

THE NOME POLITIES AND THE STATE FORMATION IN EGYPT OF THE 4th MILLENNIUM BC: RECONSTRUCTIONS AND SCHOLARLY MODELS

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The present-day vision of the state formation in Egypt fully abandoned the antiquarian scheme of 22 Upper and 20 Lower Egyptian nome states mingling together into two big entities, Upper and Lower Egyptian kingdoms, the former finally conquering the latter. This process is divided in three stages based on the evolution of the archaeological culture of Naqada. Stage 1 (Naqada I B/C – II B, ~3900–3500 BC) saw the emergence of artifacts and pieces of iconography that can be connected with the symbols of kingship in dynastic Egypt (red crown on a pottery piece from Naqada, images of falcon comparable to eventual Horus in Hierakonpolis, image of ruler smiting his enemies at Abydos); and the society of this time was strongly stratified (notably the elite cemeteries at Hierakonpolis and Naqada were separated from the burials of common people). What might be called “nome polities” has to be looked for at the stages 1 and 2 (Naqada II C–D, ~3500–3300 BC), especially at 1, as 2 has already seen the stage of their merger. But nothing attests the existence of the administration before stage 3 (Naqada III A–B, ~3300–3100 BC), which saw the emergence of writing used for accounting goods flowing to Abydos’ kings from various parts of Egypt (tomb U-j). Defining the polities of stage 1 as chiefdoms is well-attested in scholarship; shall it be true, the real early Egyptian state must have emerged during stage 2 and/or at the early stage 3, during the unification wars and the expansion of the complex trade network over Egypt and on its periphery. Incidentally, a feature of eventual dynastic Egypt was the underdevelopment and weakness

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of kinship ties in its society: it seems likely that this resulted from the deliberate eradication of clans and local structures, as natural competitors of all-Egyptian state, almost immediately after its appearance. The total merger inside it of not only early polities but also the rural communities, omnipresent in the prehistorical societies, must have been the result of this course.

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The concept of the “nome state” was effectively introduced into the domestic theoretical apparatus of ancient history by I.M. Diakonoff: apparently, he first used this term in a paper delivered during a discussion on the problem of the clan and rural community at the Ancient Orient, which was held, evidently on the initiative of D.A. Olderogge who chaired it, during the Second All-Union Session for the Study of the Ancient Orient on May 17–19, 1962 (Diakonoff 1963: 179–195). Diakonoff’s paper was later published as an article “The Community at the Ancient Orient in the Works of Soviet Researchers”: the scholar stated there that a neighborhood community “or a group of united neighborhood communities can, in connection with class stratification, at the appropriate moment of development, also act as a primary state (polis, nome — before the creation of larger states)” (Diakonoff 1963a: 26). Subsequently, the term “nome” migrated into the famous joint article of 1982 by I.M. Diakonoff and V.A. Jakobson (Diakonoff, Jakobson 1982: 3) and further, with its expanded argumentation, into the introductory lecture to the 1st volume of “The History of the Ancient World” edited by I.M. Diakonoff. Let us cite in full the definition of this concept given in this volume, which belongs to the classics of theoretical constructions in domestic historiography of antiquity (Diakonoff et al. 1989: vol. 1, 40):

“...if at a late stage in the development of the primitive system extensive tribal associations (tribal unions, confederations) are sometimes created, then the first states are always and everywhere formed on a small scale, namely, within the scope of one territorial community or, more often, several closely interconnected communities. Such state, to be stable, had to have, if possible, some natural boundaries: mountains bordering a valley, the sea washing an island or a peninsula, a desert surrounding an area irrigated by one main canal, etc. Such a clearly distinguishable district of state formation we will conditionally call a nome. The nome usually had a center in the form of a temple of the main local deity; the administration settled around it; food and material warehouses, and weapons arsenals were built; the most important workshops of artisans were concentrated here — all this was enclosed for safety by a wall — and a city was formed as the center of a small primary state”.

This definition was reproduced in the English-language edition of this volume, which appeared in 1991 (Diakonoff, Kohl 1991: 37), as well as in the 1st volume of “The History of the Orient” edited by V.A. Jakobson (Jakobson 1997: 34).

