

The Early Hieroglyphic Annotation in the Nag el-Hamdulab Rock Art Tableaux, and the Following of Horus in the Northwest Hinterland of Aswan

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“I cannot read the writings of periods so remote ... that was of the Eighteenth Dynasty, these are Predynastic ideographs.”

Boris Karloff, (as Ardeth Bey), *The Mummy*, Universal Studios 1932

The rock art tableaux that form the large pictorial cycle at Nag el-Hamdulab, on the west bank of the Nile approximately 6 km north of Aswan, represent an extended festival scene dating from the cusp of Dynasty 0 and the First Dynasty. An early hieroglyphic annotation accompanies the main panel (tableau 7a) of the ensemble, and supports, along with the iconography, a date during the reign of Narmer. The four signs making up the early text appear to describe a ritual, apparently the “Following of Horus,” that involved both the confirmation of royal ritual power and the physical taxation and incorporation of marginal areas and their inhabitants. In the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle, the king appears prominently for the first time as both overseer and object of a celebration incorporating ritual, administrative, and fiscal elements.

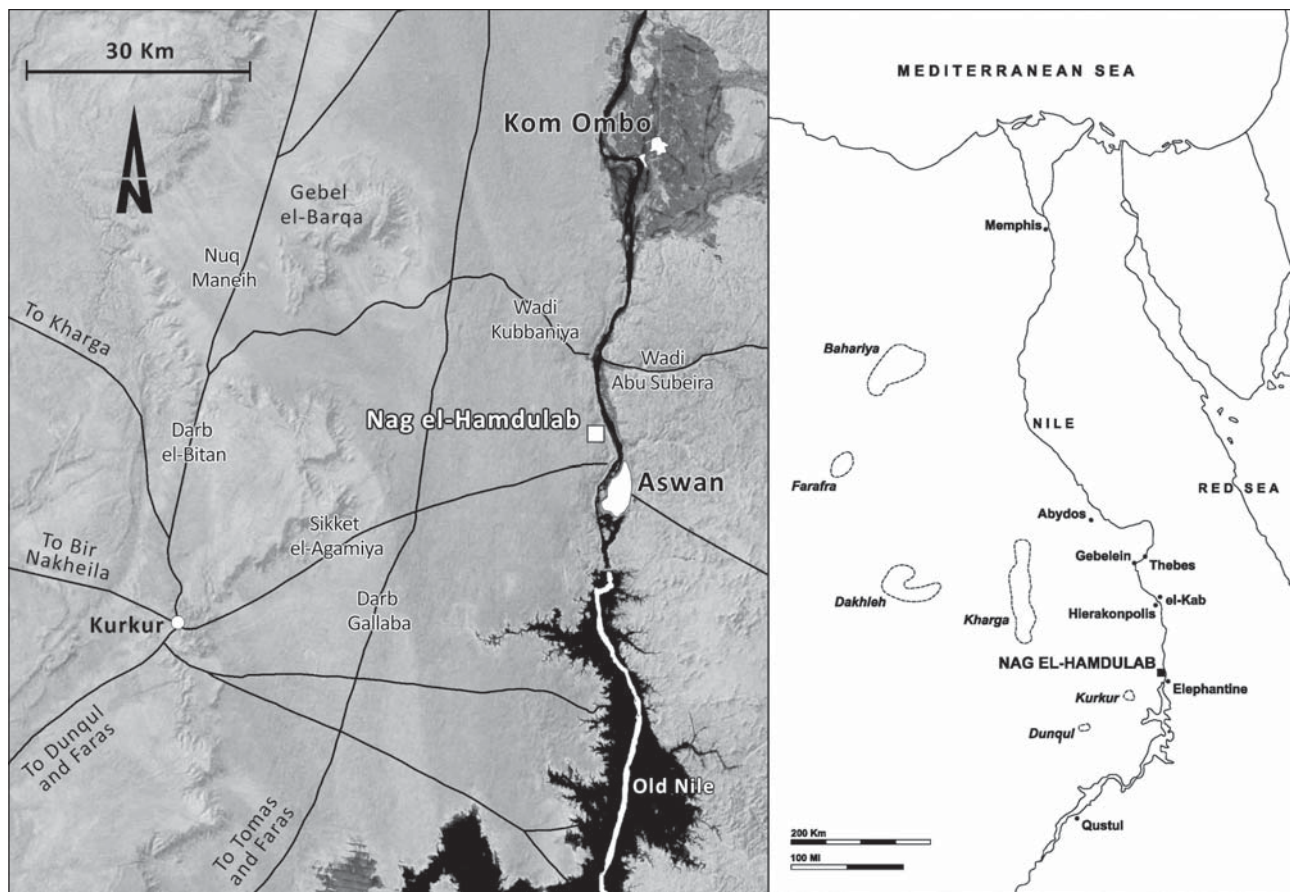
Les panneaux d'art rupestre qui constituent le grand cycle de gravures de Nag el-Hamdulab, sur la rive ouest du Nil, à environ 6 km au nord d'Assouan, représentent une cérémonie qui s'est tenue à l'aube de la dynastie 0 et la de la I^{re} dynastie. Une annotation hiéroglyphique au début du panneau principal (tableau 7a), tout comme le style iconographique de l'ensemble, incitent à dater ce cycle du règne de Narmer. Les quatre signes qui composent le texte semblent décrire un rituel, apparemment la « Suite d'Horus », qui impliquait à la fois la confirmation du pouvoir rituel royal et la levée de taxes dans des zones marginales du pays. Dans le cycle de Nag el-Hamdulab, le roi apparaît ainsi pour la première fois comme superviseur et comme objet d'une cérémonie comprenant des éléments rituels, administratifs et fiscaux.

The Nag el-Hamdulab Nautical Cycle, on the Cusp of the Predynastic and Dynastic

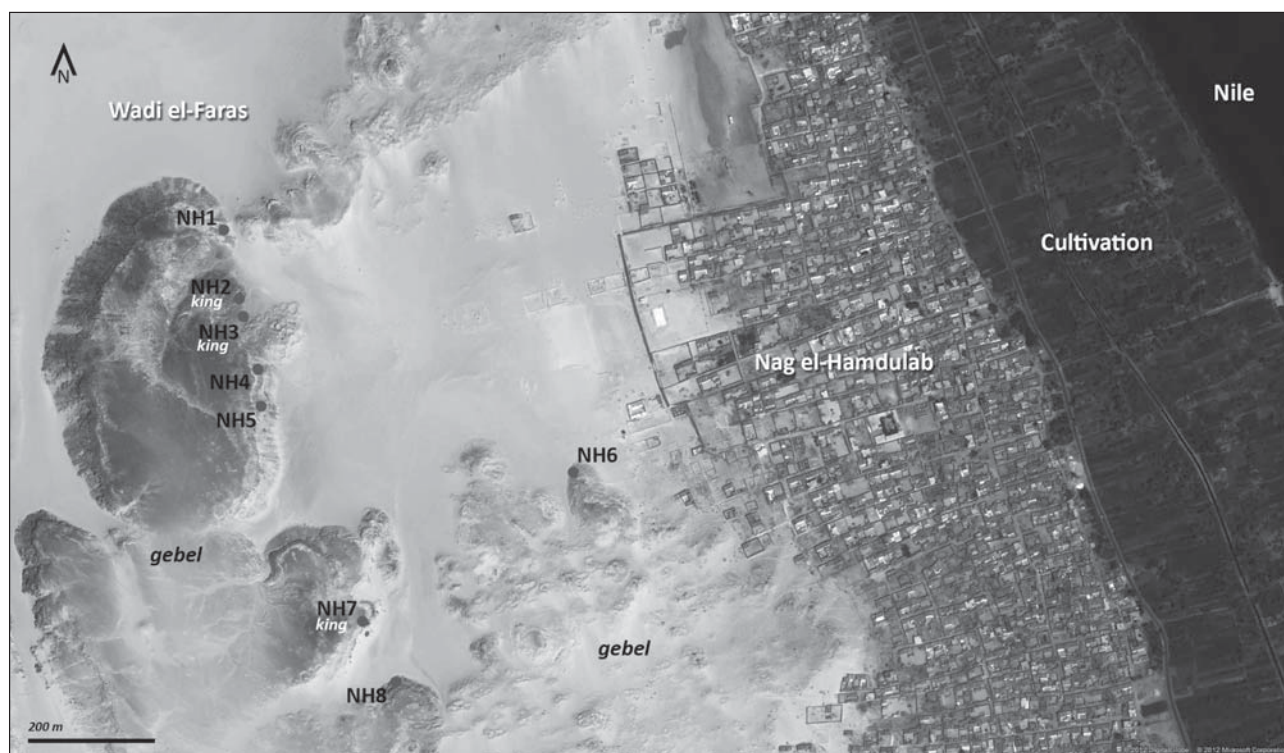
A series of important rock art scenes, composed of discreet groups of images ranging in size from a few figures to large tableaux, form an extended petroglyphic cycle on the rocks of a small bay above and behind the modern village of Nag el-Hamdulab, on the west bank of the Nile approximately 6 kilometers north of Aswan (fig. 1 & 2). Near the end of the nineteenth century, Sayce copied snippets of one portion of the site—that in which is located the early hieroglyphic inscription—and Morgan, Bouriant, Legrain, and Jéquier published those sketches shortly thereafter as a footnote near the end of their monograph on the rock art and rock inscriptions of the area between the First Cataract and Kom Ombo (Morgan et al. 1894: 203). Labib Habachi photographed the rock art at Nag el-Hamdulab sometime between

Fig 1

The Location of Nag el-Hamdulab in southern Upper Egypt, showing the relationship of the site to Aswan, Kom Ombo, and nearby desert routes.



