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Some general remarks on the origins of the state in Upper Egypt

This paper is dedicated with great sorrow to the memory of Lech Krzyżaniak, remembering the wonderful and friendly atmosphere of the Dymaczewo conferences.

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to outline a processional analysis of the origins of the state in Upper Egypt on the basis of a correlation between social, economic and ideological transformations in predynastic and early dynastic time, and to suggest a possible interpretation of this process. I have restricted this analysis to Upper Egypt for two reasons: 1) At present, despite many gaps in the record, it seems that the process of state formation started in Upper Egypt, where a cultural continuity from the early Predynastic Period to historical time can be identified (see e.g., Hoffman 1979; Trigger 1983; Fattovich 1984, Bard 1987, 1992a, 1994a, 1994b; Hassan 1988, 1997, 1998; Wenke 1989, 1991; Seeher 1991; Baines 1995; Assmann 2002: 27-45; Midant-Reynes 1992, 2003; Andelković 2004). 2) Despite more intense investigation in the last twenty years, the development of social complexity in Lower Egypt, encompassing the region of present Cairo and the Delta, is not yet fully understood (see Rowland 2004).

This process was apparently characterized by a progressive expansion of southern people to Middle Egypt in middle predynastic time and the eastern Nile Delta in late Predynastic time, and culminated with the incorporation of the whole lower Nile Valley into one territorial state in early dynastic time. The rise of the state was also characterized by the emerging of hierarchical societies and

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petty kingdoms in Upper Egypt in early to middle predynastic time and an early state in late predynastic time, as well as the progressive transformation of local leaders with a possibly ritual function into regional petty sacral kings and eventually a divine king from early to late predynastic times. The consolidation of a central administration, a state religion and the introduction of writing in middle to late predynastic time was another relevant aspect of this process (see Bard 1992b; 1999a; 1999b; Hassan 1997; 1998; Kaiser 1974; 1990; Kemp 1989; Köhler 1995; Spencer 1998; Trigger 1983; 1987; Wenke 1989; 1991; Wilkinson 1996; Andelković 2004). The following aspects of social, economic and ideological development in Upper Egypt in the late 5th to early 3rd millennia B.C. have been considered in this analysis:

1) Territory and demography:

- 1a Territorial expansion
- 1b Settlement pattern and urbanism
- 1c Demography

2) Economy:

- 2a Subsistence economy
- 2b Craft specialization
- 2c Trade
- 2d Navigation

3) Society: 3a Social hierarchy

- 3b Administration
- 3c Elite and/or royal cemeteries

4) State Ideology:

- 4a Religion
- 4b Temples
- 4c Funerary ideology

5) Kingship:

- 5a Regalia and royal rituals
- 5b Royal funerary rituals
- 5c Royal ideology.

The factual evidence is well known and has been described by many authors (see e.g., Petrie 1920; Massoulard 1949; Vandier 1952; Baumgartel 1955-1960; Arkell & Ucko 1965; Kaiser 1974; Krzyżaniak 1977; Trigger 1983; Bard 1994b; Wilkinson 1996; Midant-Reynes 1992; 2003). Therefore, the evidence will be quoted only when necessary. The paper is divided into three sections: overview of the available evidence; tentative interpretation of the process; conclusions.

State Formation in Upper Egypt: Basic Evidence

1a Territorial expansion

In the late 5th millennium B.C. the Badarian people occupied the regions around Asyut and along the Qena bend of the Nile with clusters between Hiw and Ab'adiya and near Nagada. In the early to mid-4th millennium B.C. the Nagada I people occupied most of Upper Egypt, with major concentrations around

Asyut, along the Qena bend as far as Gebelein, and around Hierakonpolis. In the mid-4th millennium B.C. the Nagada II people occupied the whole Upper Egypt from Abydos to Hierakonpolis and the region of Asyut, as well as the northern middle Egypt, and penetrated to the east as far as Gaza. In the late 4th millennium B.C. the Nagada III people occupied the whole valley, Lower Egypt, and the eastern Nile Delta. Eventually, in the early 3rd millennium B.C. the whole valley and Delta were incorporated into one territorial state, most likely as a consequence of a progressive military conquest by southern kings (see Baines & Malek 2002).

1b Settlement pattern and urbanism

In Badarian time settlements were apparently located on the terraces along the east bank of the Nile, as well as along some rivers in the Eastern Desert and perhaps on the Red Sea coast, suggesting seasonal movements from the alluvial plain to the bordering terraces and into the Eastern Desert (see Hassan 1980; Fattovich 1984).

In Nagada times, settlements were apparently clustered to form discrete territorial units, ca. 10/15 km long and sites spaced about 2 km apart. They included mainly temporary camps and semi-permanent villages in Nagada I time, and villages in Nagada II times (see de Morgan 1897; Fattovich 1984; Hoffman et al. 1986; Hassan 1993; Bard 1987; 1997; Craig Patch 2004). In Nagada II time large (urban) settlements appeared at Hierakonpolis, and most likely at Naqadah (Zuwaitah) (Kemp 1977; Fattovich 1984; Bard 1997). In Nagada III time Nagada probably declined as a major centre, Hierakonpolis was an urban settlement, and Abydos was a major ceremonial centre related to the royal cemetery and funerary cult of the late predynastic kings. Some settlements were probably protected by mud-brick walls (see Kemp 1989; Bard 1997).