From this very definition, it follows that its author considered it universal for the earliest stage of state development in the most diverse societies of the period he himself defined by the capacious term “early antiquity” (i.e. the history of ancient societies before the Iron Age); in particular, he transferred the use of this term to the realities of the field of his own research, i.e. ancient Mesopotamia (Diakonoff et al. 1989: vol. 1, 63 ff.; cf. Diakonoff 1983: 139–142, where the term “nome” is placed in quotation marks). Meanwhile, the origin of this term has a clear connection to the realities of ancient Egypt (as Diakonoff specifically notes in one instance: Diakonoff 1983: 139): Herodotus used it when listing in Book Two of his “Histories” (the “Egyptian logos”) the districts inhabited by two categories of professional warriors, the Hermotybies and the Calasiries (II. 164). For Herodotus, the term “nome” (νομός) meant the units of territorial division of Egypt that existed when the Greek historian visited the country, then under Persian rule. Unsurprisingly, Herodotus did not ponder the role of these districts in the genesis of Egyptian statehood (indeed, his Egyptian informants must have thought their state to have arisen at the beginning of time as something integral); however, it is clear from his “Egyptian logos” that individual cities of Egypt, the centers of the nomes, had their own specific religious traditions (id. 42, 46, 59, 69, 71). The latter point was confirmed when in the 19th century a detailed study of actual ancient Egyptian realities began, based on the already accomplished decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing: in particular, it was noted that the nomes, called *spt* in Egyptian (Erman, Grapow 1955: vol. 4, 97–99), were denoted by special signs, most of which were placed on standards corresponding to the designation of a deity (see in details: Helck 1974). It was natural enough to conclude that the central cities of the nomes represented the most ancient cult centers of Egypt, and the nomes themselves were the primary cells of statehood. This conclusion was supplemented by observations of dualism in the territorial structure of Egypt and in the regalia of its rulers (the designation of Egypt as the “Two Lands”, referring to its division into Upper and Lower Egypt; the corresponding, as it seemed, title of the king, which was translated into Greek in Ptolemaic bilingual inscriptions as “King of Upper and Lower Egypt”; a similar duality in the royal title of Two Ladies referring to the goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet, also venerated in Upper and Lower Egypt; the double crown of the king, consisting of the combined “white” crown of Upper Egypt and the “red” crown of Lower Egypt, etc. (see: Beckerath 1999: 10–17; Collier 1996: 16–36)). As a result, a consistent scheme of the Egyptian earliest history emerged, following which there were first formed

several dozen nome states (roughly corresponding to the number of historical nomes, 22 in Upper and 20 in Lower Egypt); then the Upper and Lower Egyptian kingdoms appeared, with capitals at Hierakonpolis and Buto (important cult centers of both parts of the country, the former being an important archaeological complex of the Predynastic period); and finally, as a result of wars between these two kingdoms, the country was unified. The last “point” of this scheme seemed to find confirmation in the depiction on the famous Narmer Palette (Quibell 1900: pl. XXIX): King Narmer is shown on its face wearing the “white” Upper Egyptian crown and striking a defeated Lower Egyptian opponent; and on its reverse he wears the “red” Lower Egyptian crown and celebrates his triumph (though it is unclear what victory exactly these scenes reflect). There is no need to trace the genesis of this scheme in Egyptological historiography in all details; it is perhaps sufficient to say that at the beginning of the 20th century it appeared in the fundamental “Geschichte des Altertums” by Eduard Meyer (Meyer 1913: vol.1/2, 110–118, § 198–201) and in “The History of the Ancient Orient” by B.A. Turaev (Turaev 1935: vol.1, 166–167); at the end of the Soviet period it was reproduced almost unchanged in the already mentioned 1st volume of “The History of the Ancient World” (Diakonoff et al. 1989: 144–145).