1. The present article is a slightly expanded version of a paper delivered on July 26, 2011 at the Origins 4 conference in New York. It constitutes a preliminary précis of a portion of a joint publication of the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle, and the author wishes to thank his collaborators on that publication—S. Hendrickx and M.C. Gatto—for informative discussions and exchanges of ideas, most importantly in the presence of the tableaux at Nag el-Hamdulab. The accompanying maps and drawings—based on tracings made in the field—are the work of A. Urcia. The image from the Labib Habachi archives, employed here in a restoration of the damaged royal retinue scene by A. Urcia (fig. 4), is courtesy of the Epigraphic Survey of the Oriental Institute, and its field director W.R. Johnson. The author thanks M. Brown, D. Klotz, M. Leblanc, L. Lippiello, and C. Manassa for discussions relevant to the study. A reviewer for *Archéo-Nil* made several important suggestions, now incorporated into the current form of the article, particularly with regard to the reading of the second sign in the early hieroglyphic text as Gardiner M9.

**Fig. 2**

The locations of the major groups of rock art tableaux that make up the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle.

1962 and 1969, but not until Nabil Swelim noticed the scene in Habachi's photographic archive, and Maria Gatto (Hendrickx & Gatto 2009) and Per Storemyr (Storemyr 2009: 126-128) rediscovered the site did the full scope and significance of the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle become apparent.

Iconographically and stylistically the entire ensemble appears to date to the cusp of Dynasty 0 and the First Dynasty (compare the preliminary remarks in Hendrickx, Darnell & Gatto 2012: 4-6). A brief early hieroglyphic text of four signs annotates one of the tableaux at the site, and palaeographically suggests for the entire ensemble a date at the dawn of the First Dynasty.¹ The scenes and the hieroglyphic annotation together reveal that the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle relates to the Following of Horus in what at the time would have been a still somewhat ill defined border area between pharaonic Egypt and A-Group Nubia. The images of the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle provide further evidence for an association of solar-Sokarian vessels with First Dynasty royal ritual, and for a connection between those vessels and the activities of a royal nautical festival, perhaps an element of the Jubilee.

From Conceptual Royalty to a Physical Royal in Upper Egyptian Rock Inscriptions

In the rock art of Late Predynastic Egypt, the trappings of royalty come to dominate images of nautical ritual and military prowess, but a focus and crystallization of this cloud of royal visual allusion—a dominating human figure who wears and holds the crowns and regalia, and to whom the other pictorial references are more the graphic footnotes—is not present. In the tableaux of royal ritual power that become more frequent in the rock art of Late Predynastic and Protodynastic Upper Egypt and Nubia, the representation of a single anthropomorphic ruler is either absent, as in the great tableau in the Wadi of

the Horus Qa-a (northwest of modern Luxor—Darnell 2009: 97-99; 2011), or present as but one of a number of human figures, no larger or more visually central or dominant than other participants in the activities depicted, as in the decoration on the Gebelein Linen (Donadoni Roveri, D'Amicone & Leospo 1994: 21-22, figs. 4-7), the images of the Hierakonpolis Tomb 100 cycle (Quibell & Green 1902: pls. 75-79), and the early Protodynastic memorial tableau at Gebel Tjauti in the Theban Western Desert (Friedman, Hendrickx, with Darnell, in Darnell et al. 2002: 10-19 and pls. 9-11). A change occurs at the dawn of the dynastic age, however, and the ruler with crown and regalia assumes a more central position, repeated within the various segments of a larger cycle of images—as in the imagery so common in the temples of dynastic Egypt, iconographically the true pharaoh could indeed be in multiple places at one time. At Nag el-Hamdulab (**fig. 2**), within sight—from atop the inscribed hills themselves—of Qubbet el-Hawa, is a large and complex cycle of images (Hendrickx & Gatto 2009; Hendrickx et al. 2009; 2012; Hendrickx, Darnell & Gatto 2012;), grouped in seven discreet sub-sites, most comprising multiple tableaux. In the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle the repeated image of a ruler wearing one of the canonical crowns of pharaonic regalia, the White Crown, finally dominates the proceedings in a series of images, many of a distinctly terrestrial nature, but all ultimately linked by the ubiquitous and often large depictions of ritual watercraft. The image of the king appears in three of the seven sites (specifically scenes NH2a, 3c, and 7), in each example wearing the White Crown and holding a scepter. The ruler appears in the second scene from each end of the roughly north-south extent of the cycle, thereby bracketing the entirety of the proceedings that occupy the major tableaux at the site.

The omnipresence of the king corresponds to a greater division of the earlier scenes into increasingly discreet units. The tableaux of the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle are detailed, and separate what in earlier nautical procession imagery are blended events without clear spatial or temporal division.² The Nag el-Hamdulab cycle stands at the end of the Predynastic images of a royal festival—perhaps in at least some instances early versions of what becomes the royal Jubilee cycle—dominated by a nautical procession,³ and at the beginning of the later, more episodic, Dynastic Period depictions of rituals in which the repeated image of the ruler dominates the proceedings.⁴

2. Individual vignettes from the cycle may appear during the late Predynastic/Protodynastic (Darnell 2009), but without association with other separated episodes (for the Jubilee and the iconography thereof, see Williams & Logan 1987; Leblanc 2011).

3. For an overview of the nautical aspects of the Jubilee see Leblanc 2011: 510-614.

4. The old fluidity of episodes in a major nautically focused ritual will not reappear in pharaonic Egyptian art until the Opet Procession scenes and texts of Tutankhamun in the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple (Epigraphic Survey 1994: XVIII-XIX), in which the presence of archaic songs (Epigraphic Survey 1994: 12-14; Darnell 2010: 7-8) may allude to a patterning on much earlier imagery. According to texts in the tomb of Kheruef, the first Jubilee of Amenhotep III was based on archaic sources (Epigraphic Survey 1980: pl. 28; Leblanc 2011: 67-75), and a palette reused during the reign of Amenhotep III may be evidence of Eighteenth Dynasty epigraphic research (Hartwig 2008: 195-209). The inscription of a New Kingdom priest added above the concluding image to tableau 7b at Nag el-Hamdulab (published already in Morgan et al. 1894: 203; the man is “the god’s father, temple scribe of the domain of Khnum, Djehutyemheb,” possibly the same man as the “god’s father, pure of hands of Khnum, Djehutyemheb” attested in an inscription dating to the reign of Ramesses VII at Sehel [Gasse & Rondot 2007: 276-280 and 543, SEH 434.VI]; for this inscription, and others in the region mentioning a priestly Djehutyemhab [if all indeed belong to the same man], see M. Brown, forthcoming) suggests that such earlier scenes were indeed visited later, and perhaps consulted for knowledge and inspiration in the depiction, if not even practise, of later rituals.

The Early Hieroglyphic Annotation of the Nag el-Hamdulab Tableaux—the Following of Horus

At the southern end of the great bay just west of Nag el-Hamdulab, around the edges of which the tableaux of the Nag el-Hamdulab Early Dynastic cycle are located, is a narrow niche within the rock face, elevated above the floor of the bay and partially—though not fully—hidden from the clear view of a visitor standing in the lower, sandy area filling the bay. Within the group of scenes in this small defile is tableau 7a, the largest of the tableaux at Nag el-Hamdulab (fig. 3-5). Five boats dominate the tableau, all with high prows, four with almost identical prow decoration and bearing twin cabins and standards, one with a single cabin and neither standard nor prow decoration, aside from an upper hook. The boats cluster into two groups, two vessels with twin cabins to the upper right, two of the same with the fifth, less decorated vessel to the lower left. With the three vessels in the lower left appear three groups of human figures, with an accompanying dog; the vessels to the upper left have no human entourage, but the large image of a giraffe hovers a short distance above the forward (left) vessel, and a rare Early Dynastic hieroglyphic inscription appears between the two vessels.

Above the lead boat in the lower pair of ritual vessels is a remarkable image of the early ruler and his entourage. The king wears a pointed version of the White Crown, oriented vertically, not in the tipped back manner in which it appears on the colossal mace heads of Scorpion and Narmer at Hierakonpolis. The ruler holds before him a tall staff with curved top,⁵ while in the other hand he holds horizontally another sceptre; rather than a flail, the object is a short staff with an upper element open on one side and sharply angled to the other, essentially the shape of the early *hk3*-scepter from Tomb U-j at Abydos (Dreyer 1998: 147 [fig. 85] and 150-151 [fig. 88]). Before the king march two standard bearers, the first holding the standard of the possible royal placenta, the second that of Wepwawet with the *šdšd* curving up in front of the canid, a pair appearing as the standards preceding the king on the Scorpion mace head (and together with falcon standards on the mace head and palette of Narmer). The dog that walks between and just below the standard bearers and the ruler is a late survival of the canid as image of human order (Hendrickx 2006; Hendrickx 2010: 112, 116, *et passim*; Darnell 2011: 1163-1169; Hendrickx & Eyckerman 2012).⁶ A single fan-bearer follows the king—unlike the two accompanying the king on the Scorpion and Narmer mace heads—and behind all, above the second of the two ritual vessels, are two probable tribute bearers. The vessel beneath the ruler literally sprouts royal imagery, with a falcon standard at the bottom of the protruding elements on the prow, two colossal maces (see

5. In the forthcoming editio princeps of the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle (by S. Hendrickx, J.C. Darnell, and M.C. Gatto), S. Hendrickx cites as parallel for the staff Petrie 1900: pl. 14, fig. 9. A very tall *hk3*-scepter is attested as a royal attribute in later, dynastic contexts—compare the statues of Sesostri I depicted in Smith and Simpson 1981: 178. Note especially the long *hk3*-scepter carried by Amenhotep III in depictions of his Jubilee activities—cf. Schiff Giorgini & Beaux 1998: pl. 115 (the author thanks one of the reviewers for reminding him of this additional archaism in the Jubilee of Amenhotep III).

