

# Was King Narmer Menes?<sup>1</sup>

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In 1963, A.J. Arkell published a short and well-known paper, “Was King Scorpion Menes?”<sup>2</sup> in which he proposed to identify the late-predynastic Scorpion with the “Menes” of the Ramessid and Manethonian royal lists. In the famous Ashmolean macehead, Scorpion is shown wearing the white crown, while on the Hierakonpolis macehead, the king represented is wearing the red crown. Arkell suggested “reading” the very deteriorated relief traces before the king’s face on this latter object as a rosette and a scorpion, that is, as the “name” of King Scorpion such as it appears on the Ashmolean macehead. Thus, the latter had to be regarded as the first king of Upper and Lower Egypt and, therefore, identified with the first name from the royal lists: Menes. Forty years have passed since this paper, and the archaeological evidence on the one hand and the epistemological context on the other have completely changed. Above all,

the findings of the last few decades make it possible to take up again and reconsider the problem of the identity of Menes from a new perspective.

In 1986 and 1996, G. Dreyer published two important seal impressions with lists of kings from the royal cemetery of Umm el-Qaab, in Abydos, where the German Archaeological Institute of Cairo has been digging for the last three decades.<sup>3</sup>

The first (fig. 1), found in the tomb of Den, contains, arranged in a single line and repeated in two or three registers, the Horus names of the kings of the first half of the First Dynasty; that is, Narmer, Aha, Djer, Djet and Den, as well as the name of Queen Meretneit, preceded by the *mwt-nsw* title. The kings’ names are headed by the falcon, but not placed inside a *serekh*. The names of the first three kings, Narmer, Aha and Djer, are preceded by a mention of the funerary god Khenamenu, whose name is written

1. In this article, I expand on some of the conclusions already presented at the *VIII International Congress of Egyptologists* held in Cairo in March 2000: J. Cervelló-Autuori, Narmer, Menes and the Seals from Abydos, in: Z. Hawass and L. Pinch-Brock (eds.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo, 2000*, 3 vols., Cairo-New York, 2003, vol. 2: *History, Religion*, 168-175.

2. A.J. Arkell, Was King Scorpion Menes?, *Antiquity* 37, 1963, 31-35, pls. III-V.

3. G. Dreyer, Ein Siegel der frühzeitlichen Königsnekropole von Abydos, *MDAIK* 43, 1986, 33-43 (figs. 1-4; pls. 3-5); G. Dreyer, E.-M. Engel, U. Hartung, T. Hikade, E. Ch. Köhler and F. Pumpenmeier, Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof. 7./8. Vorbericht, *MDAIK* 52, 1996, 11-81 [72-3; fig 26; pl. 14.b-c].



Fig. 1

with the ideogram-determinative of the recumbent jackal followed by the phonetic signs *mn*, *tyw* and *hnt(y)*. In contrast, the last two kings cited on the seal, Djet and Den, are not preceded by the mention of Khentamentiu. The sequence therefore reads: “Khentamentiu, Horus-Narmer, Khentamentiu, Horus-Aha, Khentamentiu, Horus-Djer, Horus-Djet, Horus-Den, Mother-of-the-King Meretneit.”

The second seal (fig. 2), found in the tomb of Qaa, the last king of the First Dynasty, contains the Horus names of all the kings of this dynasty, also arranged in a single line, although in reverse order, repeated in two registers, preceded by the falcon and without the *serekh* representation. The mention of Khentamentiu appears again, but only once at one end of the list, as if presiding over it, and with a slight graphic variation (a *t* between the signs *mn* and *tyw*). In this case, Meretneit is not mentioned. The sequence therefore reads: “Khentamentiu, Horus-Qaa, Horus-Semerkhet, Horus-Anedjib, Horus-

Den, Horus-Djet, Horus-Djer, Horus-Aha, Horus-Narmer”.

To begin with, it is worth noting that in the two seals the order of succession of the kings is the same and that both sequences start with Narmer.

After the first seal appeared, Dreyer interpreted the three references to Khentamentiu as allusions to kings whose names would have been forgotten because they were no longer worshipped in the Abydos necropolis: the name of the funerary deity of the necropolis would serve as a sort of “wild card”. According to Dreyer, “Athothis I”, a name he takes from Manetho and Eratosthenes,<sup>4</sup> would be one of these forgotten kings, who would have reigned between Aha and Djer. Nevertheless, his idea is based on an apriori: the identification of Menes with Aha and of “Athothis II” (the “successor” of Athothis I in Eratosthenes) with Djer,<sup>5</sup> so that what he calls “Athothis I” has no correspondent in the contemporary documentation, which leads him to say that the Horus

4. W.G. Waddell, *Manetho*, Loeb Classical Library 350, Cambridge (Massachusetts)-London, 1980, 28-33 (Manetho), 214-215 (Eratosthenes).

5. Cf. W. Helck, *Untersuchungen zur Thinitenzeit* (ÄA 45), Wiesbaden, 1987, 100-101. Cf. also: J. von Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen* (MÄS 20), München, 1984, 38-39; id., *Chronologie des pharaonischen Ägypten* (MÄS 46), München, 1997, chap. 7 and p. 187; P.A. Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs*, London, 1994, 20; R. Hannig, *Die Sprache der Pharaonen. Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch*, Mainz, 1997, 1253. Helck argues that the second row of the Palermo Stone records a gap of 1 year and 45 days between the end of a reign and the beginning of another which would correspond to Djer, if one accepts that the Cairo Stone records the continuation of that row of the annals. Given that Helck identifies Menes with Aha, the gap would correspond to the reign of an ephemeral king between Aha and Djer, the “Athothis I” of the classical lists, in which Helck proposes to see queen Neithetep (in fact, in a seal her name is written inside a *serekh*; cf. our note 13). However, if this gap is not the result of a “typographical” error (J. Kinnaer, Aha or Narmer. Which Was Menes?, *KMT* 12, 3, 2001, 75-81 [79]), it could simply evoke an obscure and anomalous interregnum, perhaps even a regency of queen Neithetep. Cf. T.A.H. Wilkinson, *Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt. The Palermo Stone and its Associated Fragments*, London, 2000, 92-94.

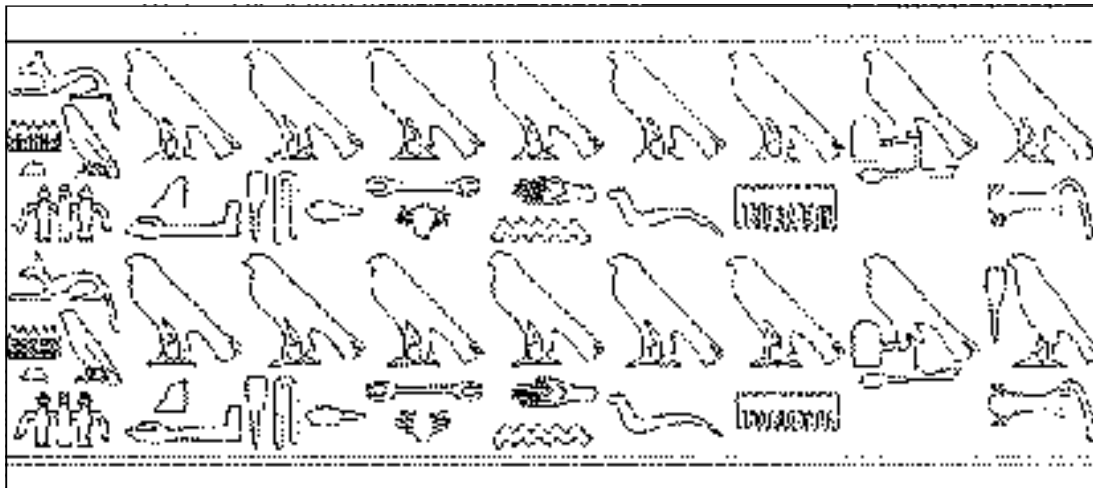


Fig. 2

name of this supposed king is unknown and could be substituted, on the seal, by the mention of Khentamenti. This approach, however, depends on the afore-mentioned a priori: if, instead, Menes is identified with Narmer and not with Aha, the “vacuum” no longer occurs, because there would be 3 Horus names for the 3 names on the lists. Dreyer goes as far as suggesting that the first forgotten king of the Abydos seal, “substituted” by the second reference to Khentamenti, between Narmer and Aha, is none other than King Scorpion,<sup>6</sup> which seems to stretch the evidence.

In fact, the second Abydos seal contradicts Dreyer’s idea and settles the problem as all the kings of the First Dynasty appear on it, without any omissions or insertions of Khentamenti, just as they are known by the already relatively exhaustive contemporary records of the First Dynasty. According to Dreyer, there would have been 10 or 11 First Dynasty kings: the 8 “canonical” ones plus the 2 or 3 “substituted” by Khentamenti on the first Abydos seal (the final number depending on the initial occurrence of Khentamenti, which Dreyer regards as a generic allusion to the ancestors of the kings

mentioned on the seal or as a reference to the protecting god of the necropolis). But this contradicts all the First Dynasty sources, which, if they do agree on something, it is that there were 8 kings of that Dynasty.<sup>7</sup> The idea of the “oversights” is even more difficult to support when all the contemporary and later records go in another direction, and curiously in the *same* direction. Moreover, I think that it is not methodologically appropriate to mix paradigms: it is one thing to compare two lists of a different nature and chronology and quite another to insert sequences into each other (the so-called “Aththis I” from the Classical lists into the supposed “wild cards” of the Abydos seal). The lists contemporary to the First Dynasty and the ones from the New Kingdom along with those of Manetho correspond, but cannot be combined, basically because both groups of lists give names for different titles. All of this poses, therefore, two types of questions:

- 1) What do the references to Khentamenti on the Abydos seals mean, if they do not have a substitute function?
- 2) How many and which kings constituted the First Dynasty?

