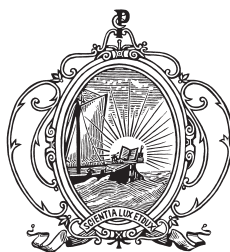# REMOVE THAT PYRAMID!

Studies on the Archaeology and History
of Predynastic and Pharaonic Egypt
in Honour of Stan Hendrickx

edited by

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THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE FIRST THREE DYNASTIES: ACTUAL FACT OR LATER TRADITION?

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In his Aigyptiaka*, Manetho organises the history of Egypt on the basis of the concept of 'dynasty'—as a definite and closed sequence of kings—and isolates thirty dynasties. Traces of this chronographical arrangement can be found in earlier Egyptian sources, so it is not an invention of Greco-Roman times, but a feature of the Pharaonic conception of time and past. But at what time in Egyptian history did the notion of 'dynasty' take shape? Did it already exist from the very beginning of the Dynastic Period? In this contribution we discuss this issue and the evidence which seems to confirm that the boundaries between the first three dynasties were already established contemporarily by the creators of the Egyptian chronography.*

1. The concept of 'dynasty': a creation of modern scholars or a notion of Egyptian chronography?

Is the notion of the Egyptian 'dynasty'—as a definite and closed sequence of kings—a modern creation on the basis of the Greek concept of *dynasteia* used by Manetho in his *Aigyptiaka*, or was it already a 'unit' of the Pharaonic conception of time and past? If the latter, when did this notion take shape? Did it already exist from the very beginning of the Dynastic Period? In other words, were the sets of kings that we group in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Dynasties (and the following) already conceived as such by contemporary Egyptians?

Two opposite opinions have been raised on this matter. According to B. Anđelković, for example, "the finds of two clay sealings with royal names from Abydos do not unequivocally testify that Narmer was the first king of the First Dynasty. The concepts and terms such as 'Dynasty 0' or 'First Dynasty' were not established by contemporary ancient Egyptians but by modern scholars" (Anđelković 2011: 31, n. 2). On the other hand, M. Baud has written: "Un certain nombre de rois ont innové en matière de datation, comme en d'autres domaines. À ce titre, il est juste de les considérer comme des véritables fondateurs, d'autant que les pratiques nouvelles qu'ils instaurent ont été suivies par leurs successeurs immédiats. Dans ces conditions, il est très probable que les rois des quatre premières dynasties aient eu conscience d'appartenir à autant de groupes monarchiques successifs […]. Le découpage répercuté par

Manéthon ne saurait donc être le fruit du hasard : il suit remarquablement les sources contemporaines et la présentation annalistique de l'Ancien Empire" (Baud 2000: 44).

Regarding Anđelković's statement, while it is true that the term and concept of 'Dynasty 0' is a creation of modern scholars based on Manetho's terminology, this is not the case for '1st Dynasty', and for 'dynasty' in general, which is present in Manetho and, as a chronographic concept, also in some Pharaonic sources such as the Royal Canon of Turin (RCT). So Anđelković's assertion seems unsustainable, at least in its actual formulation. As for Baud's position—which we will discuss in detail later (see 2.5 below)—it is based upon very conclusive annalistic evidence, but this is not the only field in which we can find evidence for early dynastic division. In the following pages we will discuss this issue and the evidence which seems to confirm that the boundaries between the first three dynasties were already established contemporarily by the creators of the Egyptian chronography. In doing so, they linked the actual facts of the kings' continuous succession and the deeply transformative action of some reigns to the mythical notions of continuous and cyclical time. It is my great pleasure to offer these remarks to the giant of Egyptian prehistoric and Predynastic studies who is Stan Hendrickx, for whom I have both great professional admiration and deep personal appreciation.

2. Boundaries between the first three dynasties? Critical review of the sources

Let us first address the matter in the general context of Egyptian chronographical sources focusing on both the Early Dynastic Period and the Old Kingdom.