6. For the dog accompanying the ruler, and perhaps expressing the order-bringing power of the Horian king, compare the small stone vessel Louvre E.27202 (Hendrickx, Friedman & Eyckerman 2011: 144-145), on which appears twice the group of a dog following the depiction of a falcon atop a throw-stick.



Fig. 3
 Tableau 7a at
 Nag el-Hamdulab,
 in its current
 vandalized state.

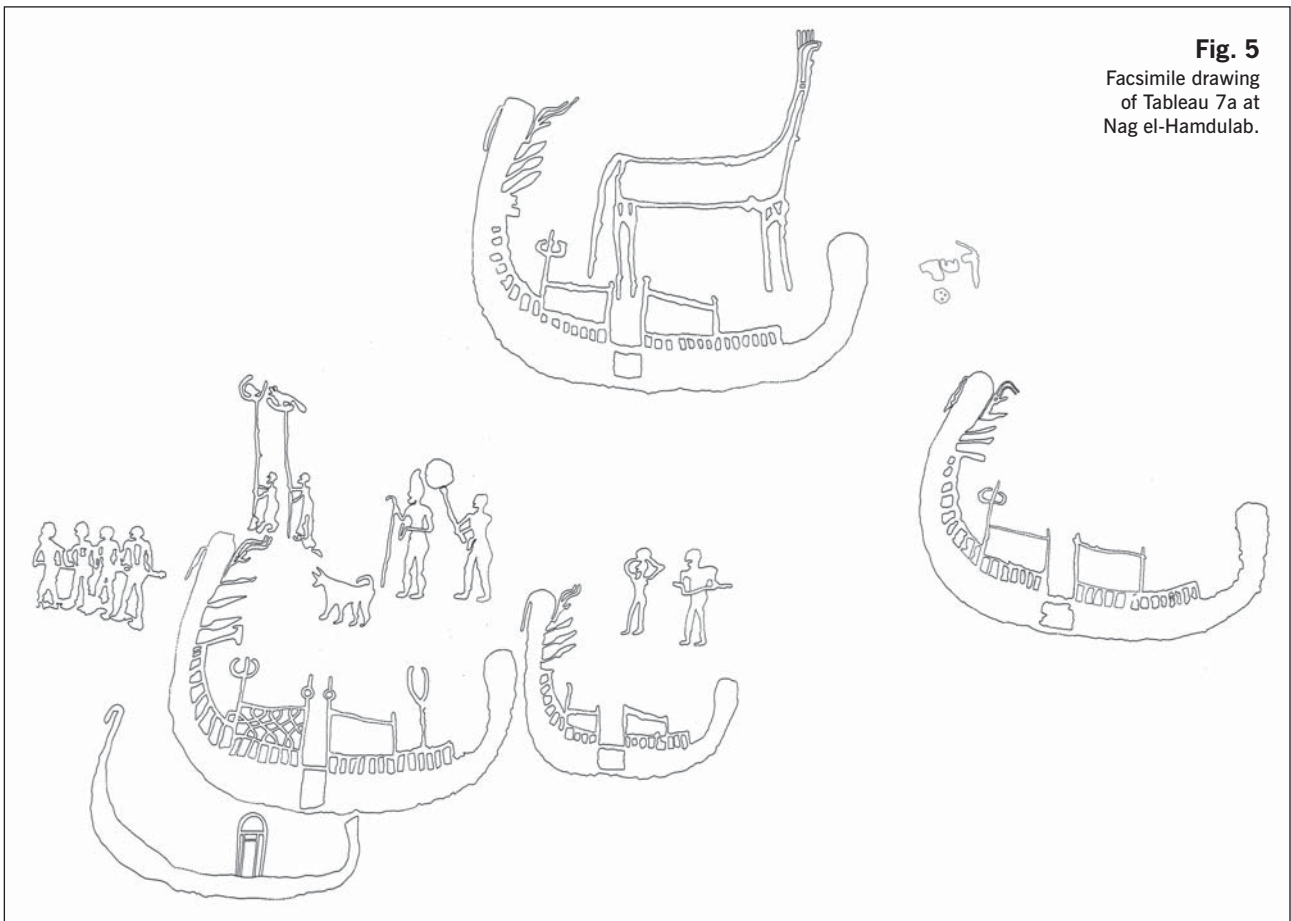


Fig. 5
 Facsimile drawing
 of Tableau 7a at
 Nag el-Hamdulab.

below) atop the cabins, and two bovid-horned standards.⁷ In front of the vessel below the king and the royal entourage is a line of four men, holding a rope that is not attached to the vessel (compare Engelmayer 1965: pl. 16, fig. 5b-c). The twin vessels in the lower left, with accompanying smaller boat, appear to represent an echo of the earlier group of ritual vessel with tender boat (examples and references in Darnell 2009: 95-97 and 100; 2011: 1160-1161 and 1174), the ritual vessel doubled in the Nag el-Hamdulab tableau.⁸ The mirroring of the double ritual vessels in the Nag el-Hamdulab tableau appears to represent an earlier image of vessel with accompanying zoomorphic symbol—the probably solar giraffe (*cf.* Westendorf 1966a: 37 and 84-85; 1966b: 207-208; Huyge 2002: 199-200) above the boat (*cf.* Winkler 1939: pl. 14 fig. 2; Darnell 2013a: 61, pls. 56-57)—repeated and updated below with an image of the royal ritualist himself now wearing the regalia of pharaonic kingship—the king in White Crown with his retinue. As the falcon in boat hovering above the larger vessel and serekh on Aha label JdE 31773 (Donadoni Roveri & Tiradritti 1998:



Fig. 4

The king and royal entourage in Tableau 7a, restored on the basis of the photographs of Dr. Labib Habachi.

7. For the pairing of falcon standard, bovid standards, and maces on the vessel beneath the ruler, compare the falcon standard apparently labelling the image of a bull, and the mace hanging from a staff as emblem of the ruler on a vessel, in the Qa-a Tableau (Darnell 2011: 1171-1178 and 1186).

8. A close parallel to the larger ritual vessel with twin cabins and accompanying boat with rounded cabin appears in the Wadi Magar Protodynastic tableau (Darnell 2009: 100; 2013a: 119-122, pls. 146-148).

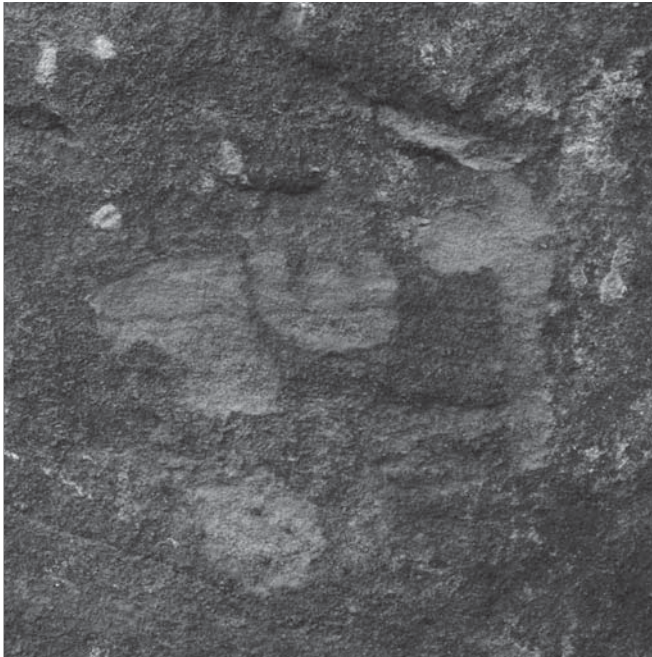


Fig. 6
Photographic detail of the early hieroglyphic annotation in Tableau 7a.

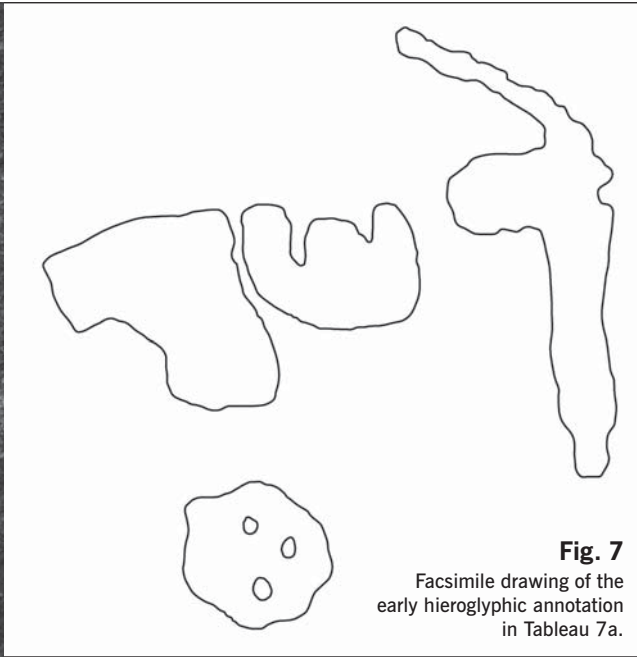


Fig. 7
Facsimile drawing of the early hieroglyphic annotation in Tableau 7a.

