingdom state with the Heracleopolitan kings (9th-10th Dynasty) ruling in northern Egypt and nomarchs ruling parts of southern Egypt.

which controlled a territory stretching from northern Upper Egypt to the Delta, either through direct or indirect rule (regional vassal or tribute polities that were deferential to the Thinite supraregional polity). In Upper Egypt, the Thinite territory seems to have included the territory of former rival, polity of South Town / Nubt [Naqada] whereas in Lower Egypt, it seems to have excluded the West Delta.

The subjugation of the West Delta polity, the last independent territory in the Nile Delta, seems to have taken place during the reign of King Narmer (see below). This concluded a protracted process of Thinite expansion which, according to Dreyer (2000: 10; 2005: 256-260), is commemorated on the so-called City Palette. This palette shows animals hacking up / subjugating a number of fortified towns which seem to be identified by the signs within the structure. The animals with the hack are identified as Thinite rulers. The fortified towns might represent the central place of polities north of the Thinite polity. According to Dreyer, the first major victory in this Thinite expansion took place during the reign of a ruler identified with the falcon, a Thinite ruler he recognises as Falcon I who is seen on the right of the upper register (Dreyer 2005: 256-260)<sup>5</sup>. Behind the fortified town being subjugated by the falcon is a fortified town topped by a stork sign. This can thus most likely be identified as Buto, it should then be King Narmer in the guise of the catfish hacking up Buto. Unfortunately the area of the palette is badly damaged<sup>6</sup>. Another indicator of the northwards expansion policy by the Thinite polity is that during the reign of the Thinite rulers Iry.Hor and Ka, the two immediate predecessors of King Narmer, there is evidence of Thinite taxation of Delta territories (Dreyer 2000: 3).

The other important process in Egypt's state formation is a seemingly short process which might not have been intentional but just a happenstance of history, the fusion of the Thinite polity with the Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] polity: *Unifi-*

5 Other rulers of the Thinite line shown on the City Palette are: (lower register, from right to left) Lion, Scorpion, and Two Falcons on Standards; (top register, from right to left) Falcon I, ruler's name destroyed (possible Catfish / Narmer, see above and next footnote), ruler's name destroyed (possible Falcon II as the tail of a bird / falcon is still visible), and ruler's name destroyed (Dreyer 2000: 10; 2005: 256-260).

6 Contrary to Dreyer (2005: 260) who assumes that the Scorpion shown in the middle of the lower register is to be identified as the Scorpion II (the ruler shown on the Scorpion Macehead) and that the City Palette is to be dated to the reign of that ruler. More likely, the Thinite ruler identified is another Scorpion who ruled the Thinite polity after the reign of Falcon I (and thus after the reign of Scorpion I, the Thinite ruler buried in Tomb U-j). The position of Scorpion II is still unclear but this ruler is to be placed near in time / shortly before King Narmer and he does not seem to belong to the Thinite ruling line. As such, Dreyer does not suppose King Narmer is shown on the City Palette, however, the identification of Buto and the possible reference to Buto on the Narmer Palette (Dreyer 2005: 254) point at Buto being conquered in the reign of King Narmer. Thus if the fortified town identified by the stork is indeed Buto, then it would be hacked up by King Narmer in the guise of the Catfish as such the City Palette should be dated to the reign of King Narmer and be added to the set of commemorative objects depicting the subjugation of the West Delta polity.

*cation of Two Lands*. This fusion took place at the end of the Protodynastic Period, presumably during the reign of King Narmer. The existence of two complex polities in Upper Egypt can be argued based on the occurrence of large, elaborate graves identified as belonging to local rulers at Abydos cemeteries U-B (Thinite polity) and cemetery Hk.6 at Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] (Wilkinson 2000b: 390, 392). The sequence of graves at Hk.6 comes to an end with grave 1 at the end of Protodynastic Period, contemporaneous with the reign of King Narmer (Adams 2000: 181). Also, King Narmer is the first Thinite King to have a substantial presence at Nekhen [Hierakonpolis], as indicated by the finds within the temple area. This so-called ‘Main Deposit’ collection of objects included the Narmer Palette and Narmer Macehead, as well as the finds at Hk.29a, a ceremonial complex or public / display area of the Palace. If the assumption about the White Crown is correct (see below), then King Narmer is also the first Thinite King known to wear that crown. How this fusion between the Thinite polity and the Nekhen polity came about is still unclear. It could be due to violent conflict with the Thinite polity victorious or through peaceful development. It might be that the male ruling line at Nekhen died out and by intermarriage between the Thinite ruling line and the Nekhen ruling line, the crown of Nekhen fell to a Thinite ruler. The implication of this reasoning is that either the mother of King Narmer or the mother of King Aha belonged to the ruling line of Nekhen. The fact that King Narmer wears the White Crown on the Narmer Palette could mean he was the natural heir to the Nekhen throne via his mother, or that he acted as ruler of Nekhen on behalf of his son, the future King Aha during his minority. The presence of the young sandal-bearer behind King Narmer (on the side where King Narmer is wearing the White Crown) on the ceremonial palette and again on the King’s ceremonial macehead might be significant in this regard, as this person could be the crown-prince<sup>7</sup>. Near the head of the sandal-bearer are two signs under each other: the upper one is a rosette, generally identified as a power / ruler indicator (Wilkinson

7 Contrary to Morenz (2003: 189-193) who identifies this person as wdpw wn “Servant of the Ruler”. As crown-prince, Morenz (2003: 186-188) identifies the person in front of King Narmer, wearing the panther-skin and associated with the signs tsht which Morenz translates as “the younger one” meaning in relation to the king, the heir to the throne. However, his dismissal of tsht as precursor of vizier, tj3tj (Wilkinson 1999: 137) or as priest, sm does not take into account the clothing and the display of regalia. On the other hand, his identification of the sandal-bearer as servant does not take into account the rosette as power-symbol, nor the possibility that the sandal-bearer also has a bulls-tail (again a symbol of very high / kingly status) the right ‘streamer’ is quite similar to that bull’s tail worn by King Narmer and is dissimilar to the streamer hanging in front of the sandal-bearer (Winter 1994: 279 identifies both streamers as animal tails, probably giraffe tails). The seal around the neck of the sandal-bearer hints at this person’s role / function as seal-bearer or sealer, a function of high status in early Egypt (Morenz 2003: 192).



1999: 56; Morenz 2003: 189-190; Dreyer 2005: 261) and underneath this rosette, a sign representing either a name<sup>8</sup> or a title. A similar rosette can also be seen near the head of the ruler identified as Scorpion [II] as shown on his Macehead found at Nekhen [Hierakonpolis]. This ruler cannot easily be placed within the Thinite line (succession of tombs in cemeteries U-B at Abydos Umm el-Qaab) and based on artistic grounds his reign is near-contemporaneous to that of King Narmer. Therefore, it is tempting to identify Scorpion II as a ruler of the Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] polity (Wilkinson 1999: 56-57) and by implication to identify the rosette as a power symbol connected with the Nekhen polity<sup>9</sup>.