6. Dreyer, *MDAIK* 43, 1986, 41-43.

7. T.A.H. Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, London, 1999, 66. Cf. also G. Godron, Les rois de la I<sup>ère</sup> dynastie chez Manéthon, in: C. Berger and B. Mathieu, *Études sur l’Ancien Empire et la nécropole de Saqqâra dédiées à Jean-Philippe Lauer* (Orientalia Monspeliensia IX), Montpellier, 1997, 199-211 [205]; Kinnaer, *KMT* 12, 3, 2001, 78-80. Disregarded here are the possible and ephemeral successors (co-regents?) of Qaa, documented by contemporary sources, who did not leave any trace in the later annalistic tradition (cf. W.B. Emery, *Excavations at Sakkara. Great Tombs of the First Dynasty III*, London, 1958, pls. 28.a-b, 38.1; P. Lacau and J-Ph. Lauer, *La Pyramide à degrés, IV: Inscriptions gravées sur les vases*, 2 vols., Cairo, 1959-1961, I, pls. IV.7, 17.86; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 82).

With regard to the first problem one might acknowledge that the two Abydos seals are very different in their structure and in the information they give. It appears that the first, which lists fewer personages, provides “supplementary” information: it separates the kings into two groups, those linked to Khentamentiu and those who are not, and it mentions the Queen Mother Meretneit, without a doubt a prominent member of the court of her time. The second seal seems more economical in additional information, perhaps because this royal list contains three more names. Here, Meretneit is no longer mentioned, and a single allusion to Khentamentiu seems to be sufficient. The question with regard to the first seal is why the first three kings are preceded by a reference to Khentamentiu while the other two are not. We assume that there were eight kings in the First Dynasty, as all the archaeological and annalistic sources indicate. I suggest that the references to Khentamentiu do not allude to third persons but to the kings whose Horus names they accompany. It seems possible to me that the sequence “Khentamentiu-Horus-Narmer” which heads the first seal is equi-

valent to the sequence “Osiris-Unis” which is first documented in the *Pyramid Texts*. The allusion to Khentamentiu may not be an allusion to the god of the necropolis, but to the funerary god with whom the kings (and only them at this time) identified when they died. That is, Khentamentiu would not be a different personage from the kings, but the “title” or the “essence” of the dead kings themselves.<sup>8</sup> The figure of Khentamentiu would be equivalent to, and in a certain way foreshadow, the later figure of Osiris.<sup>9</sup>

The identification ‘Khentamentiu=dead king’ poses, however, a problem for the first seal. In deed, on it, 3 “dead” kings and two still “living” would be cited, as there are two Horus names which are not preceded by Khentamentiu, those of Djet and Den.<sup>10</sup> This would mean that although the seal comes from Den’s tomb, it would have been made in Horus Djet and Den’s lifetime, and placed in the latter’s tomb, perhaps part of a funerary offering (see below), during the burial ritual. Likewise, this would suggest that Djet and Den would have been “co-regents” for some time. This explains perhaps the presence of Queen Meretneit on the seal, in keeping

8. A similar conclusion in H. Goedicke, The ‘Seal of the Necropolis’, *SAK* 20, 1993, 67-79. The author reads the recumbent jackal and the signs *mn*, *tyw* and *hnt(y)*, not as the name of the god Khentamentiu, but as “the resting canine among the Westerners, scil. ‘leader’”, that is to say, “deceased king” (p. 77).

9. The agrarian and funerary god who is murdered and whom the food plants and life spring from is a universal figure of the religions of the agrarian societies. He might well have existed in predynastic Upper Egypt, where the royal house which unified the Two Lands came from. The general history of religions teaches us that wherever there is an agrarian society there are deities for the food plants and the dead, since the agrarian soteriology precisely consists of assimilating the plants’ fate (they are born, they die, and are re-born) to that of mankind (M. Eliade, *Traité d’histoire des religions*, Paris, 1949, chaps. IV, VII, IX; id., *Historia de las creencias y de las ideas religiosas*, I: *de l’âge de la pierre aux mystères d’Éléusis*, Paris, 1976, chap. II). In late Predynastic, Upper Egypt had already lived through two millennia of agricultural economy. The historical Osiris could have derived from a Neolithic-agrarian deity on which Dynasty 0 would probably have already constructed the mythological figure of the deceased king. The late documentation of Osiris is no obstacle to this idea. On the contrary: the history of religions shows us also that the agrarian gods are essentially aniconical deities and that only some of them end up receiving an iconographic form belatedly (cf. J. Cervelló-Autuori, *Egipto y África. Origen de la civilización y la monarquía faraónicas en su contexto africano* (Aula Orientalis-Supplementa 13), Sabadell, 1996, 187-189 with references). It is known that Osiris is mentioned in the funerary epigraphy of the Old Kingdom, both private (*hwt di Wsir*) and royal (*Pyramid Texts*), and that, on the other hand, it is not iconographed until the Middle Kingdom. Moreover, Khentamentiu (whose name is nothing but a descriptive epithet of function) could have been the documentary “form” of Osiris before the Old Kingdom. In short, this agrarian-funerary deity would have been called Khentamentiu before being finally called Osiris and would have had a more psychopomp marked aspect (jackal) before having had a more royal marked one (deceased king). We have dealt with these topics elsewhere (Cervelló-Autuori, *Egipto y África*, 125-136, 182-189).

10. This presupposes that we do not think of an omission by the scribe of the name of Khentamentiu before Djet, nor of a readjustment of the epigraphic arrangement of a document different in origin (cf. W. Kaiser, *Zum Siegel mit frühen Königsnamen von Umm el-Qaab*, *MDAIK* 43, 1986, 115-119; Goedicke, *SAK* 20, 1993, 73, 77; according to these scholars, the name of Den would have been added at a later time and, due to the lack of space, the mention of Khentamentiu before it would have been omitted).

with the importance which she undoubtedly had in the contemporary political context. One thing is certain: Meretneit occupied a very prominent place within the First Dynasty. She appears on the first Abydos seal sequence, her name can be written inside a *serekh*,<sup>11</sup> but, above all, she has her own tomb among the kings' graves, both at Abydos and at Saqqara,<sup>12</sup> with the corresponding funerary stelae at Abydos of the same kind as that of the kings (although here her name is not inscribed on a *serekh*). Attributing to her a role of "regent" or Queen Mother with executive power not only does not stretch the archaeological evidence, but in fact explains it.<sup>13</sup> The Djet-Den-Meretneit trio could have had, during their lifetime, a historical role which eludes us, but which the archaeological and epigraphical evidence seems to suggest in different ways.

With regard to the institution of the "co-regency" and its possible existence in this period, it is worth mentioning an interesting year label from the end of the First Dynasty, found recently by Dreyer in the Qaa tomb, which shows the *serekhs* of both Semerkhet and Qaa (fig. 3).<sup>14</sup> It is a peculiar document because, on this type of label, *serekhs* of two kings never appear, but only that of the one who has ordered the making of the label. It is obvious that the label was made when Qaa was king, but his *serekh*, which is small and relegated to the annalistic section, seems to be a secondary element. In contrast, his predecessor Semerkhet's *serekh*, whom Dreyer regards as the owner of the label, is prominent and

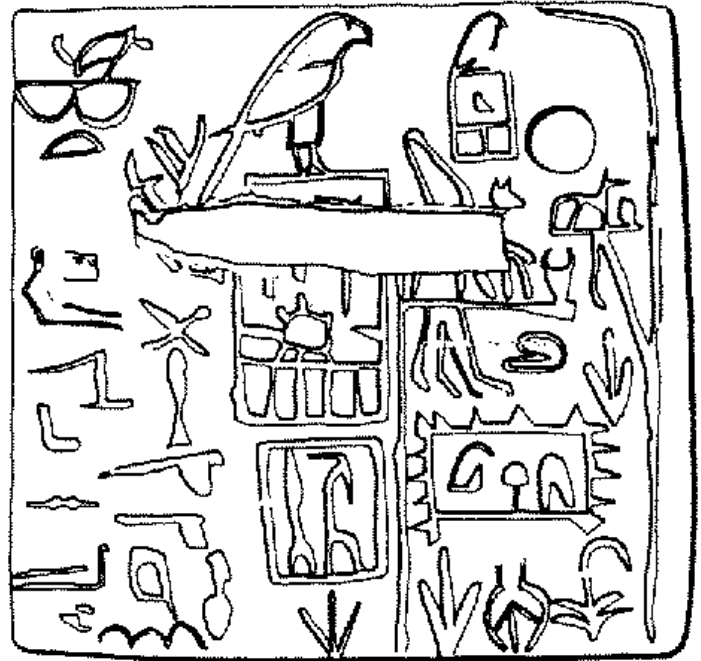


Fig. 3

has the size and the placement which on all the other year labels correspond to the *serekh* of the king who has had them made. On the annalistic section of the label the construction of a building called *Hrw-ib-ntrw* is mentioned, perhaps the "funerary palace" of Semerkhet, and the phrase *zm3-t3wy* is written. Might the "co-regent" Qaa see to the funerary buildings of his predecessor and "co-regent" Semerkhet? Might the label allude to Qaa's accession while Semerkhet was still alive and does it provide documentary evidence of a co-regency? If so, the solution proposed above for the simultaneous presence of two "living" kings on the Abydos seal would become more plausible, because the co-regency would show itself to be a recognized practice.