229 no. 190; drawing and partial parallel in Kahl & Engel 2001: 12, figs. 10-11; detail photo Seipel ed. 2003: 105) “*nous fait comprendre que le roi se trouve dans le bateau, tout comme sa nature divine se trouve dans une embarcation naviguant dans le ciel*” (Spieser 2000: 7), the giraffe and vessels above the king and almost identical vessels below appear to represent a translation of the older world of zoomorphic cosmographs into the new world of royal iconography. In the upper right portion of tableau 7a, behind the stern of the uppermost vessel in the group, and just above the prow of the rightmost and final vessel in the group, is a four-sign hieroglyphic inscription (**fig. 6 & 7**). The signs of the inscription are executed in the same style of pecking as that employed for the other elements of the Nag el-Hamdulab tableaux, and reveal a degree of patination identical to that of the other images at the site. Although the reading of early hieroglyphic inscriptions is often somewhat speculative, the representational environment of the Nag el-Hamdulab annotation offers a complex iconographic check on the interpretation suggested here—as necessarily speculative as this reading itself must be. “Heraldic” details in the imagery and the content of the inscription indicate that the tableau—and perhaps the entire Nag el-Hamdulab Cycle—relate to the “Following of Horus” at the dawn of pharaonic history.

Orientation and Composition of the Annotation

The signs that reveal a definite orientation (the first and last of the signs) face toward the left, in a somewhat irregular grouping, apparently conceived as three vertical divisions. The leftmost segment of the inscription (**fig. 6-8**) is the only one of the three to contain more than one sign, and reveals a feline head over a circular sign. A roughly crescent-shaped sign with dome-like, central element occupies the central vertical division, positioned to the right of the uppermost sign to the left, and leaving a space below as though the carver of the text was planning for a possible stacking of signs, and was not comfortable

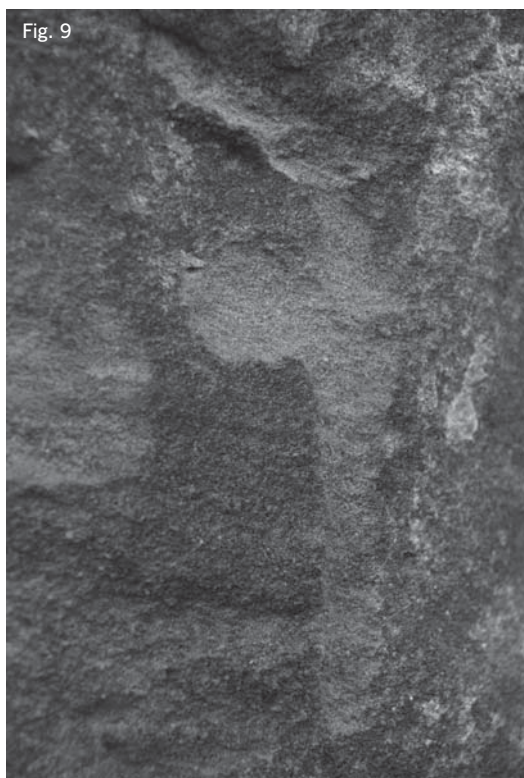
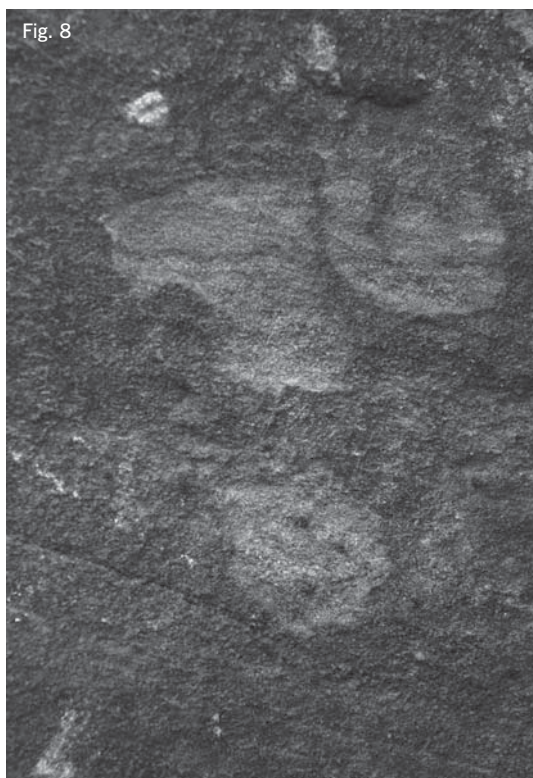


Fig. 8
Photographic detail of the left portion of the early hieroglyphic annotation.

Fig. 9
Photographic detail of the right portion of the early hieroglyphic annotation.

with allowing a single sign to occupy the middle of a vertical division of text.⁹ The rightmost portion of the inscription (**fig. 6,7 & 9**) is a single, vertical sign, the upper portion of which is angled up to the left, with a rounded element protruding to the left of the angle. The inscription as a whole slants down to the left.

Identification of the Individual Signs

The first sign from the right is the only tall, essentially vertical element of the inscription. Although the upper portion of the sign is carved in a natural crack in the stone, the pecking of the sign is clearly visible for the portion that extends into the crack. The vertical orientation of the sign, and the angled extension thereof to the upper left, rule out the identity of the sign with the curve-bladed axe.¹⁰ Although the line extending to the upper left from the middle of the sign makes it taller than those to the left, the overall slant of the inscription upwards towards the right means that the added upper portion of the sign is in fact necessary to give the right end of the inscription the same general height as that of the leftmost portion.¹¹ The standard hieroglyphic sign most closely corresponding to the rightmost element of the Nag el-Hamdulab

9. Compare the positioning of the boat sign on the name stela Munich 4290 (Martin 2011: 182-183 and pl. 69), although the placement there is also accommodating the head of the large, seated figure that functions as the female determinative.

10. That sign is normally of a horizontal orientation (Regulski 2010: 640, cites but one essentially upright example [from Wadi Maghara, reign of Netjerikhet]), and occurs almost exclusively as an element in the writing of a woodworking title (Kahl 2003: 206-207).

11. The slant is not much greater than the similar slant up to the right on the First Dynasty name stela Louvre E. 21713 (reign of Djet; see Martin 2011: 146-147 and pl. 55).

annotation is Gardiner T18, the *šms*-sign, of which the Nag el-Hamdulab version is an excellent First Dynasty example.¹²

The following sign is crescentic, with a central bulge between the upturned “horns.” The breadth of the sign in comparison to its relatively shallow depth rules out an Early Dynastic *hm*-sign (compare Martin 2011: 9, examples from nos. 113, 192, and 283). The sign to some extent also resembles the boats that appear in some late Predynastic through Early Dynastic rock art,¹³ on certain First Dynasty labels,¹⁴ and recalls to a lesser degree rare, three-dimensional versions.¹⁵ The boats that occur rarely on First Dynasty name stelae are not entirely dissimilar, although those vessels appear atop rectangular “waterways,” and are not quite so evenly curved as the Nag el-Hamdulab sign.¹⁶ The second sign from the left is most similar in appearance to early versions of the lotus blossom M9 (Regulski 2010: 138 and 483, particularly the Narmer example). The two signs at the left end of the annotation are grouped one above the other in the leftmost of the three imaginary vertical divisions of the annotation. The upper sign most closely resembles the feline head that is Gardiner F9, a sign most often having the phonetic value *b3* in Early Dynastic inscriptions, usually with the meaning of “panther hide,” in Early Dynastic inscriptions.¹⁷ The second sign at the left end of the group, beneath the feline head, is roughly circular, and contains three internal marks. The sign most probably represents Gardiner O49 or O50 (*cf.* Regulski 2010: 566-568), and the three surviving areas of patinated surface—the three “dots” within the circle—resemble the interior spaces between the outer line and the lines of the interior crossing elements in examples from the reigns of Djer and Sekhemib/Peribsen (Regulski 2010: 566-567).¹⁸ Taking the lower sign as a version of O49, the two signs on the left side of the Nag el-Hamdulab early hieroglyphic text could well write the name of a place, with excellent parallels being the toponyms on the Gebel Sheikh Suleiman tableau—of Naqada

12. Regulski 2010: 642 (the examples from the reigns of Djer and Den are particularly similar to the Nag el-Hamdulab sign); the knife is absent in the Hamdulab example, consistent with a date prior to the reign of Netjerikhet (Regulski 2010: 192).

13. Compare the examples in Engelmayr 1965: pls. 4 (nos. 1 and 3), 19 (figs. 1-5), 20 (figs. 1a-c), 22 (fig. 2), 23 (fig. 4), 29 (fig. 6), 36 (fig. 2), 52 (fig. 1); Darnell 2009: 93 (fig. 15); 2011: 1154 (fig. 2, middle vessel) and 1157 (fig. 4). The closest style parallels are Engelmayr’s Typus I, Typus III, and Typus VII, consistent with a late Predynastic through early Dynastic date (Engelmayr 1965: 63-65, 66, and 68).

14. Compare Vandier 1952: 837 (fig. 560) and 841 (fig. 562); Petrie 1901: pls. 10 and 11; Amélineau 1904: pl. 15, fig. 19; Quibell 1923: pl. 11, figs. 2-3; for the upper bulge, compare the vessel in Petrie 1901: pl. 8, fig. 12.