In early dynastic time most likely the first capital city of unified Egypt was located at Thinis, near Abydos, but no evidence of this settlement has been found, so far (Kemp 1977; Bard 1997). Memphis in Lower Egypt apparently became a major centre at this time (Mortensen 1991).

1c Demography

The trend of demographic growth in Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt is still uncertain (Butzer 1999). Mortuary and settlement evidence point to a sharp increase in population from Nagada I to Nagada II times, with a greater density around Hierakonpolis, Nagada and Abydos. (Hassan 1980; Bard & Carneiro 1989; Bard 1997). However, the esteem of the population in predynastic time is debated and an average population between 200,000 and 800,000 has been suggested (Perez Lagarcha 1996).

2a Subsistence economy

Subsistence economy in Upper Egypt relied mainly on agriculture, and the farming techniques depended on the summer floods (Wetterstrom 1993, 1999), with a progressively decreasing role of hunting and fishing and increasing exploitation of domestic cereals and livestock from Badarian to Nagada II times. In Nagada III times agriculture was the dominant component of the economy (Fattovich 1984). The predynastic farming practices were most likely based on flood basin agriculture. The evidence from the Scorpio mace-head suggests that at the end of the 4th millennium floods were controlled with levees or dikes (Butzer 1976).

2b Handicrafts and art

Craft specialization progressively increased from Badarian time, when only the manufacture of stone vessels and possibly some copper may have required a more specialized skill, to Nagada II time (see Krzyżaniak 1977; Fattovich 1984; Hassan 1998; Takamia 2004). Most likely, some specialized craft centres appeared in Nagada I time (see Krzyżaniak 1977; Finkenstaedt 1981; Fattovich 1984). In Nagada II time specialized manufacturing centres were located in the Nagada-Ballas region and at Hierakonpolis. The wall paintings in Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis suggest that a „elite/royal“ art emerged in Nagada II c-d times (see Krzyżaniak 1977; Fattovich 1984; Kemp 1989; Bard 1997). A wide range of specialized artisans and artists were working for the king and the high rank officials in Nagada III and Early Dynastic time. The colossal statues of Min at Coptos, dating to the late Nagada III - early Dynasty I, suggest that a monumental art appeared at this time (see Krzyżaniak 1977; Fattovich 1984; Kemp 1989; Bard 2000).

2c Trade

The exploitation of raw materials from the marginal regions progressively increased from Badarian to Nagada III times. In Badarian and Nagada I time hard stone and copper from the Eastern Desert, and shells from the Red Sea coast were used. In Nagada II time raw materials from the Eastern and Western Desert were exploited, and obsidian was imported from Eritrea. In Nagada III times, copper mines in the Eastern Desert, hard stones and other minerals from the Eastern and Western Desert were used (see Baines & Malek 2002; Klemm, Klemm & Murr 2002; Zarins 1996).

The regional exchange networks are virtually unknown, but pottery evidence may point to an increase in local trade from Badarian to Nagada III times. Lower Egypt was surely included into a trade network with the south in Nagada II time (Fattovich 1984; Hassan 1998; Midant-Reynes 2003).

Long distance trade also progressively increased, including Palestine in Badarian time, Levant, Mesopotamia, Nubia, Sahara and Southern Red Sea in Nagada II and Nagada III time. There is no sure evidence of long-distance trade in Nagada I time, but the occurrence of lapis lazuli in some tombs points to the inclusion of Upper Egypt into an incipient long distance trade circuit with the Middle East (Krzyżaniak 1977; Fattovich 1984; Hassan 1998; Friedman 1999; Midant-Reynes 2003). In Early Dynastic times, trade with the Levant was dominant, as we can infer from the huge quantity of products from this region in the royal tombs of Dynasty I (Bard 2000; Midant-Reynes 2003).

2d Navigation

Regional and long distance trade was probably practiced along the Nile with boats (see Vinson 1994). In Badarian and Nagada I time small papyrus boats were used. In Nagada I time large boats with many oars appeared. In Nagada II times large incurved boats with many oars were surely used to navigate on the Nile, as far as Sayala in Lower Nubian (Engelmayer 1965), and perhaps in the Red Sea area (Zarins 1996). The Nagada II boats usually have a standard on the bow. The figures on the top of standards depicted on Nagada II jars, initially interpreted as possible symbols of gods (see e.g., Vandier 1949), most likely were symbols of descent groups (Moret 1923). In Nagada II c-d time elite large boats with a high stern were used, as well. In Nagada III times both large incurved boats without a standard and elite boats were used.

3a Society

Mortuary evidence points to an increasing social hierarchy in Upper Egypt from Badarian to Nagada III time, as we can infer from a great variability in posture of the bodies, shape and size of the graves, quantity, type, quality and location of the grave goods in the single burials, suggesting that burials reflected status and rank of the individuals (Fattovich 1979, 1982; Atzler 1981; Bard 1994a; Castillos 1998). The occurrence of groups of tombs sharing similar features (mainly in type of grave, and quantity and quality of grave goods) in Badarian and Nagadian cemeteries, as well as the apparent absence of a clearly cut differentiation in the type of grave, and quantity and quality of grave goods on age/sex basis (but age and sex are not always well defined in the anthropological record) through the whole cultural sequence may suggest that the burials reflected social segments and a social hierarchy based on descent groups (Fattovich 1988; Bard 1994a; Savage 1997; Midant-Reynes 2003).