11. Cf. W.B. Emery, *Excavations at Sakkara. Great Tombs of the First Dynasty II*, London, 1954, 169, fig. 226; S. Roth, Königin, Regentin oder weiblicher König? Zum Verhältnis von Königsideologie und "female sovereignty" in der Frühzeit, in: R. Gundlach and Ch. Raedler (eds.), *Selbstverständnis und Realität. Akten des Symposiums zur ägyptischen Königsideologie in Mainz 15.-17.6.1995* (ÄAT 36, 1), Wiesbaden, 1997, [108-109, figs. 3-4].

12. For a reconsideration of the problem of the ownership of the Thinite mastabas of Saqqara in favour of their attribution to the kings, cf. J. Cervelló-Autuori, Back to the Mastaba Tombs of the First Dynasty at Saqqara. Officials or Kings?, in: R. Pirelli (ed.), *Egyptological Essays on State and Society* (Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", Serie Egittologica 2), Napoli, 2002, 27-61. On the Meretneit's tombs cf. W.M.F. Petrie, *The Royal Tombs of the First Dynasty*, Part I, London, 1900, 10-11; Emery, *Great Tombs II*, 128-170; W.B. Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, London, 1961, 65-69.

13. Not even Queen Nätchetep, mother or wife of Aha, who probably also had a tomb of her own (the niched mastaba at Naqada: J. De Morgan, *Recherches sur les origines de l'Égypte. Ethnographie préhistorique et tombeau royal de Négadah*, Paris, 1897) and whose name is also written inside a *serekh* (De Morgan, *Recherches*, 169, fig. 559; Roth, Königin, 105-107, fig. 1), had such a prominent role, at least in the eyes of the "author" of the seal.

14. Dreyer et al., *MDAIK 52*, 1996, 73-74, pl. 14.d; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 79-80, fig. 3.3.

If, indeed, the seal shows Djet and Den as living kings, this would also suggest that it could not have been used to seal the entrance to Den's tomb, as Dreyer suggests,<sup>15</sup> because there wouldn't have been any distinction among dead and living kings. Dreyer compares the Abydos seals to the "seals of the necropolis" of Thebes of the New Kingdom, like the one found at the door of Tutankhamun's tomb.<sup>16</sup> Although the Abydos seal was found relatively close to the entrance of Den's tomb, iconographically it bears little relation to Tutankhamun's. In the latter, a list of predecessors is not reproduced but the "Nine Bows" motif is, shown by means of a recumbent jackal, representing the deceased king, on top of nine prisoners. By the way, let's say that the representation of the jackal adds on to the identification 'jackal-god=deceased-king'. On the other hand, what sense would it make that on a royal tomb door seal the names of the immediate predecessors of the king buried there should appear? One must also bear in mind that the Abydos tombs had already been surveyed by Amélineau – who, it would appear, saw the seal but left it there –<sup>17</sup> and excavated by Petrie, and it cannot be asserted that the location of the objects which were not recovered by these scholars was the original one. In my opinion, there is no reason to doubt that it is a lid seal from a pottery vessel used for offerings, as is usual with this type of seals.<sup>18</sup>

The second seal does not pose the problem of the opposition between dead and living kings because Khentamentiou appears only once, "presiding" over the whole list, which obviously means that all the kings are deceased. Found in the tomb of Qaa, last

king of the First Dynasty, it would presumably have been made following the death of the latter by the first king of the Second Dynasty, Hetepsekhemui, his successor, who would have been entrusted with his burial and whose name is well recorded on the tomb.<sup>19</sup> In this way, as we shall see, what was already felt as a defined unity, the First Dynasty, was set for the first time. In this case, too, the seal was found near the entrance of the tomb: was it left there due to some sort of ritualistic reason (for example, an offering made during the burial ritual) or as a result of modern archaeological intervention?

There is one last issue to discuss with regard to the seals. The Egyptian lists of dead kings normally include the names of *nsw-bit* and/or of *z3-R<sup>c</sup>*. So why is the Horus name included on the Abydos seals, when it normally alludes to the living king? That is to say, why is the apparently contradictory sequence 'dead king-living king-N' shown? In deed, in later times the "title" of *Wsir* (=dead king) is placed directly before the name (of *nsw-bit* or of *z3-R<sup>c</sup>*) of the king.

This question seems to have an obvious answer: in the royal lists of the Thinite Age the Horus name is included because, although other titles such as that of *nbtj* or *nsw-bit* already appear with the First Dynasty, their use is not yet established, especially for the first kings (cf. below), whereas that of Horus is solidly fixed and is the only one which is shown with complete regularity.<sup>20</sup> The Horus title is also the one which appears on the tomb stelae of the royal tombs of Umm el-Qaab. On the other hand, one must not forget that the

15. Dreyer, *MDAIK* 43, 1986, 37. But cf. our note 18.

16. Dreyer, *MDAIK* 43, 1986, 37. Cf. also Goedicke, *SAK* 20, 1993.

17. Dreyer, *MDAIK* 43, 1986, 33.

18. Dreyer now seems to agree with this idea: G. Dreyer, *The Tombs of the First and Second Dynasties at Abydos and Saqqara*, in: Z. Hawass (ed.), *The Treasures of the Pyramids*, Cairo, 2003, chap. 7, 62-77 [62].

19. W.M.F. Petrie, *The Royal Tombs of the Earliest Dynasties*, Part II, London, 1901, 51, pl. VIII.8-11; Dreyer, *MDAIK* 52, 1996, 71-72, fig. 25, pl. 14.a.

20. In deed, it is the only one that the kings of the Dynasty 0 had. Cf. J. Cervelló-Autuori, *The Origins of Pharaonic Titulary. A Cultural Approach*, in: M. Hässitzka, J. Diethart and G. Dembski (eds.), *Das alte Ägypten und seine Nachbarn. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Helmut Satzinger* (Krems er Wissenschaftliche Reihe 3), Krems, 2003, 43-57. A different interpretation in Goedicke, *SAK* 20, 1993, 77.

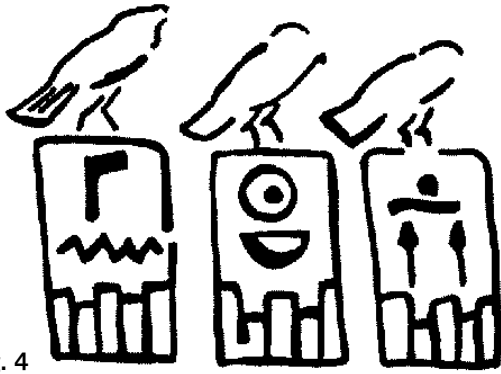


Fig. 4

other element of the Horus title, the *srh* or palace façade (which is omitted on the Abydos seals), could refer in the First Dynasty not only to the “civil” palace but also to the “funerary palaces” at Abydos and to the royal niched mastabas of Saqqara.<sup>21</sup> From the middle of the First Dynasty, other contemporary lists cite the Thinite kings by some of their other titles (*nsw-bit*, *nbtj*, *nbwy*), but the tradition of lists with Horus names is not lost yet: apart from the second Abydos seal, there are other examples from the beginnings of the Second Dynasty (fig. 4).

Now let’s proceed to the second question that we posed above: how many and who were the kings of the First Dynasty? From my point of view, the Abydos seals bring new information that clears up (and not opens up) this problem. Moreover, they throw new light on the traditional problem of the identification of Menes. In deed, they make it clear that the Egyptians of the Thinite Age had already conceived as a unity what we today, following Manetho, call the First Dynasty. Both seals, one containing the first five kings of that Dynasty and made halfway through

the Dynasty, and the other containing all the kings and made a century later, started with Narmer. This means that he was the sovereign who headed the sequence in the eyes of the Egyptians of that age.<sup>22</sup> Narmer is the first king of the First Dynasty and not the last one of Dynasty 0, as some scholars suggest.<sup>23</sup> Regarding the end of the Dynasty, the second seal terminates with Qaa. This could be accidental, since the seal comes from the tomb of this king, if it wasn’t because other lists that record the names of *nbtj* and/or *nsw-bit* of the last four kings of the Dynasty also terminate unfailingly with Qaa (fig. 6, down left).<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, different lists of the first kings of the Second Dynasty, carved on vases and on a well-known statue in the Cairo Museum (fig. 4),<sup>25</sup> start with Hetepsekhemui, the initiator of the same. This suggests that contemporary Egyptians recognized a hiatus between Qaa and Hetepsekhemui, which we define as the transition from the First to the Second Dynasty.