15. Cialowicz 2009: 123 (fig. 36); somewhat less similar is the model in Reisner 1913: 80-81 (4919).

16. See Martin 2011: 9 (examples from nos. 42 and 271). Somewhat similar vessels on Early Dynastic labels, but with angles to the sternposts, do not have the lower waterways—see conveniently, with bibliography, <http://xoomer.virgilio.it/francescoraf/hesyra/labels/xxqaa16.htm>. For the palaeography of boat signs, see Regulski 2010: 578-580 (note that the domed deck structure can appear as late as the reign of Hetepsekhemewy/Khasekhemewy).

17. See Regulski 2010: 395, with particularly similar examples from the reign of Qa-a. For the sign in early hieroglyphic inscriptions see Kahl 1994: 493; Kahl 2002: 134-135; see also Kahl, Kloth & Zimmermann 1995: 188 (D3/Sa/9 c), 194 (D3/Sa/11 a), and 222 (D3/?/4, f).

18. One might suggest reading the two leftmost signs as a perturbed writing of *sp-tpy*, with D1 over O50 (which can have various numbers of internal “grains”—Regulski 2010: 566-568), were it not for the clear snout and feline attributes of the upper sign—which does not appear to be overly prognathic in early hieroglyphic palaeography (Regulski 2010: 342). The dagger T8 appears to be the normal orthography of *tpy*, “first,” in Archaic Period inscriptions (Kahl 1994: 727).

IID2-IIIB date (Regulski 2010: 45); or perhaps in fact of First Dynasty date (Somaglino & Tallet this volume)—each composed of a single sign above O49 (Williams & Logan 1987: 283 and 285).

Order of Reading, Transliteration, and Translation

If the reading of a toponym at the left end of the annotation is correct, the overall direction of the inscription is not thereby readily apparent, but the two signs to the right may therefore be considered separately. Those two signs could write a single word, a compound, or two separate words in clipped, perhaps ideographic, orthography. Any reading that accommodates the two signs is worthy of consideration; any reading that accommodates the two signs and provides a suitable annotation to the scene is more probably correct. A plausible transliteration and translation of the early hieroglyphic text at Nag el-Hamdulab is:¹⁹

Transliteration

šmsw <-*Hr*->^a *nḥb*^b *B*^c

Translation

Nautical Following <of Horus>; taxation of Panther-Skin-Town

Text Notes

^a The *šms*-sign in early hieroglyphic texts appears to refer to a following or entourage. The presence of a *šms*-sign in a Protodynastic/Early Dynastic context immediately and unavoidably suggests the *šmsw-Hr*, the “Following of Horus.” The compound term *šmsw-Hr* often receives as determinative the sign of a ritual vessel,²⁰ and the sign in the Nag el-Hamdulab inscription immediately to the left of the *šms*-sign could be a rendering of a crescent-hulled vessel with dome-shaped deck structure, although paleographically the second sign from the left more probably represents M9. The presence of the *šms*-sign at the far right suggests that the inscription was composed in retrograde fashion, an order not unexpected in early hieroglyphic compositions (Kahl 1994: 42-47). Although other writings of the *šmsw-Hr* have some version of the Horus falcon clearly written, no falcon appears in the Hamdulab inscription. The fact that the label accompanies a depiction of the following of Horus—both as activity and in the form of the standards appearing within the tableau for which the inscription serves as annotation—may make of the depiction of the king the actual representation of Horus in the annotation.

^b The sign M9 appears in a number of occurrences to refer to the root *nḥb* for taxes and the taxed (Kahl 1994: 99-104 and 560). The term *nḥb* (although written without the sign M9) occurs in a year label of the reign of Den in a reference to a group of people subject to tribute (Regulski 2010: 138), and the

19. The following transliteration and translation represent a revision and improvement of the author’s preliminary attempt as presented more succinctly in Hendrickx et al. 2012: 308-310.

20. Erman & Grapow 1930: 485; Kahl 1994: 732; Wilkinson 2000a: 90-91; DuQuesne 2005: 413-414. Numerous examples on the Palermo Stone (cf. <http://xoomer.virgilio.it/francescoraf/hesyra/Palermo-recto5.jpg>), labels of Den (Chicago OI 6123, Godron 1990: 32ff), Semerkhet (BM 32668, Petrie 1900: pl. 17, fig. 26; also <http://xoomer.virgilio.it/francescoraf/hesyra/labels/xxsemrhet6.htm>), and Qa-a (Univ. Mus. Philadelphia E06880, Petrie 1900: pl. 17, fig. 29; also Kracht 1991: 291), and a later example from the reign of Pepy I (Sethe 1933: 214, l. 15) well illustrate the use of the vessel as determinative to the compound term.



sis pendant les IV-III^e millénaires. La datation plus précise se fera par l'étude de la céramique et l'analyse radiocarbone (ou 14C) pendant la mission d'hiver 2014. L'étude du matériel exhumé a permis de souligner les contacts entre cette population des oasis et la culture pharaonique de la vallée.

Haute et Moyenne Égypte

La seconde session dirigée par Ulrich Hartung était consacrée à la Haute et la Moyenne Égypte.

Elle a débuté par l'exposé de Yasser Mahmoud Hussein à propos d'un survey au sud du cimetière prédynastique d'Abydos dans une zone actuellement menacée par l'avancée des constructions modernes. Il s'agit d'une extension du cimetière, marqué par des superstructures de briques, trouvées par T. Eric Peet en 1911-1912 et perdues depuis. Les propriétaires des tombes ne sont pas identifiés mais se rattachent sans doute à l'élite.

Lors de la reprise de l'étude de la tombe de Den (cimetière d'Umm el Qa'ab à Abydos) par l'Institut archéologique allemand du Caire (DAI), 25 fragments de palettes de formes et d'époques variées ont été trouvés, non pas dans la structure funéraire royale, mais dans les sépultures annexes. Les palettes antérieures à l'époque de Den sont alors des réutilisations. Ces objets, apparus au Tasién, sont surtout fréquents pendant Nagada IIIA-B et les derniers exemples sont Nagada IIIC2. Robert Kuhn pro-

pose un regroupement des fragments afin d'en identifier les formes ; la plus fréquente est la palette rectangulaire sans décor, bien connue entre la fin Nagada II et le début Nagada III. Le changement de forme correspond peut-être à un changement de fonction. Joris van Wetering se penche, lui, sur le développement urbain de Noubt à 7 km au nord de Nagada. Le site, dégagé par Flinders Petrie en 1894 et largement perturbé depuis, montre une occupation qui s'est amplifiée pendant la période prédynastique, et qui a laissé des vestiges de zones d'habitations et de cimetières. Des prospections systématiques de surface ont constitué une approche du développement de l'occupation, et peut se comparer à celui de la ville voisine de Nekhen.

La communication de Maarten Horn propose de réexaminer la division qui avait été établie entre les cultures tasiénne et badarienne dans la région de Qau-Matmar depuis les travaux de Guy Brunton. L'analyse porte sur les parures corporelles retrouvées dans les tombes, comme des perles, des coquillages ou des bracelets. À l'issue de cette analyse, M. Horn considère que Tasién et Badarién ne sont pas des cultures séparées ou successives ; elles véhiculent des concepts analogues et ne sont peut-être que des variantes régionales.

La journée s'est achevée par une session de posters et une réception dans les jardins de l'IFAO.

Art rupestre

La seconde journée de conférence a démarré par la troisième session consacrée à l'art rupestre présidée par Stan Hendrickx.

Gwenola Graff et Kathryn Piquette ont étudié une scène complexe de chasse gravée sur le grès du Ouadi Abou Soubeira, en partie grâce à l'utilisation de l'imagerie par transformation de la réflectance (« Reflectance Transformation Imaging », RTI), une méthode de photographie informatique à très haute résolution permettant de rendre visibles les gravures difficilement lisibles et les étapes du travail des artisans. Le site se situe au nord d'Assouan à l'embouchure du ouadi non loin du Nil. Parmi les très nombreuses représentations, le bloc de grès 10 a révélé une scène de chasse (8 humains et 37 animaux y sont représentés) où les hommes accompagnés de chiens chassent des taureaux sauvages et des éléphants (qu'on trouve dans d'autres sites rupestres du ouadi). L'étude stylistique permet de dater cette scène de Nagada IIC-D.

Frederick Hardtke réexamine les parois rocheuses de Hiérakonpolis présentant des images de bateaux ; ils donnent à voir parfois des détails exceptionnels, comme des têtes animales à la poupe et à la proue. Ces bateaux doivent avoir une signification funéraire de par leur emplacement près d'une zone de sépultures.

En examinant les pétroglyphes prédynastiques du désert, Francis Lankester cherche à identifier leurs créateurs et leurs motivations. Le thème dominant est souvent la chasse alors que, paradoxalement, elle n'est pas un moyen essentiel de subsistance. Des bateaux et des figures « dansantes » complètent fréquemment ces compositions. La présence de l'élite de la vallée dans les déserts, domaine sauvage et dangereux, est attestée dans cet art rupestre. Les représentations de chasse ainsi que les trophées que l'élite pouvait en rapporter dans la vallée soulignaient alors leur pouvoir et leur prestige.

Les reliefs du bloc du Gebel Sheikh Suleiman, exposés maintenant dans les jardins du musée de Khartoum après avoir été détachés au moment du sauvetage des monuments de Nubie, ont pu être réétudiés par Xavier Droux et Renee Friedman afin de déterminer avec plus de précision la chronologie

appearance of prisoners, possible subject foreigners, and cattle in the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle are features consistent with *nḥb*-taxation (compare the *nḥb.w* as a group of people subject to *nḥb*-taxation—Kahl 2003: 244—and the *nḥb.w*-cattle—Erman & Grapow 1928: 293, 14; Hannig 2006: vol. 1, p. 1311).