The idea of the initial existence of numerous nome states was integrated into a purely speculative and today completely fantastical scheme of the Egyptian state evolution forwarded by the German Egyptologist K. Sethe on the base of religious texts: the formation of not just nome states but also their unions was pushed back into the Neolithic era, still in the 5th Millennium BC (Sethe 1930). The French archaeologist É. Mas-soulard stated that archaeological data did not contradict to this scheme (Massoulard 1949: 435–438); however, A.H. Gardiner in his “Egypt of the Pharaohs” said nothing about a nome stage of Egyptian state, listed arguments against the existence of two kingdoms (though generally accepted it), and was skeptical regarding Sethe’s constructs (Gardiner 1961: 420–427). Yu.Ya. Perepyolkin considered the existence of nome states in Egypt as something plausible but unprovable and recognized as certain only the existence of the Upper and Lower Egyptian kingdoms (Perepyolkin 2000: 532). Incidentally, the situation was similar in the respective sections of the “Cambridge Ancient History”: in the chapter on Predynastic Egypt E.J. Baumgartel stated the absence of archaeological evidence for the existence of nome states (CAH 1970: 483), while I.E.S. Edwards in the chapter on the first dynasties asserted the existence of two kingdoms, whose unification concluded the Predynastic period (CAH 1971: 1). Finally, W. Helck, an outstanding researcher of the Egyptian economy and administration in early antiquity, spoke quite definitively that only 26 of the 42 historical nomes can be considered as having arisen at some earliest stage; this stage must have preceded the time of Djoser, when

depictions of nome symbols were first recorded, but the emergence of the nomes can be linked not to the earliest Egyptian states, but to royal land “domains” that arose in different parts of the country already after its unification (Helck 1974: 49, 200).

Modern conceptions of the state formation in Egypt are entirely shaped by archaeological research of the second half of the 20th and the first decades of the 21st centuries (among the vastest bibliography on the theme we will follow, if not indicated otherwise, the handiest summaries: Wilkinson 2000; Hendrickx 2014; Köhler 2020). It became obvious that politogenesis at the south of Egypt, in the area of the Naqada archaeological culture, whose evolution is divided into three phases, was accelerated pace compared to the area of the Lower Egyptian archaeological culture at the north, which remained longer in the pre-state phase. Meanwhile, the most important center of politogenesis was Middle Egypt with the cities of Abydos and This, which, according to the Egyptian historian Manetho of Sebennytos, was the cradle of the first two royal dynasties (Waddell 1980: 27–37, frgg. 6–8). The most important criterion for the complexity of Naqada society was the stratification of burials, with a marked distinction of particularly rich elite tombs.

The first phase of the state formation in Egypt is recognized at the archaeological stages Naqada I B/C and Naqada II A/B (c. 3900–3500 BC). For this time, tombs apparently belonging to rulers are found in “Cemetery U” at Abydos, “Cemetery HK6” at Hierakonpolis, and “Cemetery T” at Naqada (the type-site after which the archaeological culture is named); at Hierakonpolis and Naqada, elite necropolises were separated from the burials of ordinary people. Significantly, at this time there appear artifacts, which can be linked to the subsequent tradition of royal power in Egypt: a fragment of a ceramic vessel depicting the “red” crown, associated in historical times with Lower Egypt, was discovered at Naqada (Payne 1993: fig. 34, no. 774; Wilkinson 1999: 192–194); and the earliest objects depicting falcons were found at Hierakonpolis, given that the god Horus venerated in the form of a falcon was later the deity of royal power, and Hierakonpolis was an important centers of his worship (Hendrickx et al. 2011: 130, 133). Overall, for this period, the existence of five small polities within the Naqada culture area is noted (Abydos, Abadiya, Naqada, Gebelein, Hierakonpolis) (Wilkinson 2000: 378); furthermore, the possibility of their existence at Elkab, Edfu, and Elephantine was admitted (Hassan 1993: 554; Anđelković 2004: 536).

The second phase of Egyptian politogenesis falls in the archaeological stage Naqada II C–D (c. 3500–3300 BC). At this time, the elite cemetery at Abadiya ceased to exist, indicating the disappearance of an independent polity in that area; but the history of the necropolises at Hierakonpolis, Naqada, and Abydos continued: the luxurious, richly decorated “Tomb 100”, or “Painted Tomb”, at Naqada (stage II C), obviously belonging