Therefore, it seems that for the Thinite Egyptians the First Dynasty spanned from Narmer to Qaa and consisted of eight sovereigns: Narmer, Aha, Djer, Djet, Den, Anedjib, Semerkhet and Qaa. The second Abydos seal gives the names of all sovereigns in a perfect order of succession. This offers a clear parallelism between the eight kings – Narmer included – in the Thinite documentation and the eight kings mentioned by all the royal lists in which the First Dynasty appears complete, that is, the Sethi I temple list in Abydos (A), the Turin

21. Cf. note 12.

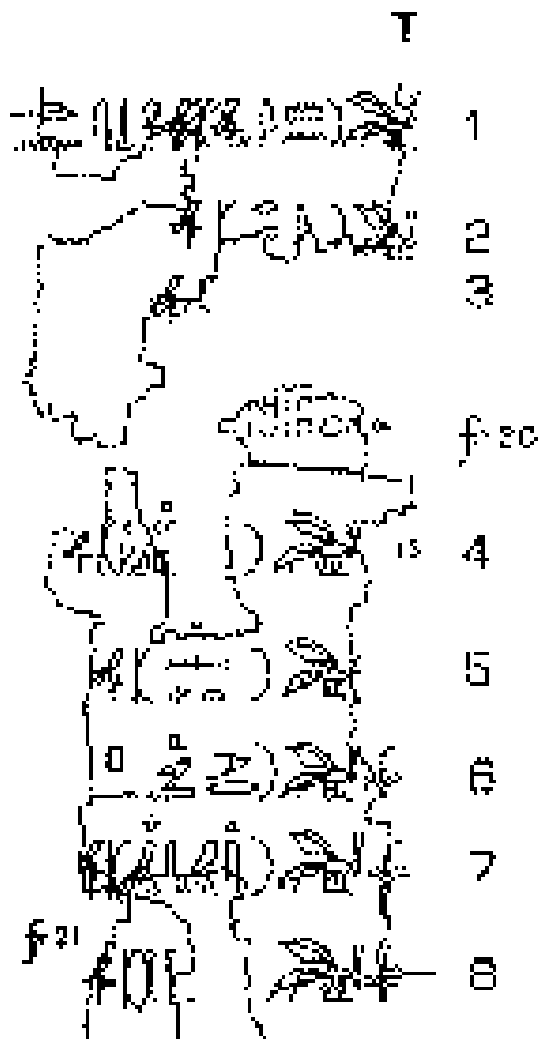
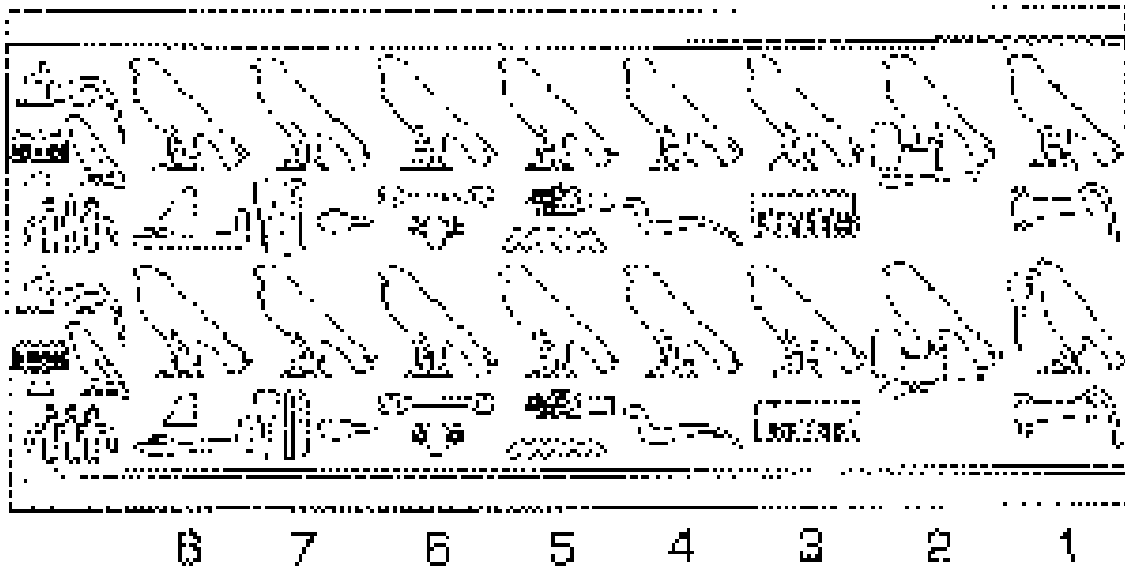
22. Kinnaer, *KMT* 12, 3, 2001, 80-81; F.J. Yurko, Narmer: First King of Upper and Lower Egypt. A Reconsideration of his Palette and Macehead, *JSSEA* 25, 1995, 85-95 [88, 92].

23. Cf., for ex., J. Baines, Origins of Egyptian Kingship, in: D. O’Connor and D.P. Silverman (eds.), *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, Leiden, 1995, chap. 3, 95-156 [124-125, 131]; Dreyer, *MDAIK* 43, 1986, 41-43; Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, 49; Von Beckerath, *Handbuch*, 37.

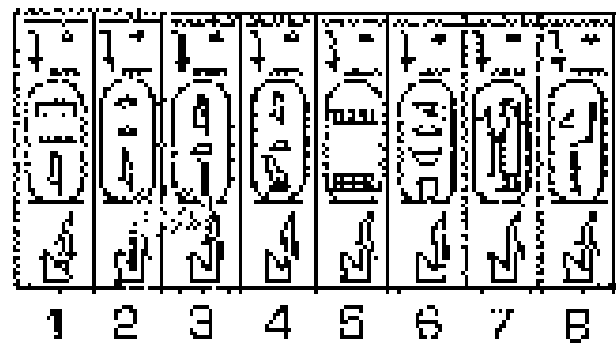
24. Lacau-Lauer, *PD IV*, I, pl. 4.19-21; II, 9-12; P. Kaplony, *Steingefäße mit Inschriften der Frühzeit und des Alten Reichs* (Monumenta Aegyptiaca 1), Bruxelles, 1968, 20-24, pls. 11, 18. On these “lists” and those quoted in the next note cf. J. Cervelló-Autuori, Listas reales, parentesco y ancestralidad en el Estado egipcio temprano, in: M. Campagno (ed.), *Estudios sobre parentesco y Estado en el antiguo Egipto*, Buenos Aires (forthcoming); id., The Thinite “Royal Lists”: Typology and Meaning, in: *Proceedings of the International Conference on Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt. Origin of the State. Toulouse, 5-8 September 2005* (forthcoming).

25. Vases: Lacau-Lauer, *PD IV*, I, pl. 11.58; II, 31; G. Maspéro, Sur quelques documents de l’époque Thinite découverts à Sakkarah, *Bulletin de l’Institut Égyptien*, 4ème série, 3, 1902, 107-116. Statue: L. Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten von Königen und Privatleuten* (CGC), 5 vols., Cairo, 1911-1936, #1; De Morgan, *Recherches*, 253-254, fig. 852, pl. II; W.S. Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom*, London, 1946, p. 15, pl. 2.b.

Fig. 5



A



M (Africanus)

- |   |                                |             |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Μηνης                          | (Menes)     |
| 2 | Ἀθωθης                         | (Athothis)  |
| 3 | Κενκηνης                       | (Kenkenes)  |
| 4 | Οὐαφης                         | (Uephes)    |
| 5 | Οὐαφαιδης                      | (Uaphaides) |
|   | (genitive of Οὐαφαις, Uaphais) |             |
| 6 | Μιεθης                         | (Miehis)    |
|   | (genitive of Μιεθς, Miehis)    |             |
| 7 | Σεμεπσης                       | (Semempses) |
| 8 | Βιενεχης                       | (Bieneches) |



royal canon list (T) and the lists of the different versions of Manetho (M) (fig. 5). If so, could it not be the case that the annalistic records were correct and that the eight kings of the lists correspond one by one to the eight kings on the seals? Thus, Narmer must be identified with Menes who heads the lists of the New Kingdom and Manetho.

There we come up against one of the most controversial problems in Egyptology: that of identifying Menes.<sup>26</sup> The problem contains two aspects: the question of whether Menes was a real person or an invention of historiography and, if a real person, the question of which personage he should be identified to. Recently, P. Vernus has returned to the subject, indicating that the Menes of tradition, like the Herakleopolitan Achthoes, is an archetypal figure of the “founder king”.<sup>27</sup> However, the archetypal nature that a certain personage may have doesn’t negate its historicity, as this same example shows: just as it appears clear that Achthoes existed, Menes could also have existed. As Vernus indicates,<sup>28</sup> Egyptian thought goes in two directions: to generate an archetype from reality and to lead reality back to the archetype. The “Menes” reality leads back to the traditional archetype “founder king”, and the archetype “founder king” is applied to the “Menes” reality. There is no reason why it should not be tangible.

First of all, the correspondence between the lists and the seals is clear for the second half of the First Dynasty (from Den, the fifth king, onwards) because contemporary

documentation combines or allows us to relate the titles of Horus and those of *nbtj* and/or *nsw-bit* (now unequivocally expressed) of these kings, and the names that appear in the lists correspond to the latter, as is the rule. Therefore (see fig. 5 and 6):

#5. The Horus Den *nsw-bit* Khasty or Semty of the contemporary documentation is the Semty of T, the Septy of A (through hieratic cross reading) and, from there, throughout the late reading of *spty ashspty*, the Usaphais/Usaphaidos of M.<sup>29</sup> He is the fifth king of the Dynasty.