2.1. The Royal Canon of Turin

As is well known, the dynastic division in Manetho and in the Ramesside sources such as the RCT is based on the location of the royal residence (Redford 1986: 13; Málek 1997: 11–14, 17; Baud 2000: 33, 45). This allows Manetho to distinguish between his 1st and 2nd Dynasties—which he links to Thinis—and his 3rd to 8th Dynasties—which he relates to Memphis (except for the 5th Dynasty, which he associates with Elephantine). The fact that in the RCT the first dynastic division only occurs between the 5th and the 6th Dynasties is undoubtedly due to the fact that Memphis was the sole capital of the country throughout this entire period (Early Dynastic Period and Old Kingdom). According to Málek (1997: 11–13), the isolation of the 6th Dynasty reflects the topographical movement of the city centre from the area east of north Saqqara to the area east of south Saqqara, but this isolation is only partial,

since a new summation starting from Menes is made after the 6th and 8th Dynasties, incorporating them into the Memphite sequence (Gardiner 1959: pl. II, fragments 44, 61 [emended by Ryholt 2000: 95–96, fig. 2]; Redford 1986: 12, no. 8; Málek 1997: 8). It is therefore clear that the RCT does not define any formal division between the first five dynasties.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the canon does not make any sort of distinction inside this long sequence. K. Ryholt (2004: 145–146; 2006: 28) has shown that, on the one hand, there is a different pattern concerning the details provided for the kings of the Early Dynastic Period (1st and 2nd Dynasties) and those of the Old Kingdom (3rd to 6th Dynasties): the reigns of the former "are recorded in years, months and days, and to this information their age at death is added", while the reigns of the latter "are recorded in round years alone" (Ryholt 2004: 145). According to Ryholt, this is due to the fact that different sources were used to compile these two sections of the canon, and this means that the chronographical tradition worked in sections which coincide perfectly with clusters of dynasties (in this case two clusters, separating the dynasties of the Early Dynastic Period from those of the Old Kingdom). On the other hand, emphasis through the use of red ink for the royal title and/or through a special textual remark, which is quite exceptional in the RCT, characterises, respectively, the entries of king Djeserit (= Netjerikhet) and king Huni, the first and the last kings of the 3rd Dynasty, which remain thus clearly identified within the sequence of the Old Kingdom reigns (Ryholt 2004: 145). It is true that in the RCT Djeserit is not recorded as the first king of that dynasty, Nebka being the one who occupies this position, but this is clearly due to a mistake in transmission, as the Saqqara list gives the correct order of succession of these kings (von Beckerath 1997: 216; Baud 2002: 65–68; see 2.3 below). The succession Khasekhemuy-Netjerikhet is ensured by the discovery of seal impressions of the latter in the grave of the former at Umm el-Qaab (Dreyer 1998; Wilkinson 1999: 95; Baud 2002: 60–61; Seidlmayer 2006: 118; Cervelló Autuori 2008: 892). The exceptional emphasis in Djeserit's title on the RCT is probably ultimately due to his actual role as a dynastic founder, more than "to his outstanding reputation in later times", as Ryholt (2004: 145) suggests (see also Wilkinson 1999: 96).

2.2. Royal annals

The same pattern that we find in the royal lists, that is to say, two different sequences of reigns separated by the transition from the 5th to the 6th Dynasties, can also be found in the royal annals. In fact, as is well known, two different annalistic sources cover the first six dynasties: the Palermo Stone and its associated fragments, which comprise the annals of the kings of the first five dynasties (Redford 1986: 87–90; Wilkinson 2000; most recently Nuzzolo 2020);

and the South Saqqara stone, a basalt block originating from the pyramid com-
plex of Pepy II that was re-used as the lid on the sarcophagus of Pepy's queen-
mother Ankhnespepy, which is a single, complete monument, with a very dif-
ferent arrangement of the information in relation to the previous one, and
includes the annals of the 6th Dynasty only (Baud & Dobrev 1995; Nuzzolo 2020:
56 n. 6). This means that the 6th Dynasty was conceived, already by its con-
temporaries, as a unit clearly separated from the previous sequences of reigns
and to which a single annalistic monument could be devoted.