to a ruler, is particularly noteworthy. In tomb U-547 at Abydos, a fragment of a limestone scepter was found, whose shape is reproduced in historical times in royal scepters and in the ideogram used in writing the word *ḥqꜣ* (“ruler”) (Erman, Grapow 1955: vol. 3, 170–173); this hook-ended scepter resembles a shepherd’s crook and must originate from the regalia of pastoral tribe leaders (Wilkinson 1999: 188). At the same time, it is precisely during the Naqada II period that river irrigation develops. Objects with falcon depictions, which appeared in the previous phase, became more frequent (Hendrickx et al. 2011: 135–138); trade contacts were established beyond Egypt – to Nubia in the south (where pottery from Hierakonpolis was actively imported) and to the Eastern Mediterranean in the north (imports from there are recorded at Abydos). Apparently, the number of polities in the Naqada culture area was reduced to three – Hierakonpolis, Naqada, and Abydos, – which became involved in a single political process. Hierakonpolis was clearly the leader among them at the beginning of this period, but by its end and at the beginning of the following stage Naqada III this leadership appears to have passed to Abydos, where the worship of the falcon Horus was also established. These two polities may have maintained contact via a roundabout route through the Western Desert, bypassing Naqada, where the god Seth was venerated in historical times, and apparently jointly opposed this polity. A reflection of this confrontation can be seen in the later mythological topos of the struggle between Horus and Seth; accordingly, the dualism of the “white” crown, seen later with the rulers of Abydos and Hierakonpolis who associated themselves with Horus (Wilkinson 1999: 194–196), and the “red” crown, first attested at Naqada, can be traced back to this time. Thus, the connection of both these motifs with the dualism of the “Two Lands”, i.e. Upper and Lower Egypt, turns out to be the product of a reinterpretation that occurred much later than their appearance. Overall, the political process in the Naqada culture area followed a path of integrating the existing polities.

A key place in the formation of Egyptian statehood belongs to the archaeological stage Naqada III: its phases A and B (c. 3300–3100 BC) saw the unification of Egypt, and phases C and D correspond to its history under the first two dynasties (c. 3100–2800 BC). At the beginning of this stage, a rock relief in the Gebel Tjauti area, on the desert route connecting Abydos and the southern part of the Nile Valley, recorded, according to a number of researchers, the victory of the ruler of Abydos over Naqada followed by the unification of the entire southern part of the Nile Valley under the victor’s authority (Darnell et al. 2002: 10–12; Wilkinson 2000: 386; Hendrickx 2014: 267). The situation in the Delta at this time is unclear: researchers speak of relatively powerful elites in centers such as Buto and Sais (Wilkinson 1999: 50); but the stage Naqada III A coincides with the so-called “transitional” phase of the Lower Egyptian archaeological culture and is followed by the spread of the Naqada culture at its

III B stage to the north (Campagno 2013: 2), i.e., clearly, by the subjugation of the Delta to the unifiers of the south from Abydos. The emergence of Abydos as the leader in the Nile Valley is evidenced particularly by the size and the richness of the famous tomb U-j, discovered by German archaeologists in 1988, which undoubtedly belonged to a ruler and conceptually represented a copy of a royal palace (Dreyer 1998). Among the finds in this tomb there is again an ivory scepter similar to later royal scepters (Wilkinson 1999: 188); however, it is especially important that it contains the earliest examples of Egyptian writing – bone tags with signs denoting locations in the Delta (in particular, the city of Bubastis), which supplied to Abydos food (oil or fat) stored in vessels placed in the tomb (Wengrow 2011: 102–103; Hendrickx 2014: 264–265, fig. 1.16.3). It is believed that these tags indicate both the control of the Abydos ruler (perhaps named “Scorpion” and identical to the maker of the monument at Gebel Tjauti) (Wilkinson 2000: 388; Hendrickx 2014: 271) over the Delta areas and the existence of the accounting administration, whose activities generated the need for writing. At the final stage of Egypt’s unification, the famous Narmer Palette, while a classic example of pictographic record, also bears an inscription in phonetic writing – significantly, the title of the head of royal administration, the vizier (*ḥty*), who precedes the king in the scene of his triumph on the reverse of the plate. It is worth adding that tomb U-j and other complexes of this time attest stable and extensive imports into Egypt from the Eastern Mediterranean (Wilkinson 1999: 157–164; Braun 2011; Hendrickx 2014: 273): probably, the desire to establish themselves in the Delta areas, from where trade with this region was possible, gave an impetus to the expansion of the southern rulers northwards. In the southern direction, the Abydos polity apparently advanced deep into Nubia, as evidenced by the reception of its ideological tradition in the Qustul area (Williams 1986; Wilkinson 1999: 39–40, 176–177).