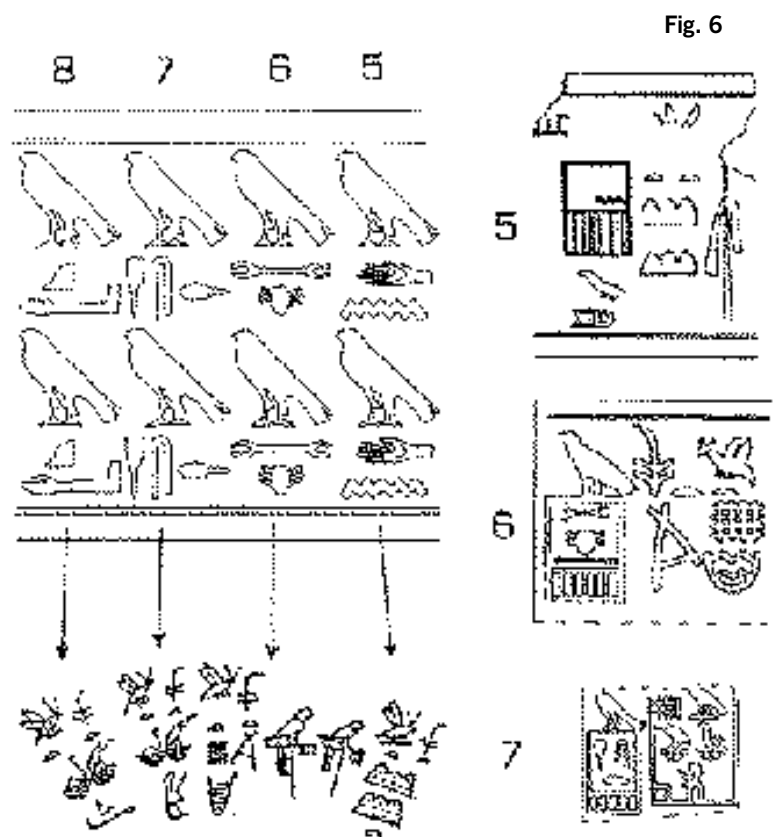


Fig. 6

26. Here, we will not enter into details of historiography regarding this problem. For further information see: J.P. Allen, *Menes the Memphite*, *GM* 126, 1992, 19-22; M. Baud, *Ménès, la mémoire monarchique et la chronologie du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire*, *Archéo-Nil* 9, 1999, 109-147 [109-110]; H. Brunner, *Mènes*, *LÄ* IV, 1982, cols. 46-48; E. Drioton and J. Vandier, *L'Égypte*, Paris, 1952, 161-162; Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, 32-37; W. Helck, *Gab es einen König "Menes"?*, *ZDMG* 103, 1953, 354-359; A.B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II* (EPRO 43), Leiden, 1988, 6-10; B. Midant-Reynes, *Préhistoire de l'Égypte. Des premiers hommes aux premiers pharaons*, Paris, 1992, 231-234; J. Vercoutter, *L'Égypte et la Vallée du Nil, I: Des origines à la fin de l'Ancien Empire*, Paris, 1992, 207-208; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 66-68.

27. P. Vernus, *Ménès, Achthoes, l'hippopotame et le crocodile – lecture structurale de l'historiographie égyptienne*, *Religion und Philosophie im alten Ägypten. Festschrift für Philippe Derchain* (OLA 39), Leuven, 1991, 331-339. Cf. also J. Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt. History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*, Cambridge-Massachusetts-London, 2002, 39.

28. P. Vernus, *La naissance de l'écriture dans l'Égypte ancienne*, *Archéo-Nil* 3, 1993, 75-108 [p. 90]. Cf. also Cervelló-Autuori, *Egipto y África*, 22-23.

29. A.H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, Oxford, 1954, p. 541; I.E.S. Edwards, *The Early Dynastic Period in Egypt*, in: *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. I, 2, Cambridge, 1971, chap. XI, 1-70 [26]; Von Beckerath, *Handbuch*, 38-39; G. Godron, *Études sur l'Horus Den et quelques problèmes de l'Égypte archaïque* (Cahiers d'Orientalisme 19), Genève, 1990, §§ 20-33.

#6. The Horus Anedjib *nbwy* and *nsw-bit* Merbiap(u)/(i) of contemporary documentation is the Mer(bia)pen of T, the Merbiap(u) of A, the Merbiapen with which the royal list of Saqqara (S) starts, and the Mi ebi s / Mi ebi dos of M (Afr.).<sup>30</sup> He is the sixth king of the Dynasty.

#7. The Horus Semerkhet *nsw-bit* and *nbty* Iry-netjer (?) of contemporary documentation is through cross reading of the sign of the man with the staff (mistaken for the sign of the bent man leaning on stick –A 19-20: *smsw*, late Eg. *smsm*– or for that of the *sm*-priest), the Semsem of T and the Semempses of M, while A reproduces, without giving its phonetic value, the original ideogram of the man with the staff, which redounds to the faithfulness of the transmission. He is not mentioned in the Saqqara list.<sup>31</sup> He is the seventh king of the Dynasty.

#8. The Horus Qaa *nsw-bit* and *nbty* Qaa of contemporary documentation is, again through error in reading, the (Q)ebeh of T, the Qebeh of A and the Qebehu of S. In this case there is no correspondence between these names and the last name cited by M (Afr.) for this Dynasty: Bi en eques.<sup>32</sup> He is the eighth king of the Dynasty.

If the correspondence is clear for the kings of the second half of the Dynasty, why could the same thing not occur with those of the first half?

The question is that while the names for the *nbty* and/or *nsw-bit* titles of the last

four kings appear well identified by these titles and related to the corresponding Horus names, for the first four, this is not so, or not in a “canonical” manner. These new titles do not appear definitively fixed until the second half of the Dynasty, but this does not mean that the previous kings did not have a personal name besides that of Horus. The titulary started to shape at that time and this might explain why the personal name does not appear according to the later canon and is, therefore, more difficult to identify. What is clear is that the Ramessid and Manethonian lists record, for these first four kings, very different names from the Horus names that appear in contemporary documentation and in the Abydos seals. That is, the names the royal lists record for these personages are not their Horus names. The question is then: are the alternative names on the lists pure invention or do they correspond to authentic names collected by annalists and recorded in the archives?

To begin with, it is still curious that there are precisely four names, as in contemporary documentation. In this sense, I think we should not separate the “problem of Menes” from the context of the first four kings of the First Dynasty. The onomastic problem is the same for all of them. It seems to me inappropriate to analyse and to look for a cultural meaning for *Mni* without considering the fact that it is the first of a series of four entities which are

30. Edwards, *CAH I*, 2, 27-28; Kaplony, *Steingefässe*, 20-23 (*ntrwj*-Titel). Some scholars believe that *nbwy* is not a title but a part of the *nsw-bit* name of the king, which would have had two variants: the shorter one (*Mrj-pj-bj3*) and the full one (*Mrj-pj-bj3-Nbwj*): Von Beckerath, *Handbuch*, 40-41; Hannig, *GHwb*, 1254. Cf. note 31.

31. B. Grdseloff, Notes d'épigraphie archaïque, *ASAE* 44, 1944, 279-306 [284-288]. Edwards, *CAH I*, 2, 28. Some scholars consider that *nbty* is not a title but a part of the *nsw-bit* name of the king: Iry-nebty (P. Kaplony, *Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit* (ÄA 8), 3 vols., Wiesbaden, 1963, I, 426; Kaplony, *Steingefässe*, 20-24; Von Beckerath, *Handbuch*, 40-41; Hannig, *GHwb*, 1254). The same applies to Qaa: Qaa-nebty. As a matter of fact, at present there coexist two different paradigms in Egyptology concerning the meaning of *nbty* in the Archaic Period and the Old Kingdom. In fact, the German scholars, following Schott (S. Schott, Zur Krönungstitulatur der Pyramidenzeit, *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, I. Philologisch-Historische Klasse*, 1956, 55-79; contra: J-Ph. Lauer, Au sujet du nom gravé sur la plaquette d'ivoire de la pyramide de l'Horus Sekhem-khet, *BIFAO* 61, 1962, 25-28), consider that in these early periods *nbty* is not a title but a part of the king's personal name. In other words, according to them there are not two titles which share a personal name, but a sole title, that of *nsw-bit*, and a personal name composed almost always by *nbty* (cf. Von Beckerath, *Handbuch*, 12-15, 40 ff.; Hannig, *GHwb*, 1253-1259). I cannot agree with this paradigm, firstly because I don't find any conclusive reason to doubt that the Thinite and Old Kingdom *nbty* is a different thing from the title of the later periods, and secondly because *nbty* and *nsw-bit* are concepts of the same “cultural order” which refer to the archetypal kingship in a complementary way (Cervelló-Autuori, *The Origins*, 48-52), and therefore they have not an individual dimension and they are reiterative and not denotative. I will expand on this problem in a forthcoming publication.

32. Edwards, *CAH I*, 2, 28-29; Von Beckerath, *Handbuch*, 40-41; Godron, *Les rois*, 205. Cf. note 31.

in the same situation. In Egyptology, the “problem of Teti, It(et) or Ita” does not exist; only that of Meni does. I think however that this depends only on our own thought categories (Menes is “the first”) as well as on the fact that the *mn*-sign evokes by chance a multiplicity of lexems which refer to gods and to king names (Amun, Min, Menkheperre), something that does not happen with the other three. If Menes is “quelqu’un”, or a cryptographic form of the name of Amun, or a name derived from that of Memphis, or a confluence of different lexical associations (*Mnw*, Min; *Imn*, Amun; *mnw*, herdsman; *Mn-hpr-r*, throne name of Thutmose III), or “a conflation of several historical rulers”, or “a purely memorial figure”,<sup>33</sup> who were Teti, Iti and Ita?