2.3. The Westcar papyrus

The Westcar Papyrus (most recently: Bagnato 2006; Lepper 2008; Stauder
2013: 110–132; Parys 2017), dated to the end of the Second Intermediate
Period or the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, gives us three different chronologi-
cal sequences of fictional-historical characters: that of the kings under whose
reigns the wonders recounted in the tales took place; that of the princes who
narrate the tales; and that of the first three kings of the 5th Dynasty.[1] The kings
of the first sequence are Djeser, Nebka, Snefru, and Khufu, two of the
3rd Dynasty (in the correct chronological order, since [Netjerikhet-]Djeser was
the first king of that dynasty: Dreyer 1998; Wilkinson 1999: 94–96, 101–103;
Baud 2002: 60–61; Seidlmayer 2006: 118) and two of the 4th Dynasty. As for
the princes, the last three are Khafre, Baufre and Hordjedef, Khufu's sons, the
name of the first having not been preserved. This was probably Djedefre
(Baud 2005: 548), since in the late Middle Kingdom, when the text of pWest-
car was probably originally written (Farout 2008: 126), Khufu and his four
sons Djedefre, Khafre, Baufre, and Hordjedef were considered as a coherent
group and were believed to have reigned over Egypt successively (see 2.4
below). Finally, the three kings of the 5th Dynasty who are mentioned are
Useref (= Userkaf), Sahre (= Sahure), and Keku (= Neferirkare Kakai), the first
three kings of that dynasty. But what we are interested in is the phraseology
used by the storyteller when describing the transition between the 4th and
5th Dynasties. Djedi, the magician, says to king Khufu:

> "Then his Incarnation said: '[…] But who is she, this Reddjedet?'. And Djedi
> answered: 'She is the wife of a *wab*-priest of Re, lord of Sakhebu, who is pregnant
> with three sons of Re, lord of Sakhebu. And he [= Re] has said about them: they
> will perform this efficient function [= kingship] in all this country, and their oldest
> will (also) act as the Greatest of the Seers in Heliopolis'. Then his Incarnation, his
> heart fell into sadness because of it. And Djedi said: 'What is this feeling, sover-
> eign l.p.h., my lord? Is it because of these three children I have mentioned? It will

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[1] A fourth sequence is that of the magicians or chief lector-priests who perform the miracles.
Only the names of the last three are preserved and they probably correspond to fictional
characters.

be your son (first), (then) it will be his son, (and only then) it will be one of them.'" (pWestcar 9,8–9,14)

The reason for the dynastic change is clear and not related to the structure or the location of the royal tombs, but to blood and lineage: the mythical argument for the dynastic transition is that the new kings are direct sons of Re, and this implies a categorical opposition to the previous line in terms of descent. The division between the 4th and 5th Dynasties is stressed in the text by the description of Khufu's sadness and Djedi's pious effort to comfort the king. The dynastic transition is thus presented as a major and critical change. This means that, at least since the Middle Kingdom, there existed a cultural consciousness of a strong separation between these two dynasties, likely promoted by the Heliopolitan priests, and that king Khufu and his two-generation line ("your son" and "his son") formed a well-defined and closed unit. It is important to highlight that this is a cultural construct, although probably based on the actual fact that the 5th Dynasty (as well as perhaps the 4th and the 6th) implied a change of ruling family or at least of family line (Baud 2010: 66). On the other hand, it is also clear that pWestcar conveys an actual chronographical event through an ideological (fictional) approach and without any intention of factual historicity (for example, four reigns, and not two, separate Khufu from Userkaf; Hays 2002).

2.4. The king list of the Wadi Hammamat mentioning Khufu and his sons

The king list carved in the Wadi Hammamat, dating from the Middle Kingdom (Drioton 1954; Redford 1986: 25; Parys 2017: 17), gives the names of Khufu and four of his sons, Djedefre, Khafre, Hordjedef(-Re) and Bafre. All these names are arranged inside a cartouche, although the last two never reigned (Ritter 1999: 42), since Khafre was succeeded by Menkaure and Shepseskaf, the last two kings of the dynasty. The correct order of succession of the last kings of the 4th Dynasty and the first kings of the 5th can be read in the inscriptions of the tombs of Netjerpunesut (G 8740; from Djedefre to Sahure) and Sekhemkare (LG 89 = G 8154; from Khafre to Sahure), both in the central field at Giza (Roccati 1982: 70–71; Redford 1986: 59–60, n. 205; Jánosi 2005: 46, 379; Strudwick 2005: 78). Although Hordjedef is a historical character (his mastaba, G 7210+20, is located in the Eastern Cemetery at Giza; Baud 2005: 522–523, #158; Jánosi 2005: 100, fig. 7, 104–106), the name of Ba(u)fre does not appear in 4th Dynasty sources, although it has been argued that he could be the owner of the heavily damaged mastaba G 7310+20, next to that of Hordjedef (Baud 2005: 548, 614–615, 631; Jánosi 2005: 100, fig. 7, 106). The fact that Hordjedef and Ba(u)fre never ruled may explain why they appear in interchanged order in pWestcar and in the Wadi Hammamat list. On the other hand,