### *The reign of King Narmer: establishing the State*

King Narmer is one of the most important rulers of early Egypt. During his reign the Protodynastic Period, with its multiple political units, ended and the Old Kingdom state under a single central authority commenced (Wilkinson 2001: 23; Seidlmayer 1998: 27). Narmer began his reign as sovereign of the Thinite polity and ended it as King of the Two Lands: the fused territories of the Thinite polity and the Nekhen polity. Therefore, he was both the last regional ruler and the first King of the First Dynasty of Egypt (Morenz 2002b: 81). This dual kingship of King Narmer is indicated on his ceremonial palette. This palette has been identified as representing almost everything in the political landscape of early Egypt, from being a purely ideological object with no historical meaning to a commemorative object for a historical event albeit with an ideological layer (Köhler 2002). The pal-

8 Problematic in this regard is how to read this name as it does not relate to the King's name (Hor-)Aha, although this name might have been taken at the time of coronation, but more importantly nor does it relate to the Prince's name Mn / Men as shown on the sealing from B.18 at Abydos Umm el-Qaab (Petrie 1901: pl. XIII-93), on the back of a label from the reign of King Aha (Petrie 1901: pl. XI-2/3), and on a sealing (Kaploný 1963: abb. 77). The name Mn / Men apparently seem to have been the birth name of King Aha (Dreyer 2000: 222-223).

9 Supporting this are two objects, one found at Qustul and the provenance of the other is unknown. The object found at Qustul within Tomb 24 of cemetery L is an incense burner that depicts a ruler wearing the White Crown (presumably of the Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] polity) with a serekh in front of him (the name cannot be read due to fragmented state of the object) and next to it a rosette sign. It is tempting to identify this object as a funerary gift from a Nekhen ruler (and displaying the Nekhen emblem) to the burial of a ruler of the Nubian polity centred on Faras-Qustul (van Wetering & Tassie 2006: 845-846), the southern neighbour of Nekhen [Hierakonpolis]. The shape of the serekh seems more Egyptian than Nubian, especially with a falcon on top, and resembles a serekh in a boat, found at Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] (Quibell & Petrie 1900: pl. V). The other object is the Metropolitan knife handle which depicts again a ruler wearing the White Crown with directly in front his head the rosette (the configuration is very similar to that of the Scorpion Mace-head). The procession of people on the Met knife handle is very similar to similar representations on objects from the Main Deposit at Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] whereas the representation of prisoners is similar to that in Tomb 100 at Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] (Williams & Logan 1987: 247, 250) A cursory examination of the finds from Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] shows that a rosette on a standard on clay-seals is frequent (Quibell & Petrie 1900: pl. LXXI-26-29, 31).

ette, although most certainly a statement concerning the political union of Egypt (Seidlmayer 1998: 28), does not reflect the actual *Unification of the Two Lands* but a slightly later stage in the process of state formation whereby King Narmer, as ruler of the Two Lands, conquers the remaining parts of the Delta, the polity centred on Sais and Buto in the West Delta ~ Papyrus Land (Morenz 2002a 282; Kinneer 2004: 48-54; Dreyer 2005: 254-255). The actual Unification of the Two Lands is however implied. On one side, King Narmer is shown striking down an enemy, and on the other, the King is depicted in the guise of a bull trampling the fortified city of his enemy and also in a 'victory' procession where the King, preceded by standards inspects a large number of conquered enemies (Dreyer 2005: 254-255). Where the King is smiting his main enemy, or rather the ruler of the opposing polity, he wears the White Crown whereas the Red Crown is worn by the King in the procession on the other side<sup>10</sup>. Both the Red Crown and the White Crown seem to originate in Upper Egypt (Wilkinson 1999: 192-195). The earliest occurrence of the White Crown is at Qustul, cemetery L, but it could be argued that these objects are funeral gifts (see below) from the rulers of Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] where the White Crown is first worn by a dateable ruler<sup>11</sup>, Scorpion II, on the so-called Scorpion Mace-head. The White Crown can probably be identified as the crown of the Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] polity. The earliest occurrence of the Red Crown is at South Town / Nubt [Naqada] on a fragment of Upper Egyptian ceramic ware (thus arguing against it being a Lower Egyptian import) and this crown can be tentatively identified as the crown of the This [Abydos], whereby the fragment at South Town / Nubt [Naqada] is identified as a gift or tribute from a Thinite ruler to a ruler of the Naqada polity. However, it might also be that the Red Crown belonged to the Naqada polity and was usurped by the Thinite polity after it subjugated the Naqada polity, although the early development of the Red Crown is still unclear. In the procession on his ceremonial palette, King Narmer is preceded by four standards; the first two with one falcon each, the third one

10 Dreyer (2005) identifies the Red Crown in the traditional sense as the Crown of Lower Egypt, an identification this crown acquires in later times (and the White Crown as the Crown of Upper Egypt). However, the Red Crown is worn by King Narmer in a number of pivotal events connected with the subjugation of the West Delta polity as shown on the Narmer Palette and the Narmer Macehead. The earliest occurrence of the Red Crown is in northern Upper Egypt, as such it would seem more likely that the Red Crown is connected with the polity of This [Abydos] and only later was transposed to Lower Egypt (whereas the White Crown, originally connected with the polity of Nekhen [Hierakonpolis], was transposed to the whole of Upper Egypt).

11 A small ivory head of a man wearing a conical crown (E.4974 – Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) very similar if not identical, to the White Crown was found with the Main Deposit at Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] might represent a ruler of the Nekhen polity but it cannot be dated (Quibell & Petrie 1900: pl. VII-2, VIII-6).

with a jackal and the fourth standard with a 'throne-cushion'. The standards with falcons seem to represent kingship whereas the Jackal standard seems to represent the Thinite polity and the 'throne-cushion' standard the Nekhen polity. Therefore, the whole group should be read as *Ruler of This-Abydos, Ruler of Nekhen [Hierakonpolis]* and followed by the name Narmer (Morenz 2002a: 278-279, 282). It is tempting to hypothesize about the Narmer Palette, and speculatively argue the palette found at Hierakonpolis was one of a set of two commemorative palettes; one dedicated by Narmer to the God of Nekhen at the Temple of Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] and the other dedicated by Narmer to the God of This at the Temple of This [Abydos]. Both palettes would be votive objects commemorating the subjugation of the West Delta polity and its ruler W3sj / Wash but on the Hierakonpolis Palette, King Narmer is wearing the White Crown in the prominent smiting scene whereas on the Abydos Palette, he might have been shown wearing the Red Crown in that prominent scene.