I suggest that in origin these names may not have been linked to any title and that later annalists associated them more or less anachronistically to the *nsw-bit* title. One important piece of data supports this idea. As it is known, on the Cairo Stone annals,<sup>34</sup> King Djer, third in the Abydos seals, is mentioned as “Horus-Djer – King of Upper and Lower Egypt of Gold *It(t)*” (written with the pestle-sign). The name *It(t)* appears enclosed within a cartouche, an anachronistic solution for the First Dynasty, but normal for the writer and “adapter” of the late Old Kingdom,<sup>35</sup> and in an epigraphic context equivalent to that of the same document or

of the Palermo Stone where the *nsw-bit* names of Semerkhet and Den appear.<sup>36</sup> That is, the annalist of the late Old Kingdom, a much closer period to the Thinite Age than the New Kingdom, attributed a second name to King Horus-Djer and considered it his *nsw-bit* name. Now, this name coincides perfectly with that appearing in the Abydos list (missing in Turin): *It(t)*. There is no reason to doubt then, the correct transmission from the Old Kingdom to the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. The question is then: Is there any document contemporary to King Djer in which this alternative name can be found even in a heterodox manner? In this sense we believe that new significant may be found in the reading suggestions made by W.M.F. Petrie and F.L. Griffith regarding certain seal impressions uncovered by the former in the tombs of Umm el-Qaab.<sup>37</sup>

We will begin by remembering the names that the lists give for the first four kings of the First Dynasty (see fig. 5):

#1. The first is invariably “Menes”: Meni in Turin (T) and in Abydos (A), Menes in Manetho (M) (from where we get Min or Menas of the classical tradition).

#2. The second is It(et?) (= *It(t?)*) in T, Teti (= *Tti*) in A and Athothis in M.

#3. The third is a gap in T, but is It (et) in A (written with the pestle-sign) and Athothis (II) in Eratosthenes.<sup>38</sup> The third king of the Abydos seals is Djer, for whom, as we have

33. For these different hypotheses cf. P. Derchain, Menès, le Roi «Quelqu’un», *RdÉ* 18, 1966, 31-36; J. Vercoutter, À propos des MNI = MÉNES, in: S. Israelit-Groll (ed.), *Studies in Egyptology. Presented to Miriam Lichtheim*, 2 vols., Jerusalem, 1990, vol. II, 1025-1032; Allen, *GM* 126, 1992, 19-22; E. Hornung and E. Stadelin, *Skarabäen und andere Siegelamulette aus Basler Sammlungen. Ägyptische Denkmäler in der Schweiz*, 1, Mainz, 1976, 44-45; Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt*, 39.

34. Recently, doubts have been cast on the authenticity of this document: P. O’Mara, The Cairo Stone, II. The Question of Authenticity, *GM* 170, 1999, 69-82. O’Hara considers that it is, at least, an authentic document but of very poor quality, very different from the Palermo Stone (they would never have been able to form part of a same “Annalenplatte”), and at most, a modern hoax. O’Mara’s doubts, however, have not had repercussions among Egyptologists.

35. Wilkinson, *Royal Annals*, 186-187. As it is well known, the chronology of the annals has been the object of a wide discussion (cf. Wilkinson, *Royal Annals*, 23-24). What seems clear is that if they are not a work of the late Old Kingdom, but of the Ramessid or Aethiopian age, at least the original document was. We must not forget that recently similar annals have been discovered, being unfailingly dated in the Sixth Dynasty (cf. M. Baud and V. Dobrev, De nouvelles annales de l’Ancien Empire Égyptien. Une “Pierre de Palerme” pour la VI<sup>e</sup> dynastie, *BIFAO* 95, 1995, 23-92 [chronology, p. 54]).

36. Helck, *Untersuchungen*, 100, 112, 124; Von Beckerath, *Chronologie*, 169. Basing on the equivalence Djer = Iti documented on the Cairo Stone, Petrie argued that if the third name of the First Dynasty in the Ramessid lists corresponded to Djer, to Aha must have corresponded the second: Teti, and to Narmer the first: Meni, so that Menes must be identified with Narmer. Cf. W.M.F. Petrie, New Portions of the Annals, *Ancient Egypt*, 1916, 114-120.

37. F. L. Griffith, The Inscriptions, in: Petrie, *Royal Tombs* I, 34-45 [43]; Petrie, *Royal Tombs* II, 30.

38. Waddell, *Manetho*, 214-215. According to Godron (*Les rois*, 202), this is the correct name in the original annalistic tradition, and not the “Kenkenes” given by Manetho for this third king, which is the result of a reading mistake (cf. infra).

seen, the Cairo Stone gives the personal name It(et) (also written with the pestle-sign). Therefore, the Djer=It(et)=Athothis correspondence seems clear.

#4. The fourth is Ita in A and, with a graphic metathesis, Ita or Itetiu in T (it depends on the reading of the bird-sign), the latter undoubtedly being a corrupt variant of the first, since the hieroglyphs for aleph and tyw are almost identical.<sup>39</sup>

For the third and fourth king, Manetho is not useful because the readings are completely divergent. For the third he gives Kenkenes, probably another reading error of the personal name of Den. For the fourth he gives Uenephes, perhaps derived from Unen-nefer, one of Osiris' epithets, since, as it is known, according to the Egyptian tradition the tomb of Osiris was located in Umm el-Qaab.<sup>40</sup>

So we can fix the sequence of personal names of the first four kings of the First Dynasty according to the Egyptian annalistic tradition as follows: Meni, Teti, It(et), Ita. One seal impression of Djer (fig. 7)<sup>41</sup> shows the following epigraphic-iconographical context: a) the king's *serekh* with his Horus name, Djer, inside, the *serekh* being repeated four times; b) the fetish *imy-wt*; c) the Wepwawet standard; d) the hieroglyphic sequence *it* a above or below two of the *serekhs*, and e) the hieroglyphic sequence *n(y)-dr* or *n(y)-shy*, a above and below the other two *serekhs*.

However, the same epigraphic- iconographical context appears to be reproduced in another

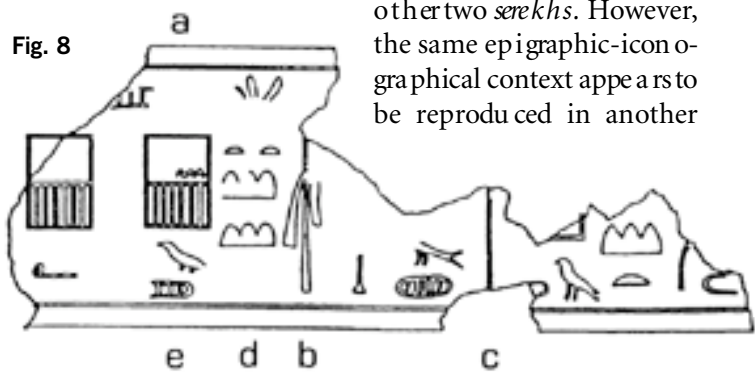


Fig. 8

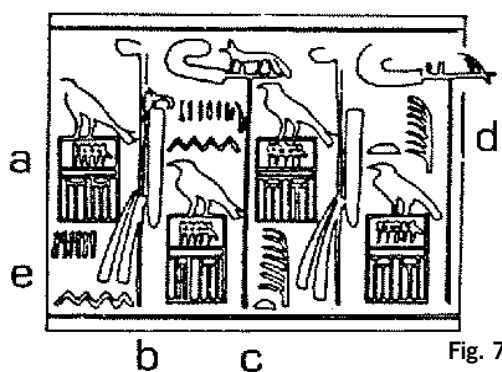


Fig. 7

seal impression, in this case of Den, fifth king of the Dynasty for whom the personal name associated to the *nsw-bit* title is now fixed (fig. 8).<sup>42</sup> In this seal – badly preserved – we can distinguish: a) the *serekh* of the king with evidence of the phonetic signs that compose his Horus name, the *serekh* being repeated at least two or three times; b) what appears to be the lower part of the fetish *imy-wt*; c) what appears to be the lower part of the Wepwawet standard flag-pole; d) the *nsw-bit* title with the personal name of the King, Khasty or Semty, next to the *serekh* (here, the extension of the title and the name impede placement above or below the *serekh*); and e) a hieroglyphic sequence of uncertain reading (the theonym *3š?*), formed by two signs, placed above and below the *serekhs*.

As can be seen, the parallels between the documents are notable, and the position of the *nsw-bit* name and title in the Den seal corresponds to the hieroglyphic expression *It* in the Djer seal, the same that the Cairo Stone and the Ramessid lists record as personal name of the third king of the First Dynasty. Thus, the personal name appears alone, without a title, as if this did not yet exist (or was still not definitely fixed). Sethe, Kaplony and Von Beckerath interpret the *It* of this seal as the personal name of a prince, a son of Djer.<sup>43</sup> They do not consider it a royal name

39. A.H. Gardiner, *The Royal Canon of Turin*, Oxford, 1987, 15 (II, 15); Von Beckerath, *Chronologie*, 165-169; id., *Handbuch*, 38-39.  
 40. Edwards, *CAH I*, 2, 24; Von Beckerath, *Chronologie*, 166; id., *Handbuch*, 38-39. On the *interpretatio* of the classical sources see Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 64.  
 41. Petrie, *Royal Tombs II*, 30-31, pl. XV.109; Kaplony, *IÄF II*, 1115; III, pl. 47.175.  
 42. Petrie, *Royal Tombs II*, pl. XIX.151.  
 43. K.H. Sethe, *Beiträge zur ältesten Geschichte Ägyptens* (UGAÄ 3), Leipzig, 1905, 28-29; Kaplony, *IÄF I*, 435-437, 533; Von Beckerath, *Chronologie*, 169 (*It* would be the personal name of Djer's successor, Djet-Ita).