^cThe two signs stacked vertically at the left side of the inscription may plausibly write a toponym, probably an absolute use of a noun of place (*cf.* Borghouts 2010: 119 [§31e]). Although the graphically most similar, hieroglyphically attested toponym is a Delta locality known from late pharaonic sources (Yoyotte 1962: 93-101 and 110-111; Habachi 1963; see also below), a “city” or “place of the panther skin” would not be out of place in the Aswan area.

Read from right to left, the initial *šms*-sign representing “following,” with probable specific reference to the “Following of Horus,” well suits the depiction of a nautical peregrination of the royal court that appears in the accompanying scene; the conclusion of the inscription provides a toponym that may refer to the place on which the royal periplous centered. The intervening *nḥb*-sign specifies the economic aspect of the royal visit, for which the following toponym fits the pattern of *nḥb* + toponym reasonably well attested elsewhere in the early hieroglyphic corpus (Kahl 1994: 99-104; 2003: 243-244). The right to left direction of the overall reading of the inscription is consistent with the apparent right to left layout of many elements in the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle, several of the tableaux at the site being executed so that they appear to begin at the right end of a relatively smooth rock surface, in spite of how much unused and imminently suitable surface remains untouched to the left (Hendrickx, Darnell & Gatto 2012: 6).

The annotation to the Nag el-Hamdulab tableau appears to label the imagery of at least that tableau 7a—and possibly the entire cycle—as ultimately related to the “Following (of Horus),” and more specifically the *nḥb*-taxation aspect of such a ritual. The taxation is that of a toponym somehow related—phonetically or directly—to the term for panther hide. Palaeographically the signs are entirely in keeping with what one would expect for an early hieroglyphic inscription, certainly acceptable for a First Dynasty date, and not impossibly as early as late Dynasty 0. The absence of a royal name suggests a late Dynasty 0 date for the Nag el-Hamdulab Cycle, although in Early Dynastic records the royal name and the image of the king can both equate and alternate, as often during the New Kingdom the name can stand for the king (Spieser 2000). On first Dynasty labels the royal name may appear in the first register, with the unlabeled image of the king present in the subsequent registers. On the Aha label Cairo JdE 31773, a serekh with boat suggests the presence of the king on the boat (Spieser 2000: 7; detail photo Seipel ed. 2003: 105), a parallel to the Nag el-Hamdulab images of the king without name on a vessel.

The Following of Horus

The Nag el-Hamdulab annotation accompanies a tableau of vessels and a scene of royal terrestrial progress, both essential elements of the original Following of Horus, the biennial progress of the royal court on a perambulating judicial and tax collecting visit to demonstrate royal authority throughout the land (*cf.* Wilkinson 1999: 142 and 220-221; Lanna 2008: viii, 55-56, and 119-120 [table 18]; Katary 2007: 187-188; Baines 2007: 10-11). Although agricultural and livestock assessment may have dominated the economic considerations of the Following of Horus, the probable inconsistency of geographical division in early

allusions to the treasury (Desplancques 2006: 15-16, with references) suggests that the acceptance and storage/redistribution of the products of trade, mining, and foreign interactions—of both militaristic and pacific natures—may have also formed additional aspects of the Following of Horus. The appearance of the sign M9, apparently in the reasonably well-attested early hieroglyphic use as *nhb* in reference to taxation supports such a general understanding of the *Šmsw-Hr*, and makes explicit the economic aspect of the Nag el-Hamdulab “Following.”

Within the scene of the royal procession, two standards precede the king (as on the Scorpion mace head—Hendrickx, Darnell & Gatto 2012: 5), early representatives of the standards slightly later known as the “Followers of Horus” (DuQuesne 2005: 253-254 and 412-418). Additional heraldic objects are the apparent mace heads—monumental in size like those from Hierakonpolis, to judge from the apparent scale—emerging from the tops of the vertical poles at the inward facing ends of the two cabins of the vessel directly beneath the group of the White Crowned ruler and his retinue in Nag el-Hamdulab tableau 7a.²¹ Such colossal mace heads are both indicative of the rulers of Late Predynastic and Early Archaic Egypt (Bußmann 2010: 463-464), and possible additional visual allusions to the “Following of Horus.” As the mace itself may appear as an image of royal power, at times in multiples exceeding two (Darnell 2009: 101; 2013a: 122-123, pls. 155-157; a veritable forest of thirty maces in Hellström, et al. 1970: corpus W27-44 and 46, pl. 88 [no. 2 = 378i1], pp. 171-172), the presence of the maces on the vessel beneath the image of the ruler may be sufficient to indicate the presence of the ruler on or near the vessel. Note that in the Tomb 100 cycle from Hierakonpolis, no mace is apparent on any of the vessels, but there the image of a male human—apparently the ruler—wields the mace himself (Quibell & Green 1902: pl. 76).

The two maces on the lead ritual vessel below the figure of the king are probable references to the Following of Horus. The annotation referring to the Following of Horus in the Nag el-Hamdulab tableaux may find some foreshadowing in the standard with mace at the prow of a vessel in the late Predynastic tableau near the mouth of the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a (Darnell 2009: 99; 2011: 1171-1173). A tall, vertical pole stands at the prow of the second, rightmost vessel in Group V of the tableau in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a; from the pole emerges a mace, slanting down to the right, hanging menacingly above the head of a bound prisoner who has been shot through the neck with an arrow. A similar mace hangs above the head of the prisoner on a vessel in the decoration of the Gebelein shroud (*cf.* Donadoni Roveri, D’Amicone & Leospo 1994: 21 fig. 4). On neither the vessel carrying the prisoner in the Qa-a Wadi tableau, nor that on the Gebelein shroud, does another human figure appear—the vessels assume the role of captor, like those that capture animals in some Naqada II images (Rohl 2000: 82-83; Graff 2009: cat. no. 191; Hendrickx 2010: 117-119), and like the vessel to which an arrow-pierced enemy is tied in the Gebel Sheikh Suleiman tableau (Murnane, in Williams & Logan 1987: 282-285), and the vessel to which a bound human and a quadruped are tied on the better preserved of the incense burners from Qustul (Hendrickx & Eyckerman 2010: 131).

21. The tops of the handles protrude above the tops of the mace heads more than is usual in early hieroglyphic palaeography, but not so much as to invalidate the identification—compare the Meretneith hard stone example and the Early Dynastic wood example in Regulski 2010: 636.

22. See the refs. in Darnell 2011: 1172-1173, those including DuQuesne 2005: 64 and 119 (nos. III.C5 and C7); Dreyer et al. 2003: 93 and pl. 18g.

Maces also cross the poles of Wepwawet standards on First Dynasty sealings,²² and the Wepwawet standard with crossing mace may serve as the determinative to the compound term *Šmsw-Hr* (Sethe 1910: PT §1245c [also §921a, with different weapons]; DuQuesne 2005: 63-64, 111, 116, 412).²³

A royal visit to what would later be considered the southern border of Egypt is not inconceivable for the reign of Narmer. During the late Old Kingdom a ruler might visit the same general region, apparently in order to investigate the area and receive the obeisance of local rulers. Two rock inscriptions—one north of the First Cataract, on the road linking Aswan with the area of Philae, the other south of the cataract—record a visit of the Sixth Dynasty ruler Merenre I, during which the king personally received the obeisance and praise of the Nubians of Medja, Irtjet, and Wawat (Sethe 1933: 110-111), and apparently made prisoners of some of their rulers (Kaiser et al. 1976: 79).²⁴ The early hieroglyphic annotation appears to refer specifically to *nḥb*-taxation, and in keeping with the appearance of *nḥb*-cattle in later texts, Site 6 at Nag el-Hamdulab depicts two men and a dog driving forward a herd of cattle (Hendrickx, Darnell & Gatto 2012: 1077-1079).

Nag el-Hamdulab tableau 7a places a consistent emphasis on the following of Horus, in both the hieroglyphic annotation and in the appearance of the members of the royal retinue accompanying the image of the king. The presence of the king as hub and leader of the perambulating court, and leader of the perambulating court, and focus of ritual is in keeping with themes of Early Dynastic royal imagery (Bußmann 2010: 463 and 465-467). Even in the detail of the monumental maces on the lead ritual vessel, the images of the tableau are consistent with Early Dynastic royal display (Bußmann 2010: 463-464).

The Toponym in the Nag el-Hamdulab Annotation and the Region of Kom Ombo

An apparently otherwise unattested toponym in the Nag el-Hamdulab annotation would be consistent with urban development during the early Archaic Period, a time that saw the establishment of both *niw.t*- and *hw.t*-estates (Lanna 2008: v-vi, 10-18, and 85-88), although the determinative in the Nag el-Hamdulab scene could refer to anything from the size of a small village to an entire district (Moreno Garcia 1999: 117-122 and 125-127). Belonging to the reign of Narmer and therefore possibly to the period before the appearance of the nome system (Lanna 2008: vii, 60-61, and 90; Martinet 2011: 111-114; see also Willems 2008: 8-24 [ref. courtesy reviewer]), the Nag el-Hamdulab annotation refers to a visit of the Following of Horus to a specific settlement, implying already a local focus for the perambulating court—rather than moving a few kilometres at a time and stopping at every village and herding camp in an area, the court may have focused on fewer stops at foci for certain areas. The Third Dynasty sees the final development of the network of support plantations for the Old Kingdom court and its building programs, the establishments commonly termed funerary domains, and the Nag el-Hamdulab annotation is perhaps evidence that the development of such domains dates back at least as far as the beginning of the First Dynasty.