Besides the ceremonial palette of King Narmer, a number of other objects from this reign are relevant to the last phase of the Thinite expansion: the subjugation of the West Delta polity centred on Sais and/or Buto (Dreyer 2005). These objects are the Abydos year-name label, the ivory inlays of a wooden box (Narmer Chest), the City Palette, and the Hierakonpolis ivory cylinder. All mention either *Ta mehoe*, which can be identified as Papyrus-land (meaning the Delta region), W3sj / Wash who seems to be the ruler vanquished by Narmer and/or the Tjenoe which in later times denote Libyans but seem in this early context to point at Delta inhabitants (Morenz 2002b: 81, 83, 85; Dreyer 2005: 254-255)<sup>12</sup>. It is possible the King's Mace-head (the King's name is damaged and unidentifiable) also shows the subjugation of the Delta. This palette was found at Nekhen [Hierakonpolis], together with the other ceremonial maceheads and palettes and is most likely a commemoration object dedicated at the Temple of Nekhen [Hierakonpolis]. It shows a King robed in *heb-sed* clothing and wearing the Red Crown sitting under an elevated canopy, the falcon in front of the canopy presenting prisoners to the King (Adams 1974: 3, pls 1-2). If the assumptions made here about the Red Crown are correct and the assumption by Dreyer (2000: 10) that the Thinite ruler Falcon I played an important role in the

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12 See Kinnaer 2004: 52, for arguments that W3sj / Wash was a geographical location, an identification primarily based on the valid assumption that naming an enemy and thus granting his name life seems doubtful. However, the presence of a clear geographical identification above W3sj / Wash on the Narmer Palette would argue against a geographical identification and supports the identification of W3sj / Wash as the name of the ruler shown on the Narmer Palette and assumed on the Narmer Chest (Dreyer 2005: 255-256).

Thinite expansion drive, then it might be assumed that the King on the King's Mace-head is a Thinite King. King Narmer is the most likely candidate as he is the most likely King to be presented the spoils of his West Delta victory by his illustrious ancestor, Thinite ruler Falcon I. The analysis by Kohler (2002: 504) on the identity of the enemy on the Narmer Palette highlights two 'non-Egyptian' features: *circumcision but not in the Egyptian style*, and *bearded*, to identify the enemy as non-Egyptian. For this early period, however, it cannot be excluded that Upper Egyptians and Lower Egyptians saw each other as foreigners and that certain features attributed to the lower Egyptians in early times were later, after the lower Egyptians had become part of the Thinite territory, exclusively assigned to non-Egyptians. On the Narmer Palette and the Narmer Chest, the signs associated with the vanquished enemy could either be identified as a name *W3sj / Wash* (Morenz 2002b: 85; Dreyer 2005: 255-256) or a geographical identification (Kinnaer 2004: 52). The Abydos year-name label seems to identify the enemy as *Nw / Noe*, which according to Dreyer (2005: 255) are a grouping of people and which is a shortened version of *Tjenoe* but Morenz (2002b: 85)<sup>13</sup> identifies *Nw / Noe* as a Lower Egyptian ruler. From about the same time (reign of Narmer), a number of Lower Egyptian objects mention a ruler identified as *Ni*. This ruler is even mentioned on a object discovered by Petrie within the Temple area of Abydos (Petrie 1903: pl. X-216), and it might have been a tribute to the Thinite polity or it could represent a victory offering by King Narmer to his god with the name of the vanquished enemy. Morenz (2002b: 86) argues that the *Nw / Noe* mentioned on the objects from the reign of King Narmer is the same as *Ni*. How ruler *Ni* relates to ruler *W3sj / Wash* is unclear. According to Dreyer (2005: 255), the final victory over the West Delta polity occurred late during the reign of King Narmer based on the Abydos year-name label.

It is beyond doubt that King Narmer played a pivotal role in the Egyptian state formation. He was the first King to display on a single object the White and Red crowns and seems to have brought the whole of Egypt, meaning the Nile Valley (up to the First Cataract) and Delta under direct Thinite Rule. If Dreyer (2005: 255) is correct in his statement that the conclusion of military activities took place late in the reign of King Narmer, this has several implications. Obviously, King Narmer spent a lot of time in the northern part of his kingdom and thus the need

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13 Morenz states that *Nw / Noe* is not an Egyptian name but our understanding about language in the whole of Egypt is still to imprecise to substantiate this claim, the possibility of different language systems in Upper and Lower Egypt needs to be taken into account. One needs to bear in mind that Lower Egyptians (their names, their dress, etc) can in this early time still be seen as foreign / ethnically different by the Upper Egyptians.

arose to have an efficient administration in the rest of the kingdom (see below). The war activities in the north, primarily its organisation and its economic implications, as well as incorporating the newly acquired territory of Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] and securing borders, would have led to less incentive / stimulus for symbolic display and (funerary) architectural aggrandizing. Instead, the wealth of the Thinite polity would most likely have benefited the on-going military and administrative efforts. Also, the King's presence in the north might have led to Inebu.Hedj [Memphis] gaining importance as royal residence and state administration centre to cover the whole of the kingdom. With the death of King Narmer, his son and successor inherited a territory which was in later times recognised as Egypt; from the First Cataract (Elephantine Island) in the Nile Valley to the Mediterranean coastline of the Nile Delta.

### *The reign of King Aha: consolidating the State*

If the previous reign is about establishing royal (Thinite) authority, then the reign of King Aha is about consolidating that authority. The process of consolidation seems to have been facilitated by the cessation of large-scale hostilities within the territory of the Two Lands. Royal authority is:

- enhanced by elaborate display in tomb architecture and innovations in the rituals associated with the King's funeral;
- strengthened by a policy of integrating the former West Delta polity into the Thinite state and by accentuating the position of the goddess Neith in relation to that of the principal queen;
- and secured by initiating a policy to remove the threat of a powerful political-economic rival south of the Two Lands (Wilkinson 1999, 2000; Bestock 2007; Dreyer 2007; van Wetering & Tassie 2006: 845-846).

The extent of the territory now under the control of the King probably necessitated a policy whereby the King is seen in all parts, especially the important centres, of the Two Lands. This royal tour was as much a political and religious event as it was administrative (Wilkinson 1999: 220-221; van Wetering 2004: 1057). The tour seems to have been well established by the end of the reign of King Aha (Wilkinson 2000a: 90-91). On this tour the King would have resided for a while in all the major centres of the Two Lands: This [Abydos], Nekhen [Hierakonpolis], Sais etc, although it is likely that the King and his court spent considerable time at Inebu.Hedj [Memphis], the administrative centre of the Two Lands. This partially itinerant King and court had the social-political effect of distancing the King from his important kinship groups, in both This [Abydos] and Nekhen [Hierakonpo-

lis]. This process effectively changed the stage on which the King interacted from that of a proto-kingdom environment where kinship / reciprocity ties limited the space in which a ruler could manoeuvre to an early state environment where there are less constraints upon the ruler to use his coercive powers as well as military-economic powers in general (Campagno 2003: 25-26, 29, 33).