The content of the stage Naqada III A–B was not only the unification of Egypt but also the formation of the sacral royal kingship crucially important for its subsequent history. The upper register of the famous Palermo Stone chronicle represents figures of kings in “red” crowns, with their names inscribed, and a similar row of kings, whose names have not survived, is presented on the Cairo fragment of this chronicle (Wilkinson 2000a: 85–89, 183–186). It was thought once that these were the rulers of the Lower Egyptian kingdom memorable until the compilation of this chronicle in the mid-3rd millennium BC; however, this can be doubted, given the early attestation of the “red” crown not in Lower Egypt but, as it was said, at Naqada. Much more important is the fact that during the stage Naqada III A–B there appeared the tradition of inscribing royal names in combination with the image of a falcon, i.e. the god Horus, and, from a certain point, in the so-called *serekh* (Hendrickx et al. 2011: 141–142). The *serekh* (Ancient Egyptian “that which

makes known”) (Erman, Grapow 1955: vol. 4, 200) is a depiction of a royal palace’ facade, into which the royal name was inscribed and above which an image of the falcon Horus was placed: overall, such a composition recorded the so-called Horus name — the earliest title of the king indicating his sacral nature. According to A.O. Bolshakov, whose opinion seems most convincing, this name indicated that the god of the sky and the sun within it, Horus, was the supreme eternal ruler of Egypt and the entire world; and that the king, in his lifetime, was his temporary embodiment on earth. After the death of one king Horus was newly embodied in his successor; and the transience of this embodiment was marked by the kings’ adopting accordingly special names, rather than being simply identified with Horus (Bolshakov 2000: 74–77). At about the final unification of Egypt, the Horus names suggested the revelation of a certain warlike principle in the king, as they compared him to a fierce creature (Scorpion, “Fierce Catfish” — Narmer, “Fighter” — Aha, “Snake” — Djet; also, according to Bolshakov’s suggestion, “Bull” — Ka and “Vulture” — Djer) (Beckerath 1999: 36–39; Bolshakov 2015). There is no doubt that such meaning of the royal title was motivated by the tense wars for the unification of the country and by the need to show the king’s supremacy over his opponents; indeed, the monuments of this time, primarily the paradigmatic Narmer Palette, testify to this. However, in due course the sacrality of Egyptian kings was associated with their ability to perform rituals (Demidchik 2005: 14–27), and it is unlikely that things were different at the very beginning of Egypt’s history. Did the idea of a sacral king-ritualist connected with the solar god emerge in some single polity (in this connection, one might think of Hierakonpolis, where the cult of Horus was apparently indigenous) and then spread throughout the country during its unification, or was it present everywhere, so that all Egyptian polities were originally headed by ritual rulers, and this quality was monopolized only in due course by the Abydos’ kings — unifiers of Egypt? Choosing one of these possibilities cannot be conclusively substantiated; but the second seems no less probable than the first, and an analogy for it might be found in the history of another society where ritual rulers were considered connected to the sun, namely Japan. According to Japanese tradition, the descendants of Jimmu-tenno took away the ritual regalia from local rulers, replacing them with the unique “sacred treasures” of their house, which ensured that only its representatives could interact with the gods (Bix 2016: 73).

Thus, by the end of Egypt’s unification, authoritarian sacral rulers stood at the head of its statehood, and the military aspect of their power was emphasized. But are there any traces of early power institutions different from kingship; and are any aspects apart from the sacral status and military power discernible in the image and authority of the late Predynastic kings? The author of this article has already noted that the only Egyptian designation for a ruler that might show his power derived from