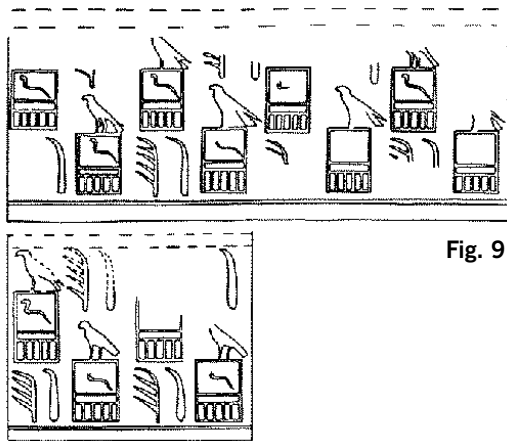


Fig. 9

because of the lack of titulary. However, the wavering nature of the titulary in its formative process explains this absence easily. Kaplony also interprets the other hieroglyphic sequence on the Djer seal as the personal name of a prince.

We can also go further and compare this seal with others, in this case of Djet and Narmer. Although differences occur, the alternating placement of 'serekh above – hieroglyphic sequence below' and 'hieroglyphic sequence above – serekh below' is repeated. In the Djet seals (fig. 9),<sup>44</sup> it could be read as a personal name, and would then coincide with the It of the Ramessid lists. Kaplony thinks that It is the personal name of a son of Djet.<sup>45</sup> In the



Fig. 10

Narmer seal (fig. 10),<sup>46</sup> a very well-known and controversial document, it is Mn that could be read as a personal name. According

to Helck, Kaplony and Von Beckerath, it is a gain the name of a prince (perhaps Aha?).<sup>47</sup> Following our reasoning the name Mn, which coincides with the Meni or Menes of the Ramessid and classical sources, could be read as a personal name of Narmer. This would lead us to agree with those scholars who have seen in this seal the proof of identification of the Narmer of contemporary documentation with the Menes of annalistic tradition.<sup>48</sup> This would mean that Narmer, and no other sovereign of the unification age, is Menes and that Menes is a historical reality. It would also mean that the sequence of eight kings on the Ramessid lists corresponds perfectly with the sequence of eight kings on the Abydos seals.

At this point, three objections may be raised:

1. Some seals of Den or Anedjib<sup>49</sup> with the same placement of epigraphic elements – or similar – show, in alternation with the serekh, sequences which are different from the well-known personal names of these kings. However, the fact that this structure may have other uses does not invalidate the idea that it could also have been used to transcribe the kings' incipient titulary. Two almost identical seals of Den from Abu Roash and Saqqara<sup>50</sup> seem to corroborate this (fig. 11). In them the serekh of the king and his personal name Khasty or Semty alternate without the second being preceded by the nsw-bit title, contrary to what is the norm with this king. As in Den's seal discussed above (fig. 8), next to the king's names we have here the Wepwawet standard and the name of the god 38 – now

44. Petrie, *Royal Tombs I*, pl. XVIII.2-3.

45. Kaplony, *IÄF I*, 435-437.

46. Petrie, *Royal Tombs II*, 51-52, pl. XIII.93.

47. Helck, *ZDMG* 103, 1953, 359; Kaplony, *IÄF I*, 486; Von Beckerath, *Chronologie*, 168-169. Helck considers that all these seals combine a royal serekh with a prince name. Von Beckerath thinks that this prince name is in all cases the successor's personal name as can be found in the Ramessid royal lists. However, this contradicts Djet's seals – which Von Beckerath does not discuss –, because in them the personal name is also It, which does not coincide with the personal name of Djet's successor, Den: Khasty or Semty. Fischer argues that the private names we are dealing with correspond to officials and not to princes (H.G. Fischer, *A First Dynasty Bowl Inscribed with the Group Ht*, *CdÉ* 36, 1961, 19-22). In any case, all scholars agree that we are facing personal names of high-rank people.

48. Grdseloff, *ASAE* 44, 1944, 282, n. 1.

49. Petrie, *Royal Tombs I*, pls. XXI.26, XXVII.69-70; Kaplony, *IÄF III*, pls. 30.82, 86-89; 31.90-95.

50. P. Montet, *Tombeaux de la I<sup>ère</sup> et de la IV<sup>e</sup> dynasties à Abou-Roach*. Deuxième partie: inventaire des objets, *Kémi VIII*, 1946, 157-223 [205-213]; Emery, *Great Tombs III*, 68-69, pl. 79.18; Kaplony, *IÄF II*, 1117-1118; III, pl. 52.195, 53.196.

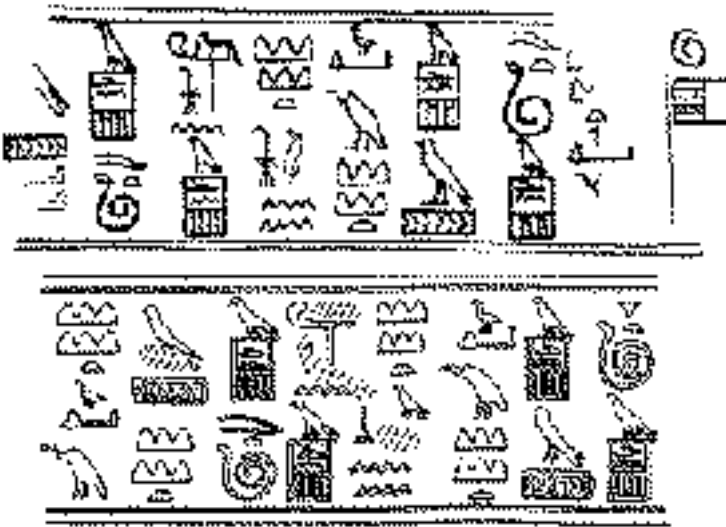


Fig. 11

properly written. All this means that the alternation 'serekh / personal name of the king without title' was in use.

2. With respect to Aha, the second king of the Dynasty seals with an identical structure to those of Narmer and Djet give, together with his serekh, the sequences *ht*, *rht?* or *s3-3st?* that in principle does not lead to the Teti/Athothis of the lists.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps only one of these three "names" was the king's personal name and we find ourselves facing a new problem of transmission (as shown above, the alternate epigraphic structure may or

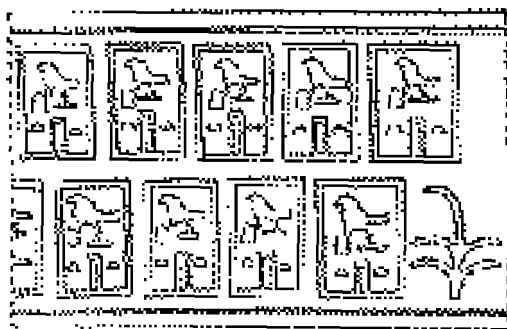


Fig. 12

may not refer to royal titularies). Or perhaps it was none of the three. A seal from the necropolis of the First Dynasty in Saqqara shows what seems to be an enclosure (*hwt?*) with the logogram of *Hrw-<sup>c</sup>h3* on the inside followed by two *t*-signs (fig. 12). The seal combines a sequence of such enclosures, arranged in two registers, along with a *sw* or *sm<sup>c</sup>*-sign. Kaplony reads "*hwt-niswt* or *hwt-sm<sup>c</sup>i(t)* of *Hrw-<sup>c</sup>h3*"; but this reading doesn't explain the presence of the two *t* inside the enclosure. Can we see in this seal a reference to the full titulary of the king and to the personal name Teti/Athothis of the Ramessid and Manethonian lists?<sup>52</sup> If we are facing the origins of the protocol, such a resource wouldn't be surprising.

3. In the well-known Aha label from the niched tomb at Naqada, close to the king's serekh and represented in triple outline, a shrine with a triangular roof appears, and, within it, the vulture and the cobra on top of each basket which make up the *nbtj*-sign are clearly distinguished and are followed by the *mn*-sign. It is the first record of the *nbtj*-sign and the sequence has been commonly interpreted as a royal name: *nbtj Mn*, 'Two Ladies Menes'.<sup>53</sup> Since it is to be found close to the Aha serekh, some scholars have assumed that this is the *nbtj* name of this king and that, therefore, Aha is Menes.<sup>54</sup> Others, instead, on the basis that the shrine shape coincides with the determinative of the term *sh-ntr*, '(funerary) shrine of the (king-)god', in the *Pyramid Texts*, have adduced that it must be the personal name of Aha's dead predecessor, Narmer, and that therefore the latter is Menes.<sup>55</sup> But the problem is more complex.

51. De Morgan, *Recherches*, 165-168, figs. 556, 558; W.B. Emery, *Excavations at Saqqara, 1937-1938. Hor-Aha*, Cairo, 1939, 4-5, 23-24, figs. 1, 18, 19; Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, 57-58, fig. 18a-b; Fischer, *CdÉ* 36, 1961, 19-22; Helck, *ZDMG* 103, 1953, 357-358; Kaplony, *IÄF* III, pl. 29.78-80; Petrie, *Royal Tombs* II, 51-52, pl. XIV.99.