A few richer tombs with over 10 artefacts may point to an incipient social hierarchy in Badarian time (Fattovich 1982; Castillos 2002). A firm evidence of social hierarchy dates to Nagada I-II time, when some burials with a great amount of grave goods appeared, suggesting some control over resources (Fat-

tovich 1982; Griswold 1992; Bard 1994a; Midant-Reynes 2003). The occurrence of tombs of officials at other provincial cemeteries as well as smaller tombs and simple pit graves dating to Dynasty I throughout Egypt is also evidence of an accentuated social stratification at this time (Bard 2000).

3b Administration

A form of administration arose in Nagada II times (Baines 1995; Kemp 1989). Clay sealings, sometimes with the impression of a roll-seal, were found in the Nagada II rural settlement at Hu (Nag Hammadi) and Nagada II/III settlement at Zuwaidah (Nagada) (Barocas, Fattovich & Tosi 1989; Bard 1996) and in the largest Nagada II and Nagada III tombs at Abydos (Dreyer et al. 1996). Roll-seals, similar to Mesopotamian seals, were collected in Nagada II graves at Zuwaidah (Nagada), Nag ed-Deir, Matmar, and in Nagada III graves at Zawijet el-Arjan and Abusir el Melek (Boehmer 1974a; 1974b).

At present, very few predynastic tombs, mainly dating to Nagada II c-d time, can be ascribed to officials on the occurrence of roll-seals (Boehmer 1974a; 1974b). They include both low status and elite graves suggesting that Predynastic officials belonged to different social groups, and were sometimes buried close to the chiefs (e.g., tomb T 29 at Zuwaidah). High rank officials and priests existed at the end of Dynasty 0 and in the 1st Dynasty they were a small kin group very close to the king (Emery 1961; Kaplony 1963-64; Edwards 1964; Baines 1995; Wilkinson 1999).

Beginning in Nagada II c-d time writing was used on seals and tags for administrative and/or recording purpose. Since Nagada III time writing was also used on royal commemorative art to display the ideology of the state (Kaplony 1963-1964; Bard 1992b).

3c Elite and/or royal cemeteries and royal palaces

Tombs of high status individuals dating to Nagada I time occur at Abydos and Hierakonpolis (Dreyer et al. 1998; Friedman 2004). High status elite (royal) cemeteries dating to Nagada II time occur at Hierakonpolis and Zuwaidah (Nagada) (Case & Payne 1962; Bard 1994a; Adams 1996; Friedman 2004), and some large tombs with evidence of clay sealings at Abydos, dating to Nagada II c-d times, may be the burial places of predynastic petty kings (Dreyer et al. 1996). Perhaps, „royal“ tombs also occurred in other cemeteries, as we can infer from some painted fragments of linen with scenes similar to those of Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis from a grave at Gebelein (Donadoni Roveri, D'Amicone & Leospo 1994). A royal cemetery appeared in Nagada III (Dynasty 0) time at Abydos. A small elite (royal?) cemetery with three large tombs dating to Nagada III was also found at Hierakonpolis (see Adams 1999; Dreyer 1999). Finally, the royal tombs of Dynasty I at Abydos and the contemporary tombs of high rank

officials at Saqqara point to a clear separation of the king and the elite from the rest of the population (Bard 2000).

There is no evidence of „royal“ palaces before Nagada III times. Beginning in Dynasty 0 the residence of the king became a major feature of the early state in Upper Egypt, and the palace had a symbolic role in the early royal ideology. Most likely, the palace had a multiple function, and served as a royal residence, a centre of the state administration, and a manufacturing centre for a palatine sophisticated craft and art. So far, the only archaeological evidence is the Early Dynastic palace of Khasekhemwy at Hierakonpolis, dating to the end of Dynasty II (Kemp 1989: 53-55).

4a Religion

The reconstruction of predynastic religion is still uncertain (Ries 1975). Some aspects of the religion can be inferred from iconographic evidence dating to Nagada and Early Dynastic times.

A frequent decoration with symmetrical convergent triangles framing a Y-, X- or star-shaped space, sometimes associated with symbols of mountains, plants, and water on Nagada I painted bowls may represent a regularly spaced universe organized according to the cardinal points (Raphael 1947: 109), and suggest that the idea of an ordered universe dates back to early Predynastic times. Female figures painted on D Class jars and some female figurines have suggested a goddess cult in Nagada II time (e.g., Hassan 1992), although no figurine from Predynastic graves can be safely related to divine figures (Ucko 1968). A bovine head surrounded by stars carved on a Nagada II/III palette from Gerzeh suggests that the sky was imaged as a cow (Donadoni 1955: 5), and may point to a sky-religion in late prehistoric times (see e.g., Wainwright 1938; Hassan 1992).

At present, there is no evidence of individual gods in Predynastic times (Hornung 1990). The frequent representation of wild animals, often associated with symbols of water, mountains and plants, on predynastic vessels and palettes, as well as the occurrence of animal burials in predynastic cemeteries suggests that the natural world was an important component of late prehistoric religion in Upper Egypt. In Nagada III times wild animals maintained an important ideological role as they are frequently represented on knife-handles and ceremonial palettes (Hornung 1990; Kemp 1989). Some animal graves at Hierakonpolis suggest that formal animal cemeteries occurred in Upper Egypt at this time (Adams 1996).