It is clear that during the reign of King Aha his royal tomb complex at Abydos Umm el-Qa'ab went through one or more architectural innovations / enlargements, transforming a simple double-chambered tomb (B13/14) into a multi-chambered burial complex with a queen's burial, numerous subsidiary graves and animal graves (Bestock 2007: 52-70). The extraordinary display of wealth visible in the royal mortuary monuments belonging to King Aha and his court: tomb complex (Abydos Umm el-Qaab), cult complex (Abydos north cemetery<sup>14</sup>), and royal mastaba tombs<sup>15</sup> (Naqada and North Saqqara) can be seen as enhancing the royal authority. These monuments were a potent, highly visible and imposing device to project the power of that authority so as to coerce the inhabitants of the Two Lands to comply with royal authority, be it the King or his representatives (royal princes and state officials, most importantly the state tax collector). The early stage of the royal tomb complex is still very much in line with the development up to the previous reign, the subsequent enlargements and other innovations point to the needs of the new political entity: to display on both earthly and celestial levels the royal authority. This elaborate tomb complex should however not be seen as a prime indicator for the identification of King Aha as the first King of the First Dynasty (contra Dreyer 2007) but rather as the outcome of the resources King Aha had at his disposal. Some of these made possible by the actions of King Narmer.

At least two labels show King Aha on a royal visit to Sais and the temple of the Goddess Neith (Petrie 1901: pl. IIIa-nr. 5-6; Wilkinson 1999: 71, 221). These labels seem to testify to a distinct act of integrating the former West Delta polity, subjugated in the previous reign, into the Thinite state by according Sais and its Goddess Neith and Buto royal favour. The administrative arrangement of the First Dynasty divides the Delta into two parts; a western part and an eastern part (Wilkinson 1999: 139). This might be a result of the differential way the two parts of the delta were incorporated into the Thinite state. These royal visits were part of a policy to strengthen royal authority in the West Delta (Wilkinson 2000b:

14 There might also have been a cult complex / funeral shrine of King Aha at Saqqara, the royal cemetery of Memphis (van Wetering 2004: 1063-1064).

15 With royal mastaba tombs (at North Saqqara, Naqada) is implied a mastaba tomb for a member of the royal family, not necessarily a tomb belonging to a King.

393), and to avoid unrest in this particular region (and its main centres Sais and Buto) that had only recently been brought under Thinite control. Also, part of this state policy seems to have been to promote a relationship between the (principal) queen of the royal household and the Goddess Neith of Sais. By tying the Goddess Neith to the Thinite queen, probably in the role of high priestess, the danger of the temple of Neith becoming a focal point of resistance against Thinite rule was contained. Queen Neith-Hetep is the first queen with the name component Neith, a name-component that was favoured during the First Dynasty. It seems most likely that Neith-Hetep was the daughter of King Narmer, and she seems to have been one of the principal queens of King Aha. Her name '*the Goddess Neith is Satisfied*' and the fact that her name is written within a *serekh* but with the sign of Neith where Horus usually stands, all point at this queen being pivotal in Thinite integration policy towards the West Delta. It is unclear if she had been named Neith-Hetep from birth (thus during the reign of King Narmer), or if that name was given to her for specific political-religious reasons at the time of her installation as principal queen of King Aha. The latter assumption seems the most likely. During the reign of King Aha, Queen Neith-Hetep therefore seems to have held a religious office (but politically significant) in the cult of Neith and as a sign of that office, she wrote her name in a so-called Neith-*serekh*. A number of later queens (during the First Dynasty) are known which might signify that the policy established in the early First Dynasty continued (or the situation within the West Delta, especially Sais and Buto necessitated its continuation). On the other hand, it might signify that the popularity of Neith meant that queens continued to be associated with the Goddess Neith after the usefulness of the integration policy had ceased. Queen Neith-Meret (reign of King Djet – King Den) also seems to have had access to / right to use a Neith-*serekh*, so it is possible that the other (principal) queens with the Neith component had a similar role in the cult of Neith and access to / use of a Neith-*serekh*<sup>16</sup>.

16 The *Neith-serekh* has been identified as a symbol of regency by a queen based primarily on linking the regency of Queen-mother Neith-Meret for her son, King Den, with the *Neith-serekh* of this queen (Kaplony 1963: abb. 730). There is a discrepancy between the reign of King Aha and the reign of King Djer of either 1 month + 15 days or 13 months + 20 days (Wilkinson 2000: 92-93) which might signify a regency-period, and this tentative regency has sometimes been linked with Queen Neith-Hetep (Seipel 1980). However, there are major problems arising from this interpretation as it implies that [1] queen Neith-Hetep was still alive after the death of King Aha and she was therefore definitely not buried during the king's reign at Naqada; [2] the regency of queen Neith-Hetep was already known during the reign of King Aha as she already has the Neith-*serekh* when king Aha was still alive whereas a regency only becomes an issue after the death of a king, and [3] the connection Neith-*serekh* - queen-regency is based on the connection Queen-regent Neith-Meret and her Neith-*serekh* whereas the linking is not based on solid evidence, and is the existence of a *Neith-serekh* for Queen-regent Neith-Meret doubtful (Roth 1997: 111-112).

Funeral gifts decorated with the White Crown found within a tomb complex (Williams 1986: figs. 40-c, 55, 165-b, 166, 168-b) assigned to the rulers of the Nubian polity, centred on Faras-Qustul (Campagno 2003: 33) point at non-violent / diplomatic / economic contact between Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] and the Nubian polity during the period immediately preceding the Unification of the Two Lands / First Dynasty (Wilkinson 2000b: 390; van Wetering and Tassie 2006: 845-846). The rock-cut inscriptions at Gebel Sheikh Suleiman, however, point at hostile contact if the scorpion can be identified as a ruler from Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] in conflict with a ruler of the Nubian polity (Wilkinson 2000b: 390). By the early First Dynasty / reign of King Aha the relations seem to deteriorate further. To secure the southern border and to eliminate a growing political-economic rival to the south, a policy of military action against the neighbouring Nubian polity was instigated during the reign of King Aha as indicated by a label and continued in the succeeding reign (Petrie 1901: III-nr. 2; Wilkinson 1999: 71; van Wetering & Tassie 2006: 845-846).

### *The Unification of the Two Lands*

Within the reigns of King Narmer and King Aha, the *Unification of the Two Lands* took place and the expansion of the Thinite polity resulted in creating an immense territory – from the Mediterranean Sea to the First Cataract – under a single central authority, one of the most remarkable features of early Egyptian development. The dynamics of increasing complexity within societies along the Nile have been discussed elsewhere (Hassan 1988) as well as the need for an increasingly complex constellation of religious beliefs to develop alongside the social-political development of early Egypt (Hassan 1992). Suffice it to say, all political activities of the state are to a high degree steeped in religious ideology.