the will of a community is the title *iry-p^ct*, i.e., literally “one who belongs to the (people)-*p^ct*” (Erman, Grapow 1955: vol. 2, 415–416). The designation *p^ct* (Erman, Grapow 1955: vol. 1, 503) referred in historical times to a certain category of privileged individuals, and it may derive from the designation of people originally belonging to the polities of Abydos and Hierakonpolis, the worshippers of Horus and the subjects of Egypt’s unifiers. In historical times, this title could belong to a nome ruler, a prince, or simply a noble, in the feminine form also to a queen; but judging its origin and time of emergence is quite difficult, although the Predynastic attestation of the word *rh^yt* (Erman, Grapow 1955: vol. 2, 447), paired with *p^ct* and opposite in meaning as a denotation of some unprivileged community (perhaps, at the very start the people of the entities defeated and conquered by Abydos), allows assigning the appearance of both notions to that time (see with bibliography: Ladynin 2014). At the stage Naqada III A–B the “non-military” function of the king is vividly manifested in the well-known and highly informative composition on the macehead of King Scorpion (Gautier, Midant-Reynes 1995): here the king is depicted performing some action (possibly a rite) related to the construction of a canal (Wilkinson 1999: 216). Finally, under King Den of Dynasty I, the title *nsw-bity* came into use and later became the main designation for the king, literally meaning “he who belongs to the reed and the bee” (Beckerath 1999: 10–16). The translation of this title in Greco-Egyptian bilingual inscriptions of the Hellenistic period as “King of Upper and Lower Egypt” prompted the view that it connected the king with the sacred symbols of the south and north of the country (the reed and the bee, respectively); however, it has been supposed that its original meaning had been different. In the 2000s, the German Egyptologist H. Roeder suggested that the first component of this title, *nsw*, could relate to the most dynamic, military function of the Egyptian king (Roeder 2003); and his colleague J. Kahl thought that the second component, *bity*, related to the opposite, peaceful, economic and religious function of his power (Kahl 2008). These assumptions seem sufficiently substantiated, and if they are correct, one can conclude that the merger of these two main functions of power in the person of a single, unrestricted king occurred already at the dawn of Egypt’s history. Note for comparison that in ancient Mesopotamia, the dualism of these functions, belonging to the ruler-priest heading the temple economy (*en, ensi*) and to the military leader (*lugal*) (Diakonoff, Kohl 1991: 74–77) is clearly traceable for a sufficiently long time; however, in Egypt, this dualism is obviously lost in the retrospect of the early state formation.

This review of the stages of politogenesis in Egypt traceable through archaeological data makes it clear that the real existence of polities corresponding to the territorial criteria of the concept “nome” should be sought

in the first of these stages, i.e., in the period Naqada I B/C and Naqada II A/B: already in the next stage, in the period Naqada II C–D, these polities began drawing into more extensive structures and the struggle between the latter started. In this connection, the question arises: should these earliest polities be qualified as states? This question is clear enough when it comes to the third stage of politogenesis, in the period Naqada III A–B bringing the unification of Egypt: the appearance of writing providing for the needs of administration is the most important indicator of state existence. As for the first stage of politogenesis in Egypt, B. Kemp, a serious researcher of Egyptian social history from archaeological data, preferred to designate the polities of this period with the non-committal term “proto-state” (Kemp 2018: 73, 75 et al.). Definitions of these earliest polities coming from major archaeologists involved in Predynastic studies considerably vary: the Belgian researcher of southern Egyptian sites S. Hendrickx believed that such polities exceeded the level of chiefdoms (Hendrickx 2014: 263), while Chr. Köhler, who worked at Abydos and Helwan, thought they were “two-tiered chiefdoms with dominant, individual leaders” (Köhler 2020: 134). The Serbian Egyptologist B. Anđelković applied to the first stages of Egyptian politogenesis the typology developed by R. Carneiro and considered the polities of Naqada I A–B (“proto-nomes”) as “minimal” or typical chiefdoms, and the polities of the next period (“nome pre-states”) as “maximal” chiefdoms; he considered the “Upper Egyptian Commonwealth” formed by the end of Naqada II (the union of Hierakonpolis, Naqada, and Abydos under the hegemony of the latter) an “asymmetrical confederation” of such pre-states, which never reached the level of actual states within this union (Anđelković 2022: 888, n. 72). The Argentine researcher M. Campagno was perhaps the only one who tried to find real archaeological criteria to determine the stages in the development of early Egyptian polities: in his opinion, the most important criterion for recognizing a polity as a state is the monopoly of power on coercion, and it might be attested already at the Naqada II stage due to the mass mobilization for the construction of a large ritual complex at Hierakonpolis (HK29A; Naqada II B–D), the depictions of “gift-bearers” on an ivory object from Abydos (tomb U-127; Naqada II D), and the scene of a king killing prisoners from the “Painted Tomb” at Naqada possibly reflecting ruler’s monopoly on such actions (Campagno 2002: 49, 51, 55). The fragility of these arguments is quite obvious, and Campagno notes in an encyclopedic article on the completion of politogenesis in Egypt that those who see a sign of state existence in the presence of a “political-administrative apparatus ruling over a large territory” are inclined to consider the Predynastic period as a pre-state “formative phase”, while those who attach greater importance to “social stratification and coercive practices” allow that the state arises already in the second half of the Naqada II stage (Campagno 2013: 7).