Two (masked?) figures carved on Nagada III ceremonial palettes suggest that the representation of deities with human body and animal head appeared in Nagada III times. These figures, along with the earliest representation of a cow-goddess with a human face (Hathor) on the Narmer's palette from Hierakonpolis

and the anthropomorphic statues of Min from Coptos, suggest that individual gods with specific attributes were distinguished at this time (Hornung 1990).

In early dynastic time the religion focused on sky-gods, such as Horus and Hathor, directly related to the king. Short inscriptions dating to Dynasties I and II and later annals suggest that a „pantheon” consolidated at this time, and included gods with a southern or northern origin (Emery 1961; Edwards 1964; Wilkinson 1999).

4b Temples

At present, there is a very scarce evidence of temples for the cult of the gods in Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt, although temples or shrines are represented on inscribed labels dating to Dynasty I (Kemp 1989; O'Connor 1992). A large ceremonial structure, dating to Nagada II c-d, was discovered at Hierakonpolis (Friedman 1996). Artefacts and deposits from early temples (Dynasties 0-I/II) have been excavated at Coptos, where two big statues of the god Min were discovered, at Abydos and Hierakonpolis (Bard 2000). Some architectural evidence of an early temple was found at Hierakonpolis (Fairservis 1983). An urban shrine dating to Early Dynastic times was discovered on Elephantine (Dreyer 1986; Kaiser et al. 1995).

4c Funerary ideology

Funerary ideology was a basic factor to strengthen the social ties of the individuals, and most likely to legitimize the rights to access to cultivable land, grazing areas and exploitable resources by descent from common ancestors buried in the village cemetery (Fattovich 1982; Bard 1992a).

The burials were usually oriented with the head to the south facing west, and probably reflected a symbolic relation of the hereafter with the sky (Fattovich 1982; Bard 1992a). The orientation of the body along the Nile and the occurrence of boats painted on Nagada I bowls and Nagada II jars, as well as model boats from Predynastic graves (Vandier 1952), may point to the belief in a journey in the afterlife. The discovery of a bowl filled with soil and containing some seeds of wheat in a Nagada II grave near Nagada suggests a belief in the renaissance after the death, which in historical times was connected with the cult of Osiris (Bard pers. com.).

In Early Dynastic time the burial customs of commoners were the same as in the Predynastic period. The bodies were buried in oval or oblong graves on the left side, the head to the south, grave goods were placed at the side of the burial. Only the artisans and servants were buried close to the royal tombs at Abydos and Saqqara and were often oriented to the north. Sometimes, a small stele with the name of the owner was located near the tomb (Emery 1961: 135-139).

In Dynasty I boat burials were sometimes associated with the tombs of officials, suggesting that at this time the journey in the afterlife was reserved to the elite (Wilkinson 1999). In turn, the carved stelae with offerings in tombs of the late Dynasty II at Helwan suggest that a mortuary cult of the elite consolidated at the end of the Early Dynastic period (see Barocas 1978).

5a Regalia and royal rituals

Most insignia and regalia of the Pharaoh and some rituals the king performed in Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom times surely descend from Upper Egyptian prototypes (Fattovich 1970; Hassan 1988; Baines 1995).

The kilt and the ostrich feathers may go back to Badarian times. The penis sheath, red crown, false tail, bow, as well as the hunt to the hippopotamus and the iconography of smiting enemies date back to Nagada I times. In particular, the red crown is represented on a Nagada I potsherd from Nagada (Wainwright 1923; Baumgartel 1975; Baines 1995; Midant-Reynes 2003). The hook-sceptre, the stick, the pear-shaped mace-head, the standards, and possibly the white crown, the ritual run, and a very singular ritual of the king capturing an antelope with the hands go back to Nagada II times (Fattovich 1970). This evidence suggests that the figure of the king was forged in Upper Egypt during the Nagada period, and indicates a symbolic link with hunting, herding and fighting, rather than farming (see Helck 1954; Hassan 1988).

5b Royal funerary rituals

The wall paintings in Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis provide a picture of the „royal“ ideology in Nagada II c-d times (Baines 1995). These paintings show boats, wild animals, scenes of hunting, dancing and sitting women, and scenes of fighting (see Vandier 1952; Monnet Saleh 1987). Boats, wild animals, and dancing women are frequently depicted on pots from Nagada I and Nagada II burials, and may reflect general beliefs about the afterworld. The scenes of hunting, fighting and smiting enemies are typical of this tomb, and may reflect a specific symbolism of the king.

The Pyramid Texts record two specific rituals, which were later included into the funerary ritual of the king in the Old Kingdom (Fattovich 1987): the disarticulation of the body, and the disjunction of the head from the body. Disarticulated bodies occur in predynastic burials since Nagada I times (Murray 1956; Fattovich 1982, 1988; Wengrow & Baines 2004), and probably survived as an elite and/or royal funerary ritual up to the early 4th Dynasty. This type of burial was rare and was probably reserved to specific individuals. In Nagada II time burials with a disarticulated body are often associated with rich graves, and at Zuwaidah (Nagada) disarticulated bodies occur in the elite tombs of Cemetery T (e.g., T 5, T 42). The disjunction and possibly later re-deposition of the head in

the burial occurs only in the cemeteries at Nagada, Ballas, Nag ed-Dir, and Adaima. This ritual appeared in Badarian times, but was more frequent in Nagada I and II times. These burials are not very frequent, and might have been restricted to a segment of the population (Fattovich 1982, 1988; Midant-Reynes 2003). Burials with the disjunction of the head at Nag ed-Dir and Adaima, dating mainly to Nagada I, are often poor (Fattovich 1988; Midant-Reynes 2003). At Zuwaidah (Nagada) burials with a disjunction of the head occur in rich tombs in Cemetery B (Petrie up.m.; Petrie & Quibell 1896).