The sealings and labels of the early First Dynasty point at a complex administration with taxation and tribute within a mostly agricultural society of numerous small communities and a few large cities along the Nile (Hassan 1988). The reign of King Narmer can then best be seen as concluding a long process of establishing a centralised polity (the Thinite expansion process), whereas the reign of King Aha is the start of a process of consolidation, strengthening the royal authority and expanding the state administration. This process can be tracked throughout the Old Kingdom with a significant improvement during the early Third Dynasty (Wilkinson 1999: 139). The two reigns signify a period of fundamental change for the Thinite ruler and his direct family. The needs of Thinite warfare organisation and the enlarged administration necessitated changes in the political-admin-



istrative system, thus providing the (senior) members of the royal family with new opportunities, be they religious or administrative. The greater wealth (from tribute / taxation and expanding access to natural resources) now flowing to the king and his administration facilitated the means to expand royal display / status, re-distribute wealth to royal relatives, state officials, temple officials and trustees, and enlarge the administration with functions for members of the higher elite.

By the late Old Kingdom, under political pressure for establishing a nationally inclusive identity, the historical event of the *Unification of Two Lands* was transformed into a propaganda-ideological tool to create the construct of a Lower Egyptian Kingdom and an Upper Egyptian Kingdom, thus including the whole of the territory of the Old Kingdom state in the narrative of how that state was formed. The meaning of the symbols and devices that were so intimately connected with the history of the original Two Lands, This [Abydos] and Nekhen [Hierakonpolis] as well as the historical events of the process of state formation were changed to suit the political needs of the day. These symbols, devices, and images were kept, but altered to include the whole unified country. The *Unification of the Two Lands* now implied that a Kingdom of Upper Egypt unified the country by the fusion with a Kingdom of Lower Egypt. This kind of political-ideological propaganda, whereby a historical event is changed to suit later political needs and where the outer trappings of the event are kept but the meaning completely changes, is an established process in human political dealings (Suny 2001). In the same vein, it seems the crowns of the Two Lands underwent a significant geographical shift in dynastic times (again probably late Old Kingdom). No longer is the White Crown tied to the southern of the Two Lands (Nekhen [Hierakonpolis]), and the Red Crown to the northern one (This [Abydos]) but the first becomes the Crown of Upper Egypt and the latter the Crown of Lower Egypt. These acts were propaganda tools to forge an inclusive national identity encompassing the whole of Egypt (meaning the Nile Valley north of the First Cataract and the Nile Delta, or rather *Kmt* / Kemet ~ the black Land).

### ***The Royal Family of the (early) First Dynasty, and their role in the King's administration***

That the court of a King consisted of several queens and their children as well as the brothers, uncles, sisters and aunts of the reigning King is made clear by the inscriptional evidence. This extended royal family must have been regulated by a rank hierarchy, especially among the queens and princes (Roth 2001: 13;

Schmitz 1976). This ranking system, nonetheless, is difficult to recognise within the archaeological record. As stated above, during the reigns of King Narmer and King Aha opportunities arose for members of the royal family to function in the increasingly complex state administration of the kingdom of the Two Lands.

*The Queens, their roles within the court and in the state administration*

The funerary context of certain females who – based on their titles – can be identified as queens indicates that widely different types of graves were allocated to the queens during the First Dynasty. As funerary evidence is our most extensive archaeological resource, the wide range of grave types might be taken as indicative of ranking among queens. The elaborate tomb complex (including subsidiary graves) of Queen Neith-Meret at Abydos Umm el-Qa'ab, indistinguishable from a King's tomb complex, can be taken as an indication of the rank of this queen<sup>17</sup> whereas tombs that are completely indistinguishable from non-royal graves within the King's royal tomb complex are also identified as belonging to queens and these queens must have ranked much lower within the King's court (Roth 2001: 11).

At the beginning of the reign, the King's mother probably played an important role in her son's court (Roth 2001: 303). If the King's mother was not a principal or senior queen in the court of the previous reign, the principal queen (especially if she was the daughter of the principal queen) of her son's court might outrank the King's mother from the start. If, on the other hand, the King's mother was a senior queen or even the principal queen she will probably have been the foremost queen in her son's court. It cannot be stated conclusively that the mother of the King is a queen in the court of the previous King (Roth 2001: 9-10) but this seems very likely. It can, however, be assumed that the King is a son of a King, meaning legitimate succession followed the principle of father to son (and the added possibility of father to son to full brother so the latter King is still a son of a King). The Royal Annals (Palermo Stone) underline this principle as only the King's mother is mentioned, implying that it was superfluous to mention who the King's father was. Depending on her status and the age of her son at his coronation, the influence of the King's mother might even extend into the political arena. The title *djd.t ikh.t nb.t (nefr.t) iri(.t)=tw n=s* ~ «Who says, it will be done» connected to

<sup>17</sup> Queen Neith-Meret is the only queen buried within the royal cemetery at Abydos whose tomb is fully independent of a King's tomb complex. All other identified tomb structures belonging to a queen are an integral part of a King's tomb complex. As such, the unique occurrence of an independent tomb complex for Queen Neith-Meret indicates that the position of this queen and her role in the state administration is extraordinary (although the favour bestowed by a son on his mother should not be overlooked in this unique situation).

certain queen mothers points at this influence (Roth 2001: 303). The situation is different when at the King's death his heir apparent is still a minor and in need of a regent. His mother would then be a primary candidate, but only if her status in the court of the deceased King permitted her such a powerful role. Otherwise, it seems most likely that the principal queen of the court of the deceased King will probably be queen-regent to the new King.

The importance / status and influence of the principal queen would grow the longer she held that position (or could even strengthen it by producing a male heir). Presumably, one of the spheres in which the principal queen participates is in the state religion, so as to further the political aims of the King. The Neith-*serekh* as a symbol of religious office, presumably high priestess, in the cult of Neith (as part of the state policy to integrate the West Delta polity into the Thinite state) can be taken as case in point. Another queen who would gain influence and importance in the court (at the end of the reign) is the mother of the presumptive heir, irrespective of her status before the birth of her son.

### *Princes functioning in the state administration*

A King's son seems only identifiable through so-called prince-seals: sealings showing the King's name (usually in a *serekh* symbol) and closely associated a name apparently belonging to a royal prince (Helck 1963: 72-73). The appearance of a prince-seal in a specific reign does not conclusively imply that the prince named with the King is necessarily that King's son as it seems feasible the King's (half-) brothers can also be named.