23. In spite of its relative rarity, the Wepwawet with mace crossing the standard appears in Gardiner's sign list as E 19.

24. A possible visit of Sahure was apparently of a more specifically cultic nature (Seidlmayer 2005: 290), if it actually occurred (Bußmann 2010: 485).



The area of the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle is at the northern edge of the greater Aswan area, near the northernmost tributaries of the Gebel Tingar route (the Sikket el-Agamiya) to Kurkur Oasis (Storemyr et al. 2013: 401 and 407). Nag el-Hamdulab is thus at the northernmost end of the Aswan routes into the Western Desert; proceeding to the north, beyond Nag el-Hamdulab, the next major routes out of the far Western Desert converge on the Wadi Kubbaniya, in the southern hinterland of the greater Kom Ombo region.²⁵


The location of Nag el-Hamdulab at the southern end of the greater Kom Ombo area and close to the routes leading into the Western Desert suggests that the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle was intended not to mark the northern outskirts of Elephantine/Aswan, but rather to represent a focal point of the area that would later become the First Nome of Upper Egypt. Although Nag el-Hamdulab is not equidistant to Elephantine and Kom Ombo, the site lies essentially at the mid-point between the southern desert routes of greater Kom Ombo—Wadi Kubbaniya and Wadi Abu Subeira—and those of the direct hinterland of Elephantine/Aswan. Kom Ombo and Elephantine are the two toponyms that together evoke the totality of the First Nome in the First Intermediate Period inscriptions of the nomarch Ankhtify (Vandier 1950: 239 [no. 12]). Nag el-Hamdulab gives direct access to Kurkur Oasis via the Sikket el-Agamiya, and to the apparent hub of desert activity at the playa region of Nuq Maneih, due west of Kom Ombo, via the Darb el-Bitân/Darb Gallaba (Darnell & Darnell 2009; 2013). The site of Nag el-Hamdulab would well represent the major agricultural regions of the area—Kom Ombo and Aswan on the Nile, Kurkur and the region of Nuq Maneih in the Western Desert—the juncture of the agricultural and desert trade bases of the economy, and the two major population groups of the area: the Nilotic settlements and the nomadic groups of the desert hinterlands.


Rather than being an unknown toponym, the feline head with city determinative may write the early name of Kom Ombo.²⁶ The sign of the panther, or at least head thereof, appears in toponyms such as Pekhat (near Speos Artemidos: Gauthier 1925, 148; Klotz and LeBlanc 2012: 661–662) and Nebwy (near Memphis or Herakleopolis: Yoyotte 1962, 91–101, 110–111; Habachi 1963; Leitz et al. 2002–2003, IV, 74). In the latter toponym, the panther-head has the value *nbi*, an early phonetic variant of *ʒbi*, “panther” (Yoyotte 1962, 100–101; Schneider 1997, 266–267), perhaps ultimately related to *bʒ*, “panther (skin)”

25. The map of the region of Kom Ombo that appears in the great atlas of the Napoleonic expedition shows routes from Kharga and Shebb converging on the wadi—certainly the wadi now called Wadi Kubbaniya—just north of what there appears as a settlement labelled “Hindellab” (Jacotin 1818: detail sheet 2 and p. 789). Any connection of Hindellab with Nag el-Hamdulab would require the toponym to have migrated to the south since the time of the Napoleonic expedition. Sayce believed Hindellab to be south of both Kubbaniya and Hagar el-Ghorab (cf. Sayce 1894a: 174; Hagar el-Ghorab is Site SM13 in Gatto et al. 2009: 10 fig. 1); by the late nineteenth century, however, the name Hindellab appears to have fallen out of use (so Morgan et al. 1894: 202 n.1), and the toponym Kubbaniya at that time applied to both the great wadi to the north, and the villages to the south (Sayce 1894a: 174; Sayce 1894b: 314). Although Morgan, et al. 1894: 202 n.1, states that the toponym Hindellab was not in use, the map in Morgan, et al. 1894: map between pp. x and xi, shows a toponym Hamdillah (the “h” mistakenly written for “b”?) near (perhaps slightly south of) the current Nag el-Hamdulab. Hendrickx, in the forthcoming monographic publication of the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle, observes that the present form of the toponym may derive from “Wanasáb el Hamdulláb, a family group within one of the two Kanüz tribes, living at Kalabsha (MacMichael 1922: 99).

26. David Klotz (personal communication) suggested that the toponym could be an early writing of the name of Kom Ombo, and provided a number of references.

(*cf. Wb.* I, 7, 11; Yoyotte 1962, 101, n. 2; etymologically see also Kammerzell 1994: 31-37). The toponym Nebwy appears at least thrice with the panther-head alone ( or ) twice under Nectanebo II (CG 70016 and JE 89076; Habachi 1963, 43, fig. 1, 46, fig. 5 and Pl. VIIIb), and once in the Ptolemaic Period (Rochemonteix et al. 1984-1987: 388, 5-6; Yoyotte 1962, 110).

These late orthographies of a northern Nebwy suggest a possible reading *Nbi.t* or *Nbwy.t* for the Nag el-Hamdulab inscription toponym () potentially an early attempt at writing the toponym *Nbwy.t*, “Kom Ombo” (Gutbub 1980: 676-676; Timm 1985: 1468-1470). Although little is known of Kom Ombo proper during the Old Kingdom or earlier, a number of tombs at the site date to the Middle Kingdom and later (Gomaà 1986, 29-30), and ample Predynastic through Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom archaeological and epigraphic material fills the area between Aswan and Kom Ombo (*cf. Gatto et al.* 2009).

Even if the toponym  is unrelated to the later name of Kom Ombo, the place name—and the focus of the activity depicted in the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle—could well be located at a site closer to Kom Ombo than to the later dominant First Nome center of Elephantine/Aswan. The comparatively late development of Elephantine as a seemingly modest settlement at the cusp of Naqada II and Dynasty 0 (Kopp 2006: 25-26 *et passim*), and the foundation of the fortress and larger center at the beginning of the First Dynasty (Seidlmayer 1996; Wilkinson 1999: 345-346)—indications that *3bw* was a development dependent on the expansion of the proto-pharaonic and then pharaonic state—suggest that the focus of a royal peregrination in the Aswan region at the dawn of the First Dynasty might have been at a site north of Elephantine/Aswan. Even after the elaboration of the late Predynastic site at the dawn of Dynasty 0, Elephantine and its greater area does not appear to have received any direct royal attention (Bußmann 2010: 460-463 and 494-496). The area of Kom Ombo and the region south thereof to Aswan formed a zone of hybrid Egyptian and Nubian cultures during the Predynastic and Protodynastic Periods (Gatto 2011; Roy 2011: 45 and 203-204).

Although in the inscriptions of Anktify, Kom Ombo appears after Elephantine (*3bw*) as though a secondary center of the First Nome (Butzer 1976: 61 assesses surviving evidence to assign such secondary status to Kom Ombo), the reference on the Karnak White Chapel of Sesostris I to a temple of Horus (Haroeris?) in the First Upper Egyptian Nome has suggested to at least some that Kom Ombo may have been the original administrative center of the southernmost district (Gomaà 1986, 11; citing Martin-Pardey 1976: 196-197). Even the original name of Elephantine and the entire region remains uncertain, as the toponym *3bw* appears first during the high Old Kingdom, and then apparently as a designation primarily of the island fortress (Roy 2011: 201).

The terminal First Dynasty inscriptions of Qa-a in the vicinity of Elkab (Huyge 1984: 5-9) may be evidence that even as late as the end of First Dynasty, the southern border of the Hierakonopolitan region possessed the character of a southern boundary, perhaps administrative if not fully hegemonic. As late as the New Kingdom the entirety of the area south of Hierakonpolis retained some of the aspect of “foreignness” that its name *T3-Sty* implies, to judge by the fact that during the New Kingdom, the northern jurisdiction of the Viceroy of Kush extended north to the regions of Elkab and the Wadi Baramiya (Davies 1926: pl. 6; Darnell 2013b: 824-825;).

One is on firmer ground in simply assuming that the toponym refers to the usual reading of the feline head in Archaic Period inscriptions, and alludes to a previously unattested “Panther-Skin-Town,” somewhere in the area including Kom Ombo and Elephantine/Aswan, if not near the present Nag el-Hamdulab itself. The “panther-skin town” might well represent the name of some emporium of goods from the south— *b3*-skins are one of the eight groups of goods Harkhuf lists as the physical results of his third journey (see Roy 2011: 251 and 254-255). Animal skins are already important symbols of power during the Predynastic Period in Upper Egypt (cf. Hendrickx 1998; Graff 2007), and the skin—or more specifically the tail—of the *lycaon pictus* appears to have become a symbol of the victorious hunter at least as early as the late Naqada I Period (Hendrickx 2006; 2010: 127-128; Hendrickx & Eyckerman 2012: 60-63). The panther—or leopard—skin specifically, so well known later as the sartorial badge of the Sem-priest, might give the toponym of the Nag el-Hamdulab inscription some cultic significance as well.²⁷ During the reign of Narmer the panther skin might have been more specifically the formal vestment of the vizier, the *tt* (Lanna 2008: 51-52; Wilkinson 1999: 137-139; 2000b: 30; see also Logan 1999: 263).