In early dynastic times the royal funerary ideology greatly increased in complexity and integrated different predynastic elements into one system focusing on the king (see Wilkinson 2004). Funerary enclosures, where the cult of the king was practiced after the burial, were located to the northeast of the royal tombs and closer to the edge of cultivation at Abydos (see O'Connor 1989). The sacrifice of retainers, who had to accompany the king in the afterlife, most likely represented the total submission of people to the kings. They were usually buried in small pits surrounding the royal tombs at Abydos and Saqqara (see Baines 1995). The representation of a personage carrying a ladder in a scene of a possibly funerary ritual on an ivory tag of Djer (Dynasty I) from Saqqara (Emery 1961: fig. 21) may point to an astral destiny of the dead king (see Faulkner 1966). Finally, boat burials dating to the end of Dynasty II were associated with the royal mortuary cult at Abydos (O'Connor 1991, 1995).

5c Royal ideology

The scene of smiting enemies in Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis may suggest a military role of the kings in Nagada II times. This role surely increased at the end of the Predynastic period, just before the unification, when the king was represented in the form of a lion or bull destroying the enemies on ceremonial palettes (see Baines 1995), and was symbolically codified with the iconography of the king smiting enemies on Narmer's palette. The ceremonial stone maceheads of Scorpio and Narmer from Hierakonpolis, as well as some Early Dynastic ivory tags of Djer and Den (1st Dynasty) show the king as a focal figure of the state festivals, and personally performing some rituals (Emery 1961; Millet 1990).

The earliest possible evidence of a sacral kingship dates back to Nagada III times when the kings were associated with wild animals, which were later identified with different gods. Wild animals were also included in the names of Dynasty 0 and early Dynasty I kings (Baines 1995). The palette of Narmer suggests a direct association of the king with the sky-god Horus, and his female counterpart Hathor at the end of the Predynastic times. In Early Dynastic times the falcon symbolizing Horus always surmounted the royal serekh with the name of the king, suggesting a possible identification of the king with the god. At pre-

sent, we do not know if the king was a god-king or was an agent of the god and derived the authority from him (Posener 1960; Hassan 1992; Baines 1995).

The process of State formation in Upper Egypt: a tentative interpretation

Table 1 is a tentative synthesis of the whole process and represents the temporal trajectories of the single components and their possible correlation. In the last column a speculative interpretation of the process, based on a competition between descent groups, is suggested. This table shows that the evolutionary trend in the process of state formation in Upper Egypt was characterized by:

- 1) Emerging homogenous cultural area, suggesting some interaction between local communities; low demographic growth; subsistence economy based on hunting-gathering, domestic livestock and agriculture; low craft specialization; limited local exchanges; small boats; small settlements; low social hierarchy with an emerging elite; common funerary ideology; emerging personages with specific features in Badarian time.
- 2) Consolidation of a homogenous cultural area, suggesting a more intense interaction between local communities; increasing agriculture; increasing population; increasing craft specialization, with at least one main specialized centre; expanding local exchanges; use of large boats with many oars; emerging settlement hierarchy; increasing social hierarchy with high status elite tombs; emerging differentiation in the funerary ideology; emerging concept of an ordered universe; presence of personages with insignia and performing rituals mainly related to hunting, and with military features in Nagada I time.
- 3) Expansion into Middle Egypt and Lower Egypt; increasing agriculture, maybe with use of artificial basins; increasing population; increasing craft specialization with some major centres of production; expanding regional and interregional exchanges and trade; use of large incurved boats with many oars and standards and elite boats; emerging urbanism; increasing social hierarchy with emerging chiefs/petty kings and elite cemeteries; emerging administration; increasing differentiation in funerary ideology between people, elite and chiefs/petty kings; natural world and sky as main elements of religion; temples; chiefs/petty kings with insignia and performing rituals mainly related to hunting, pastoralism and with military features in Nagada II times.
- 4) Expansion into eastern Nile Delta; increasing agriculture with use of basins; strong craft specialization with at least one major centre of production and emerging palatine art and craft; expanding interregional exchanges and trade; use of large incurved boats with many oars and no standard and elite boats; consolidation of urbanism; strong social hierarchy with kings, elite cemeteries

and a royal cemetery; increasing administration; increasing differentiation between elite and kings in funerary ideology; sky religion; major temples; kings with mainly military features and performing great festivals in Nagada III time.

- 5) Incorporation of the whole lower Nile Valley into one territory; agriculture with basins; strong palatine art and craft specialization; expanding interregional exchange and trade, mainly to the Levant; use of large elite and royal boats; royal palace as focus of the settlement pattern; very strong social hierarchy with kings at the top and a royal cemetery; articulated administration; strong differentiation between elite and kings in the funerary ideology, and progressive incorporation of all funerary ideological elements into the king; individual deities and formation of a proper „pantheon” with increasing number of temples; sacral kings performing great state festivals in Early Dynastic time.