It would seem that half-brothers, younger full brothers, and sons, if they had reached the age appropriate for such functions, played a pivotal role in the centralized state administration<sup>18</sup>. These princes are closely linked to the King and can through their close physical relationship act, as a 'proxy' for the King at strategic places around Egypt (superseding any local hierarchy or kinship groupings). Even if the King and his court (including the holders of the most important state offices) were itinerant part of the two-year cycle during the so-called Following of Horus (Wilkinson 2000a: 90-91; van Wetering 2004: 1057), the King would not be able to be everywhere where his attention was needed. As such, having reliable proxies permanently stationed at strategic places around the country to carry out the King's wishes, to oversee the local economic facilities, and to keep potential

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<sup>18</sup> It is only at the end of the Fourth dynasty / early Fifth Dynasty that the record shows that non-royal elite could reach high office (Roth 1993) although tied within royal control mechanisms (Kanawati 2003: 56-57).

places of unrest under control benefited the state administration. The close relationship between princes and King can be beneficial to the state administration but at the same time, it could be a liability for the King. Depending on the rules of succession, certain princes are potential threats because they can stage or be involved in a coup attempt against the King. Most certainly younger full brothers who have the same claim to the throne as the King himself could be considered such threats. Under these circumstances, it would be imprudent to give such a prince a position of (regional) importance where he could build a powerbase in opposition to the King. The same applies to the King's sons when they reach maturity, in particular the presumptive heir to the throne. Half-brothers of the King (be they older or younger), and sons of queens of a lesser status would be less of a threat as they depend on the King for positions and not have a strong enough claim to the throne. These princes would be the ideal candidates to act as proxies for the King at strategic places around the country. One would expect Inebu. Hedj [Memphis] to be such place as the King does not permanently reside at the administrative centre. Other potential places where a royal prince might be stationed to act as the King's proxy could be places of economic importance.

#### **THE ROYAL TOMB OF NAQADA AND ITS SOCIAL-POLITICAL CONTEXT**

The tomb's architecture, its location and the status of the owner provide clues about the social-political context of the tomb and its occupant. The architecture as well as the contents of the Royal Tomb are both remarkable. The elaborate niche-façade and the tomb's size are impressive, while the contents are to a high degree similar to the contents of the tomb complex of King Aha at Abydos Umm el-Qaab and seemingly of similar status to the royal mastaba tomb ES.3357 at North Saqqara (Kahl et al 2001: 183-185). ). The re-discovery of the tomb by F. A. Hassan and the WSU team now makes its location secure: cemetery PWT112, which is located about halfway between the settlement-site Kh3 and cemetery-site Kh6, southwest of modern Naqada (Fig. 4). The distance to South Town / Nubt is approximately 7 km, which argues against a connection between this cemetery and the settlement of South Town / Nubt. In fact, the community at South Town / Nubt [Naqada] does not seem to have had much political significance during the early Old Kingdom (First Dynasty – Third Dynasty), as most, if not all, references refer to the God Seth. By the late Old Kingdom, Nubt had become completely insignificant (Baer 1981). The large settlement, Kh3, is nearby but no firm traces of First Dynasty occupation have been found. However, no investigation of the floodplain area actually took place where those occupation layers might have be

found. According to Baer (1981), the cemetery with the Royal Tomb as well as other cemeteries in the area seem to be connected to Qus. To date the earliest remains at Qus date to late Old Kingdom (Sixth Dynasty), it is located within the floodplain thus it is very possible its associated cemeteries are located on spurs of the low desert of the nearest Nile Bank (Makris 1999: 657-658). There is a distance of about 6km between PWT.112 and Qus. The royal mastaba tomb at Naqada can best be compared with the royal mastaba tomb, ES.3357 at North Saqqara which can most likely be assigned to prince Het. The location of the tomb, overlooking the city of Inebu.Hedj [Memphis], makes it likely that prince Het held a high office in the state administration and was based at Inebu.Hedj [Memphis]. Both the time frame and the potential threat of Inebu.Hedj [Memphis] becoming a power-base for a prince, seems to argue against an identification of Prince Het as a son of King Aha<sup>19</sup>. As a son of King Narmer (Wilkinson 1999: 71), Prince Het might have entered the state administration in the second half of his father's reign and would have continued in this function into the reign of his half-brother, King Aha. If this interpretation is correct it has important political consequences, for on the basis of tomb ES.3357, it is frequently assumed that Inebu.Hedj [Memphis] as principal political centre was only established during the reign of King Aha (Wilkinson 1999: 71). Although the princely burials at both Naqada and North Saqqara cannot be more precisely dated than within the reign of King Aha, it seems very likely that Prince Het and Prince Rehit held office already during the reign of King Narmer. Thus, the founding of Inebu.Hedj [Memphis] as a political centre can be pinpointed to the reign of Narmer.

### *The identity of the occupant of the Royal Tomb at Naqada*

The following names have been found inscribed on objects found with the Royal Tomb: Narmer, Aha, Neith-Hetep, Rehit, Het and Meri.iti<sup>20</sup> (Kahl et al 2001: 179; Kahl and Engel 2001: 27). The Royal Tomb has been assigned to either Queen Neith-Hetep based on the display of wealth (Petrie 1901: 4; Kahl et al 2001: 185) or to Prince Rehit (De Morgan 1897: 165; Kaplony 1963: 560-561; Seipel 1980: 8). The 'presence' of King Narmer in the form of a small label (seem-

19 The absence of the name of King Narmer might be an argument against the identification as a son of King Narmer but the absence of certain names within the assemblage of a plundered tomb cannot be taken as conclusive.

20 It is unclear who Meri.iti is, possibly a prince (it is tempting to link this name to the later king Djer who also carried the name Iti [Wilkinson 2000: 186] but this can in no way be substantiated) or a princess. It is also possible that Meri.iti was the wife of prince Rehit. There is a possibility that objects naming a princess identified by "three fishes" were also present in the tomb (Kaplony 1963: 613) but this is not confirmed by the re-investigation of the grave goods (Kahl et al 2001; Kahl and Engel 2001).

ingly attached to a funerary gift) can either indicate it was deemed important that the deceased King's name was present among the inscribed objects or that it was deemed important that something in the tomb indicated him (Rowland pers. comm. 2009). The label with the name of King Narmer and the funerary gift it was attached to, was either carved during the reign of King Aha especially for use in the tomb, or it must have been kept in storage specifically as a burial gift. The presence of King Aha is self-evident as the burial took place during his reign. The primary reason for linking Prince Rechit to this tomb is because of the high frequency of this name occurring on objects found within it (15 times). Only the name of King Aha occurs more times, whereas Queen Neith-Hetep is mentioned 10 times (Seipel 1980: 8, 11). The position of Queen Neith-Hetep is a lynchpin in the reconstruction of the family relations of the early First Dynasty. She is frequently identified as queen of the court of King Narmer and mother of King Aha (Adams and Ciałowicz 1997: 62; Wilkinson 1999: 6, 70), or as queen of the court of King Aha (Kaplony 1963: 591-592; Seipel 1980: 11). Queen Neith-Hetep seems more likely to have been a daughter of King Narmer and (half-) sister of King Aha as well as King Aha's principal queen. The name of Prince Rechit has been found within the royal tomb complex of King Aha at Abydos Umm el-Qaab (Petrie 1901: pl. II-15) and within the royal tomb located at Naqada (Kahl et al 2001: 179). In both contexts, the name of the Prince appears independently (object inscribed with name of the prince only) and associated with King Aha (object inscribed with the *serekh* of King Aha followed by the name of the prince). It is clear that the prince belonged to the royal family of the early First Dynasty with his father either being King Narmer or King Aha but based on the context it seems more likely to identify Prince Rechit as a son of King Narmer. He was either a younger full brother of King Aha or, more likely, the King's half-brother and thus probably a brother of Queen Neith-Hetep. The tomb and its contents imply that the owner had a high function within the state administration. This timeframe is difficult if Prince Rechit is a son of King Aha as this would mean that he reached an age old enough to hold office and functioned long enough in the state administration to attain high office and be buried by his father. Even if certain high offices were hereditary, a mature age would still be necessary.