Summing up this certainly incomplete review of researchers' views, one can say that none of them gave real arguments for the existence of state structures at the very earliest stage of Egyptian politogenesis, when the existence of actual nome polities should be posited. It seems quite probable that statehood really did not arise in Egypt at this minor territorial level: the Egyptian nomes did not have enough time to “outgrow” the level of chiefdom-like structures before the process of their integration and territorial unification began, when the actual formation of the state occurred.

It is legitimate, however, to ask what happened to the Egyptian nome pre-state polities within the supra-nome territorial union from which the unified Egyptian state eventually grew. Here one can say that the knowledge of the nome polities of Egypt is not limited to archaeological data of the major Predynastic settlements but also includes monuments of this time recording symbols similar to those of future historical nomes. The most famous is undoubtedly the already mentioned composition on the macehead of King Scorpion. Several fragments of this monument survive, and the upper register of the larger one shows standards with symbols, from which hang lapwings symbolizing the community *rhyt* that is opposed to the community *p^ct* and disadvantaged in some sense. A smaller fragment of the macehead represents standards topped with images of the falcon Horus in a boat (a known motif of the sun's journey across the sky): similarly, from them hang bows symbolizing in Egyptian tradition foreign peoples subject to the king (Gautier, Midant-Reynes 1995: 108–109, fig. 13). Obviously, this part of the composition reflects some successes of Scorpion outside Egypt, perhaps in Lower Nubia, where his monuments are attested (Wilkinson 1999: 177–179); as for the standards with lapwings, one can think that these birds symbolize some newly subjugated communities within Egypt, not belonging to the leading polity of Abydos and Hierakonpolis. In that case, victory over them should be attributed to some forces associated with the standards from which the lapwings are hung: on these standards, from left to right, one sees the sign for hill-country, used in historical times to write the word *h3st* (“foreign land”) (Erman, Grapow 1955: vol. 3, 234); the sacred animal of the god Seth; the sacred symbol of the god Min; again the animal of Seth; an image of a jackal. All these symbols are found on nome standards of historical times: the hill-country sign (in combination with a horned serpent) was present on the standard of the 12th Upper Egyptian nome; Seth's animal — on the standard of the 11th Upper Egyptian nome; Min's symbol — on the standard of the 9th Upper Egyptian nome (Akhmim); the jackal image — on the standard of the 17th Upper Egyptian nome (Cynopolis) (Helck 1974: 93, 99–100, 112). Men carrying standards, one of which again bears a jackal image, are shown preceding the celebrating king

on the reverse side of the Narmer Palette; images similar to future nome standards are also present on other Predynastic monuments (Massou-lard 1949: 431, pl. LVI.2). It is noteworthy that the historical nomes whose standards find analogies on these monuments are located within Upper Egypt along the Nile lower than the territory integrated by the beginning of Naqada III into the polity of Abydos and Hierakonpolis. It seems that the appearance of these symbols on monuments of its rulers should denote an alliance formed during this polity's expansion northward with some less significant entities of this territory that aided Abydos in the wars. However, in that case, these entities must go back to some more ancient nome polities, whose history and level of development at the time of the alliance with the unifiers of Egypt are not known. Obviously, some of the historical Egyptian nomes do indeed descend from the most ancient nome polities, and the completion of their system as the basis of Egypt's administrative division occurred under the first royal dynasties through the "emulation" of these ancient models — by founding districts whose centers were towns with particularly renowned temples.