This evolutionary trend suggests that the formation of the state consisted of two interacting processes: a) an economic and political process of progressive transformation of a household economy into a palace economy, and local leaders into paramount kings and eventually pharaohs, and b) an ideological process of progressive transformation of a ritual leader into a sacral king.

a) Household vs. Palace: the economic and political process in Upper Egypt

The main aspect of the state formation in Upper Egypt was the progressive transformation of a household economy in early predynastic times into a „palace“ (state) economy in Early Dynastic times, when the Pharaoh had complete control of land property and external trade as well as the exploitation of mineral resources in the Eastern Desert and Sinai (see Fattovich 1984; Wilkinson 1999; Bard 2000; Baines & Malek 2002). At present, in the absence of exhaustive settlement and off-site evidence, this process can be tentatively outlined as follows:

- 1) In Badarian times, household economy was dominant. Most likely, subsistence economy relied on individual and collective activities. Individual activities were hunting, fishing, and gathering in the alluvial plain. Collective activities were practiced at a household scale and likely included cultivation and animal husbandry at the edge of the alluvial plains and the low desert. Hunting big savannah and river mammals and reptiles may have required collective action, maybe under the direction of ritual leaders. Handicrafts were most likely practiced at a household scale, although the manufacture of stone vases required a specific skill and may have been practiced by a few households only. Products could circulate at a local scale. The occurrence of a few richer graves suggests that some individuals may have enjoyed a greater affluence and were possibly involved with some regional and incipient interregional trade.

- 2) In Nagada I times, a household economy similar to the earlier one was probably still dominant. The emerging of specialized manufacturing centres (such as Nagada) and increasing craft specialization, most likely, expanded the network of regional trade. The Nile became the main road connecting separate communities together, and large boats were built for a longer navigation. In particular, the evidence of boats with many oars points to a collective activity, not directly related to subsistence, at a larger scale than household, perhaps at descent group scale, under the possible direction of petty leaders. This may have also stimulated: a) A more rational crop production to generate a surplus to support collective production and exchange activities at a regional scale. b) The emergence of leading descent groups and within them leading individuals with a consequent increasing social hierarchy at a descent group and individual scale (see also Savage 1997). c) The request of prestige materials and goods, such as, e.g., lapis lazuli, by the incipient elite, and the development of a larger network of external contacts and exchanges.
- 3) In Nagada II times, the occurrence of at least two major centres of production at Nagada and Hierakonpolis most likely generated a more articulated network of exchange and competition between elite descent groups within the centres, and between the centres. Actually, both Nagada and Hierakonpolis had strategic locations to exploit the mineral sources in the Eastern Desert and to get to the Red Sea, as well as to control the Nile route to the north (Nagada) and to the south (Hierakonpolis). This may have also stimulated a more rational control of cultivated land to increase crop production for sustaining the new exchange system and specialized activities. In particular, the progressive diffusion of rectangular houses in this phase may point to a more regular organization of space, which may also reflect more precise division of cultivated land by means of basins (see also Lehner 2000). The competition between leading descent groups may have stimulated a greater request of exotic materials to symbolize their prestige, expanding the exchange circuits with a consequent increase of long distance trade.

Initially, different descent groups and their leaders were involved with this process. The number of standards on the prow of big boats depicted on pots at Nagada suggests that at least eleven descent groups were initially active. Moreover, the competition between descent groups at a local scale stimulated the rise of single dominant groups and the transformation of their leaders in petty kings. A consequence of this change in the social system was an increased request of exotic materials as status symbols of the kings and their kinship and a greater impulse to long-distance trade under the control of the new dominant elite.

Long distance trade might have been a strong incentive for the elite to control the regional economy, production of craft goods, trade routes, and access to sources of prized goods and/or raw materials, and the control over trade, routes, or access to resources would have led to increased militarism, reinforcing the authority of the local leaders as war-chiefs (Bard 1987, 1989). At the same time, control on the circulation of goods (and possibly tribute) was improved and an administration arose. The introduction of mud-bricks may suggest that a standard measurement was introduced to better define the limits of cultivable land of households and villages under the control of the king.

- 4) In Nagada III times, competition between local centres concluded with the rise of a dominant paramount king (see Kemp 1989; Trigger 1987). The king controlled all economic activities with the support of his descent group, and performed some crucial agricultural activities, such as e.g., the opening of basins or the construction of ditches, suggesting that the king already had some control on land tenure and crop production. Abydos became the main ceremonial centre for the cult of the dead king of this early state, and the palace was the core of the whole system.
- 5) In Early Dynastic times, after the unification of the Nile Valley under one king, the Upper Egyptian system was applied to the whole country, and a strong centralized territorial state arose.

b) From ritual leader to sacral king: the ideological process

Archaeological, iconographic and textual evidence dating from Predynastic to Early Dynastic times clearly points to: a) a progressive legitimization of the royal and elite power through a manipulation of the funerary ideology; b) an increasing role of the king as a military and ritual leader; c) the progressive development of a sacral kingship (Baines 1995; Bard 1992a; 1992b, 1994a; 1994b; Fattovich 1970; 1984; 1987; Hassan 1988; Kemp 1989). At present, the following changes in ideology can be outlined:

- 1) Most likely, the Pharaoh descended from a personage with a specific status (possibly a ritual leader) dating back to Badarian/Nagada I time. Some elements – such as the false tail, the bow, and the hunt of hippopotamus – may relate this personage to hunting rituals. Apparently, the disarticulation of the body was a funerary ritual reserved to this personage. The red crown might have been a specific symbol of this personage, at least in the Nagada region.