Although the animal skin associations of the apparent toponym may simply be fortuitous, the image of an animal skin occurs most often in association with a vessel in the iconography of decorated ceramics of the Naqada I and Naqada II Periods (Graff 2009: 73 and 133). One of the rituals associated with the Jubilee, as the tomb of Kheruef most completely relates, was an opening of the mouth ritual, an event that would have required the presence of the leopard-skin wearing *Sem*-priest (Leblanc 2011: 112-122); in the texts in the tomb of Kheruef, the event is closely associated with the towing of the king in the simulacra of the solar vessels during Amenhotep III’s first Jubilee. Although the boats in the Nag el-Hamdulab images most closely resemble the *Hnw*-bark of Sokar, those vessels themselves have an early solar association.

Solar-Sokarian Navigation

The Nag el-Hamdulab cycle is the earliest depiction in the by then well-established line of images that belong to scenes of royal navigation—perhaps more specifically the Jubilee cycle (Williams & Logan 1987; Leblanc 2011)—to bear an accompanying hieroglyphic annotation. The brief Hamdulab early hieroglyphic text is consistent with known Archaic hieroglyphic inscriptions, and the closest parallels for an Early Dynastic navigation with early hieroglyphic annotation are the twin annotated rock inscription images of a boat carrying a smaller vessel in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a, northwest of Luxor, dating probably to the reign of Qa-a at the end of the First Dynasty (Darnell 2009: 102-103; 2011). In these scenes of royal navigation with early hieroglyphic annotations—the Nag el-Hamdulab tableau and the two scenes from the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a—vessels associated with Sokar are present, in the Hamdulab scenes boats like the later *Hnw*-bark, in the Qa-a Wadi images the *Maaty*-bark.

27. For the leopard skin of the Sem priest, see *inter alia* Erman & Grapow 1926: 415; Helck 1984; for possible representation of the skin in Protodynastic iconography, see Darnell et al. 2002: 13. For a discussion of most of the Predynastic material bearing on the panther/leopard skin, see Hendrickx 1998: 224-229.

The Annotations to Scenes of Ritual Navigation in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a

Near the head of the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a are two scenes of ritual navigation accompanied by hieroglyphic annotations. Paleographically the inscriptions appear to date to the late First Dynasty, more specifically being compatible with a date during the reign of Horus Qa-a, to the right of whose serekh they occur (the left inscription is approximately 4 meters to the right of the serekh). Both inscriptions are almost identical, differing only in one sign, and both begin with a reference to *s3h M3(.ty)*, “arrival of the *Maaty*-bark” (see Darnell 2009: 102-103; 2011: 1180-1186), a vessel with Sokarian associations (Anthes 1957; Jones 1988: 245 [no. 40]). According to Pyramid Texts Spell 627 (§1785b-c, Sethe 1910: 435), the king navigates twin *Maaty*-vessels at the time of the New Year celebration. The doubled nature of the *Maaty*-vessel may lie behind the sense of duality and dual motion that appears in a number of rock art representation of vessels, as in the repetition of the paired ritual boats in Nag el-Hamdulab group 7a (compare also Darnell 2009: 92; 2011: 1155-1156 and 1180-1187).

The bark of Sokar best attested in later, pharaonic iconography is the *Hnw*-bark (see *inter alia* Graindorge-Hérel 1994: 17-33; Jones 1988: 252 [no. 81]), the type to which belong the vessels that dominate the Nag el-Hamdulab tableaux—excepting the vessel in NH2a1 and the lowest vessel in NH1a1, all of the NH vessels are of the *Hnw*-bark type. These boats have a series of relatively short, parallel, vertical elements running up the inner/upper line of the high, upturned prow. Near the tip of the prow of each of these Sokarian vessels, on the inner/upper side, facing in toward the cabins of the vessel, is the head of a horned quadruped, apparently a long-horned animal with curving horns. Although the animal head on the later, pharaonic versions of the *Hnw*-vessel is the head of an oryx, the similarities and virtually identical layout of the prow ornamentation make an identification of the Nag el-Hamdulab vessels in question with the Archaic Period prototypes of the later *Hnw*-bark both unavoidable and virtually certain. The apparently “primitive” construction of the *Hnw*-bark’s cabin, and the tripartite steering oars thereof (*cf.* Epigraphic Survey 1940: pls. 221, 223, *et passim*)²⁸ reflect the early origins of the later bark of Sokar.

With the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle filling nicely the criteria of royal navigation imagery, even specifically the imagery of the royal Jubilee, and incorporating vessels that are prototypical of the later Sokarian *Hnw*-bark, the *Maaty*-barks of the Qa-a Wadi may also belong to the world of the Jubilee. In both the Hamdulab cycle and the small pair of First Dynasty images in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a, a large royal figure dominates, and the vessels share an association with Sokar.²⁹ Other vignettes of royal navigation also appear to depict the *Maaty*-bark (Darnell 2009: 102-103), and an association of the royal navigation ritual (perhaps more specifically the Jubilee), the newly ascendant royal ritualist of the First Dynasty, and the deity Sokar is apparent.

28. Compare the Early Dynastic *Maaty*-bark in Darnell 2009: 101 fig. 23; for the tripartite steering oars see also Cerný and Sadek, *Graffiti* III/1, pl. 13 (no. 1721), and the D-Ware vessel in Asselberghs, pl. 1 fig. 18 (Ashmolean Museum 1895.584); a possible example is the “tender” boat of the upper of the mirrored barks at Qa-a Wadi Boat Site 4, preliminarily published in Darnell 2009: 92 fig. 14.

29. One later application of the fully developed, pharaonic appearance of the *Hnw*-bark, drawn on a sledge, to desert activity appears in an Early Dynastic scene with hieroglyphic text (apparently a title) in the Wadi Hammamat (Goyon 1957: 44-47 and pl. 3).

One may postulate a period in which the apparently late Predynastic *M3^c.ty*-bark shape and the original *Hnw*-bark shape overlap in meaning and use. The association of the king and Sokar that appears clearly in the Pyramid Texts (Gaballa & Kitchen 1969: 13-19) may include an association, even identity, of the *M3^c.ty*-bark and the vessel of the *Šmsw-Hr* (Anthes 1957: 78-86; Serrano 2002: 92-93; also Wilkinson 1999: 301). During his first Jubilee Amenhotep III rode in terrestrial versions of the solar *Mskt.t* and barks, hauled by courtiers in a journey between two artificial lakes associated with his Malqatta complex, and the connections of the dual solar vessels with the *M3^c.ty*-barks and the vessels of the *Šmsw-Hr* may indeed lead to a confusion of the two pairs (cf. Anthes 1957). As Sokar appears in the Jubilees of Amenhotep III (particularly the third thereof) and is associated with the opening of the mouth ritual when the king was towed in the models of the solar barks (Leblanc 2011: 4, 17-18, 41, 101, 132-166; see also Laboury 2010: 71-73), the *Maaty*- and *Hnw*-barks of early royal navigation could well symbolize the translation of the king and his actions from the mundane world into the divine.

Nag el-Hamdulab and Things to Come

Considering the combination of ritual, royal perambulation, and biennial tax base assessment apparent in the images and the short hieroglyphic annotation, the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle finds its closest parallel—in terms of geography and time—in the late Third Dynasty combination of small pyramid, ritual court, and probable local palace and economic center on the island of Elephantine (Seidlmayer 1996; Baud 2002: 183-189 and 290-291).³⁰ The appearance of the first of the small, Upper Egyptian step pyramids coincides with the cessation of the perambulating Following of Horus visits (Dreyer & Kaiser 1980: 56-59; Gundlach 1994: 70; Redford 1986: 89), and represents an anchoring of the royal cult (Seidlmayer 1996: 123-124; Wilkinson 1999: 277-279), and associated economic aspects thereof, within the greater Egyptian landscape. The Elephantine complex of ritual and economic activity, with manifestation of royal authority, roughly corresponds temporally to the great changes in provincial administration and agricultural domains under Snofru (Moreno Garcia 1999: 235 *et passim*), and may directly have replaced the activities that appear in the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle. The discovery near the Elephantine pyramid complex of ceramic vessels—possibly originally employed as papyrus containers—bearing Third Dynasty ink annotations referring to the Following of Horus (Kahl, Kloth & Zimmermann 1995: 168) suggest a link between the older Following and the later “sedentary” royal economic and ritual establishment on Elephantine. Just as the small step pyramids of the late Third Dynasty may have made “explicit and intelligible the ideological background to the demands of the state on a local level” (Seidlmayer 1996: 124), so the Nag el-Hamdulab cycle of images may have performed the same function on the southern marches of the nascent pharaonic state, the scenes of ritual celebration and reception of local livestock the *do ut des* that was and would remain at the heart of the relationship between ruler and ruled in ancient Egypt and her dependencies.

30. An unlikely variant interpretation of Huni’s Elephantine constructions appears in Stadelmann 2007: 426-427.

The Nag el-Hamdulab tableaux stand at the cusp of the Protodynastic and the Early Dynastic Periods. The early hieroglyphic annotation provides an unexpected textual check on the significance of the great cycle of rock art tableaux at Nag el-Hamdulab, indicates that the image of the ruler and his court in tableau 7a is indeed the focus of activity there, and suggests that the entire cycle of images may well depict the “Following of Horus.” The emphasis on this royal Following, and its combination of religious, administrative, and fiscal activities, suggests that other, earlier depictions of the apparent Jubilee may also relate to a Predynastic version of the complex ritual. The resulting possible implications for the organization of Upper Egypt prior to Dynasty 0, and for the origins of local administrative structures and practices during the Dynastic Period, are not inconsiderable, but indeed exceed the scope of the present brief study.

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