The final question related to the integration of Egypt's nomes into a unified state concerns the reasons for it to arise at an exceptionally early stage and to have proved extremely durable, disintegrating only for relatively short periods, and invariably restoring itself. First of all, one must agree with I.M. Diakonoff, who stressed the extreme specificity of Egypt within his typology of the early ancient societies (the "second path of development" represented by Egypt alone) and drew attention to the comparative ease of creating and maintaining militarily a unified structure in the narrow Nile Valley even at the level of the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age (Diakonoff et al. 1989: vol. 1, 47–48). The necessity to create such structure was traditionally linked by scholars to the need for a unified irrigation economy within the entire river valley; however, it became clear that this explanation "does not work", as irrigation systems in the valleys of great rivers were always a sum of local and overall decentralized irrigation systems. A.E. Demidchik suggested that the durability of Egypt's unification was backed with the interdependence of its parts in terms of resource exchange: the narrow river valley in the south of the country experienced an acute need for grain supplies from the north, without which famine began; and large works for the development of the Delta in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC required the movement of people there from other parts of the country through state mobilizations (Demidchik 2010a). This factor undoubtedly operated in historical times and made inevitable the restoration of a unified Egyptian state after periods of its disintegration; however, before it began to operate, the unification of the country itself had to take shape, and until then its regions, one must assume, relied only on their own resources. Probably

an important factor in the durability of the unified Egyptian state, which began to operate, obviously, at the stage of its unification already, was the policy of its initiators to eradicate all possible “cells of separatism” within its structure. This policy, likely pursued quite consciously and purposefully, led in a fairly short perspective to the eradication not only of the former nome autonomy (and even the memory of their former independence!) but also to the total absorption of rural communities by the state sector of the economy (according to Diakonoff, the absence of rural communities constitutes the specificity of the notorious “second path of development”) (see also: Ladynin 2018) and to the reduction of the entire kinship system in Egyptian society to the nuclear family (Demidchik 2010). The pursuit of such policy is hardly unique to Egypt; rather, it turns out to be fairly natural for early regional states that saw a potential danger in the traditional structures from which they were “assembled”; however, only in Egypt did this policy lead to a truly complete eradication of such structures, after which the Egyptians became a “Staatsvolk” (Franke 1983: 350) and a person’s place in society was entirely determined by the nature of his service to the state.

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**НОМОВЫЕ ПОЛИТИИ И ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ ГОСУДАРСТВА
В ЕГИПТЕ IV тыс. до н.э.:
РЕКОНСТРУКЦИИ И НАУЧНЫЕ МОДЕЛИ**

И.А. Ладынин

Современное представление о формировании государства в Египте полностью исключило устаревшую схему, согласно которой 22 нома Верхнего Египта и 20 номов Нижнего Египта постепенно объединялись в два царства и в итоге первое покорило второе. Этот процесс разделяется на три этапа,

согласно эволюции археологической культуры Нагада. На первом этапе (Нагада I В/С – II В, ~3900–3500 до н.э.) появились артефакты и элементы иконографии, связанные с символикой царской власти (красная корона на керамическом сосуде из Нагады, изображения сокола — будущего Хора в Иераконполе, правителя, поражающего врагов, — в Абидосе). Общество было стратифицировано (элитные некрополи отделены от погребений простых людей). Структуры, сопоставимые с номами, стоит искать на первом и втором (Нагада II С–D, ~3500–3300 до н.э.) этапах политогенеза, особенно на первом, поскольку во втором уже начинается их слияние. Однако административные структуры фиксируются лишь на третьем этапе (Нагада III А–В, ~3300–3100 до н.э.), с появлением письменности для учёта товаров, поступающих в Абидос из различных регионов Египта (гробница U-j)/(Скорпиона I?). Определение политий первого этапа как вожеств засвидетельствовано в научной литературе; если оно верно, то ранние государства возникли в Египте лишь на втором и/или в начале третьего этапа в ходе войн за объединение и расширения торговой сети, охватившей Египет и его периферию. В дальнейшем особенностью династического Египта были слабость и неразвитость отношений родства, вероятно, объяснимые уничтожением кланов и локальных структур, как конкурентов обще-египетской власти, вскоре после возникновения государства. Итогом этого процесса стало растворение в едином государстве не только ранних политий, но и сельских общин (повсеместного явления поздней первобытности).

Ключевые слова: Египет, Абидос, Иераконполь, Нагада, ном, политики, объединение, археология, родство, сельские общины, сакральная царская власть.

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