King Narmer and King Aha can be excluded as the tomb's occupants so either Queen Neith-Hetep or Prince Rechit are the most likely candidates as owners of the tomb. However, one should be careful to assign the tomb based on names inscribed on objects as these could represent persons who donated a funerary gift (Kahl et al 2001: 178, 184) or that the object came from an estate that belonged

to this person (Rowland pers. comm. 2009). These names do, however, provide a reasonable dating context. Only a careful analysis of all available inscriptions and their location within the tomb might provide tentative insights. Besides the name of King Aha on an ivory plaque, the names of both Queen Neith-Hetep and Prince Rehit have been found on ivory vases in the burial chamber while the name of Prince Rehit has also be found on sealings from that chamber (De Morgan 1897: 161; Kahl et al 2001: 184). The name of Prince Rehit is mostly found on sealings (both with and without the name of King Aha), stone and ceramic vessels throughout the inner rooms (De Morgan 1897: 165, 168, 177, 184-185), whereas the name of Queen Neith-Hetep is found on ivory labels in room C and a small ivory vase in a the burial room as well as the bullae with the Neith-*serekh* (De Morgan 1897: 161, 163, 169). The distribution of the name of Prince Rehit indicated to De Morgan that this name had to be associated with the person buried in the tomb although he connected Rehit as a secondary name with Menes (De Morgan 1897: 165). The names of King Aha and Queen Neith-Hetep can be explained without identifying them as the person buried there, for they were the reigning monarch and chief wife – the most prominent persons in the kingdom – as well as close family relatives of Prince Rehit. The considerable presence of objects with the name of Prince Rehit can not be so easily explained, other than it belonging to the owner of the tomb.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is evident from the location of the Royal Tomb as well as the lack of First Dynasty activity at South Town / Nubt [Naqada] that the socio-political focus within the Naqada region had shifted southward by the early First Dynasty, focussing on the area of modern Naqada and Qus within the floodplain. Here the tomb structure of a prominent member of the royal family was erected, the burial taking place during the reign of King Aha. The rediscovery of this royal mastaba tomb (cemetery PWT-112) in 1981 during the WSU *Predynastic of Egypt* Project shows the potential for re-excavation of this important structure, most importantly to clarify architectural inconsistencies.

According to Wilkinson (1999: 6, 37, 70-71), Queen Neith-Hetep was buried in the Royal Tomb at Naqada and that the location of the Royal Tomb implies a Naqadian origin for her, even indicating that she was a heiress. This being the case, her union with the Thinite ruler Narmer can be identified as political union between This-Naqada, with the purpose of cementing political relations. King Aha, being the son of the Thinite King Narmer and Naqadian Heiress Neith-

Hetep, would then have had a strong support base for his rule. These assumptions are quite problematic, however, insofar as the incorporation of an independent Naqada polity into the Thinite state took place generations before the reign of King Narmer. Also the location of the Royal Tomb, away from South Town / Nubt [Naqada], does not allow for such a close linking of the Royal Tomb at Naqada and the Predynastic-Protodynastic remains at South Town / Nubt [Naqada]. Not Queen Neith-Hetep but Prince Rehit can be identified as the owner of the royal tomb at Naqada. The location of this princely burial at this specific place can be explained as the posting of a royal prince as the King's proxy in the economically important region of the Wadi Hammarat and its access to the resources of the Eastern Desert. His posting here seems to indicate that the prince was not in a position to be a threat to the King by building a political powerbase in the Naqada region to stage a coup uprising against King. Thus, it seems that Prince Rehit was a half-brother who did not have strong claims to the throne. Prince Rehit probably started his career in the state administration during the reign of King Narmer and either received his posting in the Naqada region from this King or from King Aha. He died during the latter reign and was buried under the supervision of his half-brother in an elaborate tomb structure with a well-adorned grave assemblage. It would seem a very real possibility that the King contributed to the construction of the tomb. It should be taken into account that the elite cemetery at North Saqqara where (senior) members of the royal family were buried during the First Dynasty and onwards, was not yet in use. The Mastaba Tomb ES.3357 was either still empty (under construction) or had just become the burial place of Prince Het. Both princes seem to have chosen to build their tombs at / near to their official residence or the King provide them with a tomb structure at the place of their posting.

As a result of the military activities in the north of the kingdom, King Narmer must have spent a degree of time away from Upper Egypt and the Thinite central place; This [Abydos]. This seems to have facilitated a system of royal management through the posting of a royal prince as the King's proxy at strategic places along the Nile. The burial of Prince Het in mastaba tomb ES.3357 at North Saqqara seems to be connected with this prince holding office at Inebu.Hedj [Memphis]. Presumably the decision to create such a high office at Inebu.Hedj [Memphis] and to place a (senior) royal prince there was taken by King Narmer, and this decision most likely stimulated the initiation of Inebu.Hedj [Memphis] as administrative centre of the Kingdom of the Two Lands (van Wetering 2004: 1057). A royal prince was, probably, also stationed at This [Abydos]. but no elaborate Mastaba



tomb of the early First Dynasty has been uncovered. This might be because the prince in question was the crown-prince, due to the status of This [Abydos]. The burial of Prince Rehit at Naqada is part of this system of royal management at strategic places. It is unclear when this system was put in place, but as it seems likely to identify both Prince Het and Prince Rehit as sons of King Narmer, the system seems to have already been in place during the latter part of King Narmer's reign.

The strategic importance of the Naqada region is indicated by a sealing found in Mastaba tomb 3 at the Kh2 cemetery, south of the PWT112 cemetery and of modern Naqada. The title on this sealing: *sealer of the golden things* (Kaplony 1981) underlines the importance of this area for the gold supply from the Eastern Desert and its distribution within the Two Lands. Another indicator of the connection between the Qus-Naqada area and gold procurement is also found at cemetery Kh2, where a crucible was found with traces of gold smelting<sup>21</sup>. As such, the royal tomb and its occupant had nothing to do with South Town / Nubt [Naqada] as argued by Wilkinson (1999: 337). The location and socio-political position of the occupant, Prince Rehit, points to the necessity for royal control over the distribution of gold mined in the Eastern Desert that entered the Kingdom of the Two Lands via the Naqada region. This distributive node, somewhere in the area of modern Naqada but as yet not located (possibly Qus), required the presence of a loyal member of the royal family with direct lines of communication to the King: Prince Rehit.