Ritual leaders, providing a possible analogy, occur among the Borana (southern Ethiopia) and the Meru (northern Kenya), as well as other Cushitic and Nilotic peoples (see Fattovich 1987). The Borana are a semi-nomadic pastoral people divided into descent groups with an age-class system. Political decisions are taken in an assembly where some individuals may have a position

of leadership on their rank and prestige. They recognize the authority of a few ritual leaders with a strong sacral meaning. These personages are directly related to a Sky-God, and are the intermediaries between the human and the supernatural world. Their symbols include different objects, such as a turban, a metal phallus, a stick, and a bracelet with a very strong magic power. The title is inherited by the son, but when the heir is still a young child the office is held by his uncle (Bassi 1996).

The Meru are a segmentary society with age-classes and a dual division into white and black clans, consisting of different lineages. In colonial times, an assembly of elders, including the leaders of the clans, controlled political and ritual activity. A particular status was assigned to the *mugwe*, whose authority derived directly from the deity. The *mugwe* guaranteed the welfare of the community, and had a political role, attending the assemblies as a leader. Symbols of the *mugwe* were a skin-mantle, a straight stick, a curved stick with magic power, and a crown, as well as a specific object (*kiragu*) with a strong magic power (Bernardi 1971; 1983).

Early predynastic burials suggest that the basic aspects of funerary ideology (grave goods, orientation of the body, boats) consolidated at this time. Maybe, the conception of an ordered universe emerged in Nagada I times.

- 2) A major transformation occurred in Nagada II times, when hierarchical societies with chiefs or petty kings arose in Upper Egypt. Mortuary evidence suggests that chiefs and elite shared the same basic hereafter destiny of the rest of the population, as we can infer from the paintings of Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis. At this time elite burials were larger and richer than non-elite burials, and formal burial grounds were used for the chiefs.

The occurrence of rich burials with disarticulated bodies at Nag ed-Dir and Cemetery T at Zuwaidah (Nagada), suggests that Nagada I „ritual leaders” got a high rank, and most likely evolved into petty kings, at least in the Nagada and Abydos region. The paintings in Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis, representing scenes of fighting and smiting enemies, suggest the emergence of a symbolism of the king as a warrior.

Apparently, wild animals and the sky, already represented as a cow, were focal elements of the religion at this time. The occurrence of a large cult centre at Hierakonpolis – and possibly at other major settlements – points to a centralization of the cult in Nagada II times.

- 3) Paramount kings surely appeared in Upper Egypt in Nagada III times (Dynasty 0). Tombs, palaces, and a formal ceremonial art were the main symbols of the supremacy of the king. A formal art style emerged at the end of

the Predynastic period, and the foundations of the Egyptian „Great Tradition” (see Assman 1992) were established at this time.

The ideology of the king imposing order on a chaotic natural and human world consolidated in Nagada III times (Kemp 1989: 43-56). Ceremonial palettes and mace-heads also emphasized the military and ritual role of the king, who is represented destroying his enemies and performing the major state cult festivals. Sacral kingship was probably established at this time, through the identification of the king with the sky-god Horus. A differentiation of deities into gods with specific characteristics and a proper personality apparently started in Nagada III times.

- 4) A proper state ideology consolidated in Dynasties I and II, and funerary monuments became the most impressive symbols of this ideology. A polytheistic religion with a few paramount gods related to the king and some local gods also emerged at this time as a consequence of the new territorial and administrative organization of the state. Cult temples were established in provincial centres, as well. The king became the focal figure of the state, and the authority of high rank officials depended directly on him, as members of the royal lineage. This process culminated at the end of Dynasty II when ceremonial boats for the navigation in the afterlife, which still were a prerogative of the elite in Dynasty I, were buried close to the royal tombs and the king incorporated all elements of funerary ideology.

Conclusion

The process of state formation in Egypt was characterized by a progressive transformation of a household economy in Badarian to Nagada I times into a palace economy in Nagada II to Nagada III time. Competition between descent groups in extending control over resources and exchange networks at a regional and interregional scale was a major factor of increasing social hierarchy and emerging of petty kings. Most likely, increasing control of craft production and land tenure was the main factor, which regulated the political game by alliances among descent groups and probably warfare up to the rise of an early state. Manipulation of the ideology was another crucial factor to legitimate the role and power of the petty kings and kings up to the emerging of a sacral king, who guaranteed the whole social and natural order.

Finally, demographic increase in Upper Egypt, along with control of the Nile route in the network of long distance trade with the Levant, may have stimulated the progressive colonization of Middle and Lower Egypt, that was the background to the unification of the country in Early Dynastic time.