52. Emery, *Hor-Aha*, 20-21, fig. 13; Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, 58, fig. 18b; Kaplony, *IÄF* II, 1098; III, pl. 19.36. The seal comes from the tomb #3357 of Saqqara's First Dynasty Cemetery. Enclosures named after personal names of kings are well attested for the second half of the First Dynasty and the beginnings of the Second (cf. Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 123-124, fig. 4.2, 2, 12-14; cf. also our fig. 6, right #7).

53. See discussions in Edwards, *CAHI*, 2, 11-15; Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, 34-36, 49-50; A.H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, Oxford, 1961, 404-405; J. Kinnaer, The Naqada Label and the Identification of Menes, *GM* 196, 2003, 23-30; J. Vandier, *Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne, I: Les époques de formation, vol. 2: Les trois premières dynasties*, Paris, 1952, 828-831.

54. L. Borchardt, Das Grab des Menes, *ZÄS* 36, 1898, 87-105; Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, 36, 49-50.

55. Grdseloff, *ASAE* 44, 1944, 279-282, referring to *Pyr.* 2100.

First, there is nothing to prove that *nbtj mn* is a royal name. Here, *nbtj* is, without a doubt,<sup>56</sup> the theonym “the Two Ladies” on its first record, and alludes to the dual nature of the Egyptian kingship and state. But it does not necessarily introduce a personal name of king. In fact, the *nbtj* title is not clearly documented with this function until the reign of Semerkhet (cf. supra).<sup>57</sup> The only occurrences of the *nbtj*-sign prior to this king are – at least which this author knows of – that of the Naqada label and those of two year labels of Djet, in which the cobra is substituted by the red crown.<sup>58</sup> On the Djet labels, the sign is again clearly to be found within a building, in this case a “palace” *ḥ*, and is followed by the signs of two shrines (*pr-wr?* and *pr-nw*). What is most likely then, is that on both the Naqada label and those of Djet, the sequences inside the buildings correspond to the proper names of those same buildings, following a usage which would later become so common (names of funerary enclosures, tombs and pyramids). Thus, on the Naqada label, a funerary shrine would be alluded to (it does not matter whether it is Narmer’s or Aha’s) whose name would be “The Two Ladies endure” or “The Two Ladies Shall Abide”, as some scholars have suggested.<sup>59</sup> More data support this hypothesis. In Qaa’s reign, when the *nbtj* title has become a regular element of royal titulary, at least three

different sequences headed by the *nbtj* title are recorded: *nbtj Q3-ꜥ* (preceded or not by *nsw-bit*; very frequent) (fig. 6, down left),<sup>60</sup> *nbtj sn* (*sn* with the determinative of the face; five cases)<sup>61</sup> and *nbtj shtp* (one case).<sup>62</sup> The latter, found recently by Dreyer at the tomb of Qaa himself at Abydos, is again characterised by the substitution of the cobra by the red crown in the hieroglyphic writing of *nbtj*. *Nbtj sn* and *nbtj shtp* are always arranged to the right of the *serekh*; *nbtj Q3-ꜥ* never is. But it is highly improbable for the three cases to be (alternative) personal names of the king. The most logical conclusion is that, of the three, only one is the true *nbtj* name of the king and the other two are, once again, the unrelated title accompanied by or used as an epithet. However, the sequence *nbtj Q3-ꜥ*, apart from being much more frequent than the other two, is the only one which appears on the Thinite royal lists (fig. 6, down left), signifying undoubtedly a royal name. It is also the only one that appears when, in individual references to Qaa, the *nsw-bit* and *nbtj* titles followed by the personal name of the king are found together (in this period these two titles share the personal name; cf. supra). On the contrary, the other two sequences never appear in these contexts. It is clear, then, that the *nsw-bit* and *nbtj* name of the king was Qaa and that it coincided with his Horus name. It seems

56. The objections which have been stated on the matter do not seem to be well-founded (cf. V. Vikentiev, *Les monuments archaïques, I: La tablette en ivoire de Naqâda*, *ASAE* 33, 1933, 208-234 [212-218]).

57. Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 203; Cervelló-Autuori, *The Origins*, 50. Cf. note 31.

58. Emery, *Great Tombs II*, 102-103, fig. 105; Helck, *Un tersuchungen*, 155-156; V. Vikentiev, *Étude des d’épigraphie protodynastique, II: Deux tablettes en ivoire (Ire dyn.) et les linteaux de Médamoud (XII-XIII dyn.)*, *ASAE* 56, 1959, 1-29.

59. Cf. S. Schott, *Hieroglyphen. Un tersuchungen zum Ursprung der Schrift* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Klasse 24), Wiesbaden, 1950, 113; Edwards, *CAH* I, 2, 14; S. Quirke, *Who Were the Pharaohs?*, London, 1990, 23; Allen, *GM* 126, 1992, 19; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 203. The suggestion pointed out by Vikentiev (*ASAE* 33, 1933, 212-218) and recently by Kinnaer (*KMT* 12, 3, 2001, 76-77) that what is depicted beneath the *nbtj*-sign is not the *mn*-sign but two shrines side by side seems very unlikely, as Emery argues (*Hor-Aha*, 5) and Kinnaer himself recognizes (*GM* 196, 2003, 29-30). Kinnaer proposes a new interpretation of the whole epigraphic sequence: “(Year of) establishing the shrine of the Two Ladies by Horus Aha”. He considers that the verb *mn* is not a part of the shrine name. The objection is that the *mn*-sign is included within the shrine together with the *nbtj*-sign, which suggests that the two signs form a linguistic unity.

60. Cf., for ex., Petrie, *Royal Tombs I*, pls. VIII.1, 5, 9-10, 13-14; IX.3, 6, 8, 10, 12; II, pl. VIII.6; Lacau-Lauer, *PD IV*, I, pls. IV.1-2, 4.19-21; Kaplony, *Steingefässe*, pls. 11.9, 18; Z. Hawass, *Hidden Treasures of the Egyptian Museum*, Cairo-New York, 2002, 7 (down left).

61. Petrie, *Royal Tombs I*, 43, pls. XII.2, XVII.29; Petrie, *Royal Tombs II*, 50, pls. VIII.2-3, XII.6; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 204, fig. 6.5 (2), 219, fig. 6.7 (2); Hawass, *Hidden Treasures*, 7 (above).

62. Dreyer, *MDAIK* 52, 1996, 74-75, pl. 14.e; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 204-205, fig. 6.7 (3).

dear, too, that regarding *nbtj sn* and *nbtj shtp*, we are faced with allusions to the dual “principle” which governs the kingship and to its “properties” (“The Two Ladies are vivified” and “The Two Ladies are pacified”) or epithets (but not names) of the king himself (“He who vivifies the Two Ladies” and “He who pacifies the Two Ladies”).

Therefore, the *nbtj* title has two meanings: one unrelated and the other related to royal titulary. Note that only in the unrelated one the substitution of the cobra by the red crown may occur (Djet and Qaa labels). On the Naqada label we would have one of the unrelated uses, which rules out that the sign *mn* transcribes here the name of Menes. Therefore, there is no obstacle to the identification Menes= Narmer.

### In conclusion,

1) the Abydos seals give the Horus names of the eight kings of the First Dynasty in perfect order of succession, the same names – neither more nor less – than those already documented by the rest of the contemporary epigraphic sources; the number and order of the kings can therefore be considered fixed; 2) all the Ramessid and Manethonian royal lists give eight names for the First Dynasty; the last four can be easily related to the corresponding Horus names through the contemporary documentation; 3) in contemporary documentation, it is possible to find the names that appear in the lists as personal names of at least three of the first four kings of the Dynasty, associated with their corresponding *serekhs*, although they are not linked to any royal title; 4) the one to one correspondence in the same order between the eight Horus names and the eight names on the lists is, therefore, practically

complete; and 5) therefore, Menes is Narmer and the First Dynasty starts with him.

### Addenda

During the *II Conference on Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt*, held in Toulouse in September 2005, a new important Thinite inscribed document was presented. This is a seal impression coming from Tell el-Samarah and found by S.G. El-Baghdadi, director of the Egyptian Mission which excavated the site (S.G. El-Baghdadi, *The Proto-Dynastic and Early Dynastic Necropolis of Tell el-Daba'a (El-Qanan) and Tell el-Samarah (El-Dakahlia province, North-east Delta)*, in: B. Midant-Reynes and Y. Tristant, *Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt. Origin of the State. Toulouse, 5-8 September 2005. Abstracts of papers*, Toulouse, 2005, 95-96).

Despite the fact that it is not easy to restore the epigraphic sequence due to the superimposition of more than one impression, the excavator reads on the seal the hieroglyphic sentence: *Itt (Itt) di s3 h3t sh*, “Itet has given protection in front of the chapel”. Associated to this sentence is a rectangle (an enclosure?) within which the upper half of the logogram of a falcon, perhaps holding a shield, is arranged. Are we facing the name of Hor-Aha? If this reading is confirmed, we would here have a link between the Horus name Hor-Aha and the personal name Itet/Teti/Athothis of the Ramessid and Manethonian lists. However, in the Ramessid and Manethonian lists, Itet/Teti/Athothis is the successor of Meni/Menes, and in the Thinite record Hor-Aha succeeds Narmer. So, if Hor-Aha is Itet/Teti/Athothis, Narmer must be Meni/Menes, as we maintain in this paper. ■