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21 This was only recently (2008) noticed when the crucible was analysed by a conservation-student at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL, and is based on preliminary investigations, and further scientific tests (utilising a SEM) have been conducted but were unable to confirm or contradict the preliminary results due to the fact that the crucible was cleaned too extensively during initial field investigation.

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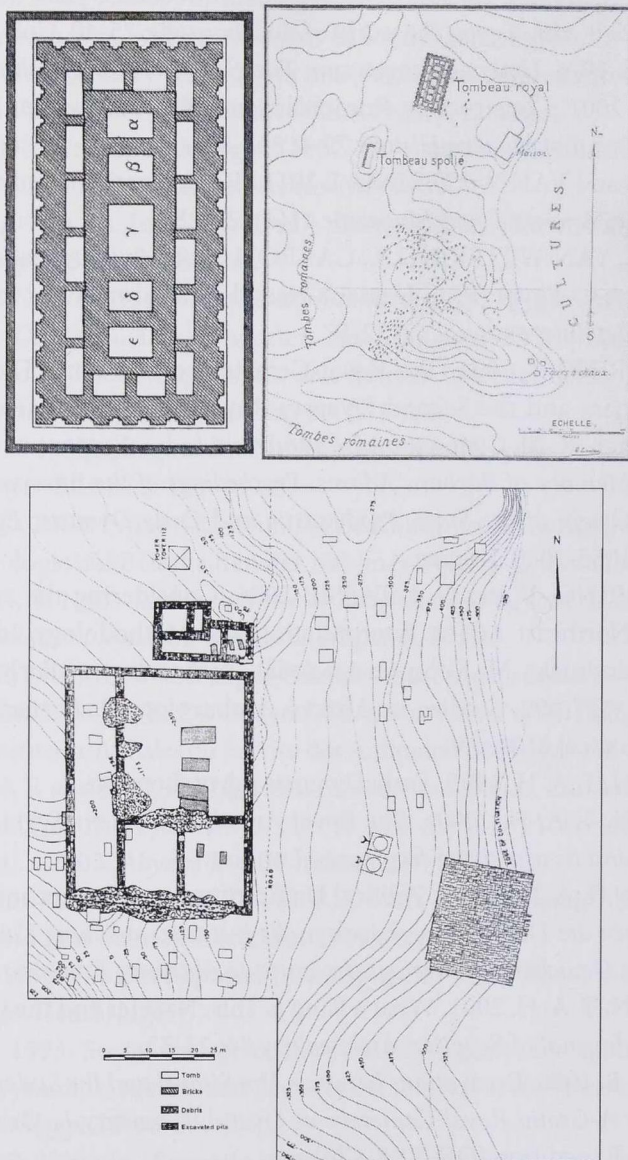


Fig. 1. Top left: plan based on the work of De Morgan and Borchardt, after Kaiser (Kahl and Engel 2001). Top right: cemetery of the Royal Tomb with 2 mastaba tombs at the northern end of the cemetery and early graves at the southern end (and Roman graves in the southwest), after De Morgan (1897). Below: plan of cemetery PWT.112 by WSU team, with the large structure of the Royal Tomb, a smaller structure north of it and the house that is also shown in the map of De Morgan, plan courtesy of Prof. Hassan.



Fig. 2. WSU team investigating the Royal Tomb and its extant walls, all photographs courtesy of Prof. Hassan.



Fig. 3. GoogleEarth images of cemetery PWT.112, top wide view showing the numerous pits and subsurface features in the area, and below (right to left), the house, the two shrines, the structure of the Royal Tomb (with the three pits in it), and the structure north of the Royal Tomb, and power tower 112 to the northwest. Images courtesy of GoogleEarth 2007.



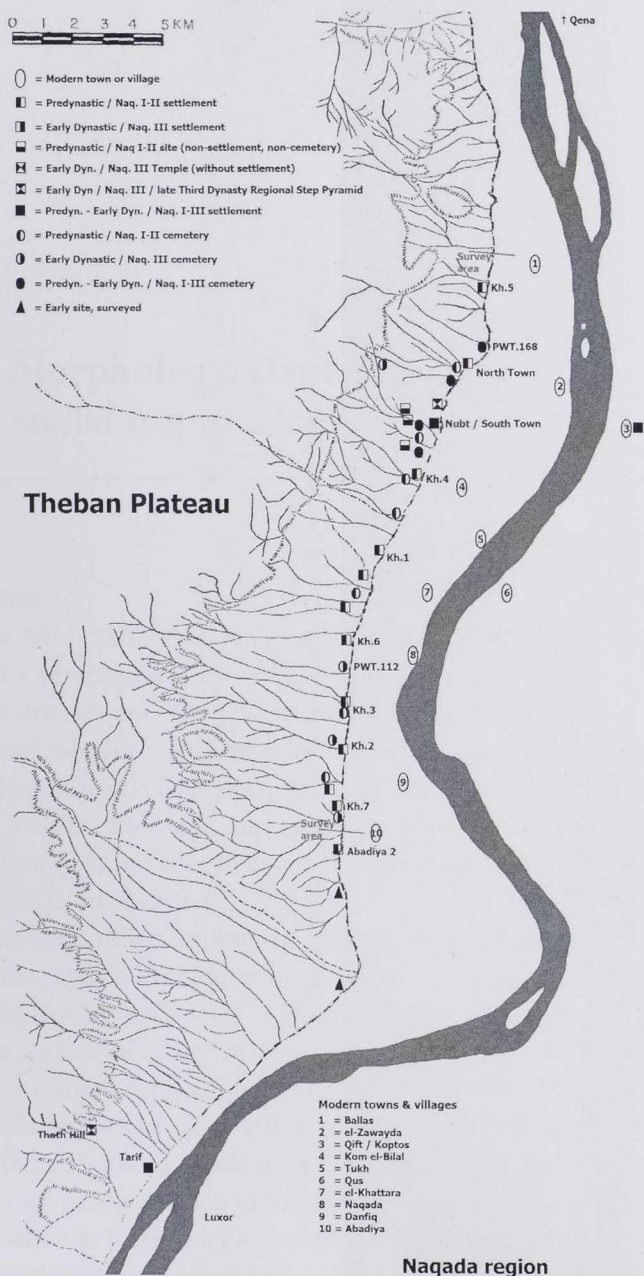


Fig. 4. Map of the Naqada region with sites mentioned in the text.  
 Courtesy of Prof. Hassan, re-drawn by J. van Weterenig.



Fig. 5. Cemetery PWT.112, photographed by, and courtesy of Prof. Hassan.