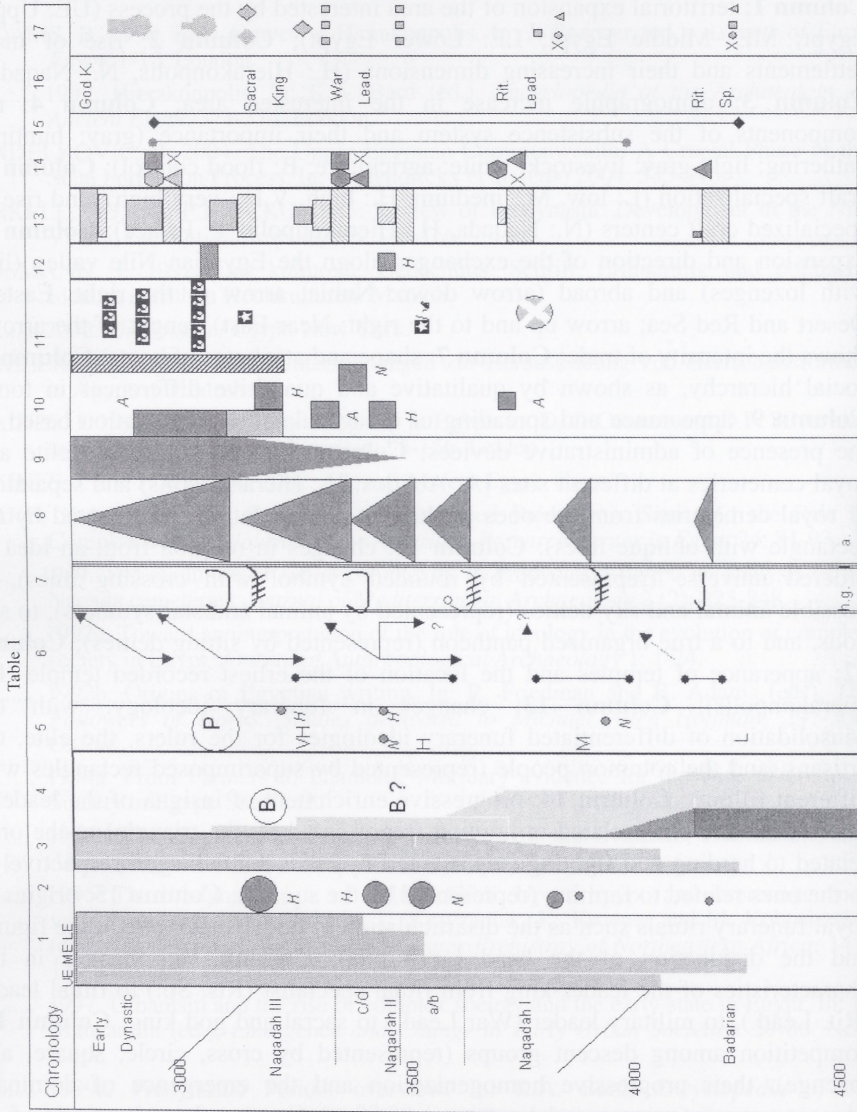


Table 1: tentative synthesis of the process of State formation (captions) .

Column 1: territorial expansion of the area interested by the process (UE: Upper Egypt; ME: Middle Egypt; LE: Lower Egypt); **Column 2:** rise of main settlements and their increasing dimensions (H.: Hierakonpolis, N.: Naqada); **Column 3:** demographic increase in the interested area; **Column 4:** the components of the subsistence system and their importance (gray: hunting-gathering; light gray: livestock; white: agriculture; B: flood control); **Column 5:** craft specialization (L: low, M.: medium, H.: high, V.H.: very high), and rise of specialized craft centers (N.: Naqada, H.: Hierakonpolis; P: Palace); **Column 6:** expansion and direction of the exchanges along the Egyptian Nile valley (line with lozenges) and abroad (arrow down: Nubia; arrow to the right: Eastern Desert and Red Sea; arrow up and to the right: Near East), length of the arrows shows the intensity of trade; **Column 7:** shape and attributes of boats; **Column 8:** social hierarchy, as shown by qualitative and quantitative differences in toms; **Column 9:** appearance and spreading of an articulated administration based on the presence of administrative devices; **Column 10:** appearance of elite and royal cemeteries at different sites (A: Abydos; H.: Hierakonpolis) and separation of royal cemeteries from the ones of the rest of population (represented by the rectangle with oblique lines); **Column 11:** changes in religion from an idea of ordered universe (represented by rounded symbol with crossing lines), to possible animal and sky deities (represented by animal and star symbols), to sky gods, and to a true organized pantheon (represented by sitting deities); **Column 12:** appearance of temples and the location of the earliest recorded temple (H.: Hierakonpolis); **Column 13:** changes in funerary ideology, with the consolidation of differentiated funerary ideologies for the rulers, the elite, the artisans, and the common people (represented by superimposed rectangles with different filling); **Column 14:** progressive enrichment of insignia of the leaders-rulers from the ones related to hunting (represented by the triangle) to the ones related to herding and fighting (represented by cross and hexagon respectively), to the ones related to farming (represented by the square); **Column 15:** origins of royal funerary rituals such as the disarticulation of body (black line in the figure) and the disjunction of the head (gray line); **Column 16:** changes in the characteristics of the leader-king from ritual specialist (Ris. Sp.) to ritual leader (Rit. Lead.), to military leader (War Lead.) to sacral and god king; **Column 17:** competition among descent groups (represented by cross, circle, square, and lozenge), their progressive homogenization and the emergence of dominant descent groups (squares and lozenge respectively), up to the emergence of a unique descent group expressing the king and characterized by an internal hierarchy (circle topped by a square).

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