the presence of Djedefre in the Wadi Hammamat list allows us to suppose that he was the prince mentioned in the missing part of pWestcar (see 2.3 above). Be that as it may, it seems clear that, in the Middle Kingdom, a tradition existed about a dynastic line formed by Khufu and four of his sons. This means a notion of a strong and closed dynastic unity, even if it does not coincide with the complete dynasty. This is what Baud has called the "modèle de la dynastie-lignée" (Baud 2000: 45), which implies a well-defined conception of chrono-graphical discontinuity.

2.5. *Year designations*

If we now turn to sources contemporary to the first four dynasties, we must first consider the crucial issue of the year designations. In his paper meaning-fully titled "Les frontières des quatre premières dynasties: Annales royales et historiographie égyptienne" (2000), M. Baud analyses all the sources dating from the period spanning the 1st until the 4th Dynasty containing 'designations' of regnal years (see also Baud 1999: 114–115; 2002: 54–56). These sources are, on the one hand, the royal annals (Palermo Stone, Cairo Stone and frag-ments), and, on the other hand, contemporary inscriptions such as those on the annalistic labels of the 1st Dynasty, the *dipinti* on vases from the underground galleries of the step pyramid at Saqqara and from Elephantine dating to the 2nd Dynasty, and the quarry marks and inscriptions from the pyramids of Snefru at Meidum and Dahshur. Baud observes that in all sources corresponding to the 1st and 3rd Dynasties, the regnal years are named after events (*nom événemen-tiel*), while in all sources corresponding to the 2nd and 4th Dynasties they are designated in a numerical way (*nom numérique*), the boundaries between the two being precisely the transition between the last reign of one dynasty and the first of the following one (Baud 2000: 39, table). According to him, this means that the first king of each of these four dynasties innovated in the field of dating (as well as in other possible fields), and in this sense it is correct to consider them as 'founders' (see quotation at the beginning of this paper). Baud concludes (2000: 43): "Le recoupement entre les sources indique sans équi-voque, en termes manéthoniens, que le passage de la IIᵉ à la IIIᵉ dynastie d'une part, de la IIIᵉ à la IVᵉ dynastie d'autre part, correspond à un changement de mode de désignation des années. La disparition des étiquettes datées [= the annalistic labels] après Qa'a joue aussi en faveur de cette conjonction entre les Iʳᵉ et IIᵉ dynasties. […] Les quatre premières dynasties ont donc connu l'alternance de systèmes événementiel et numérique de désignation des années, par binômes successifs Iʳᵉ–IIᵉ puis IIIᵉ–IVᵉ. À cette date, le mode numérique finit par l'emporter définitivement".

Baud's study seems to be conclusive. However, one objection may be raised with respect to it. Baud fails to consider the inscriptions carved on stone vases

of king Khasekhem (probably later Khasekhemuy), towards the end of the 2nd Dynasty, where the years are designated by event names (Quibell 1900: pl. 36; Wilkinson 1999: 91). This exception in an otherwise perfect pattern (the regnal years of Khasekhemuy himself are designated numerically: Baud 2000: 36–39) can be explained by the commemorative nature of the inscriptions of Khasekhem (carved in stone) in front of the more documentary nature of the inscriptions from Saqqara and Elephantine (written in ink), or by political reasons (attempt to emulate the usage of the 1st Dynasty in what seems to have been a critical time; disruption caused by the crisis that probably affected the Egyptian State in the second half of the 2nd Dynasty and led to the second unification of the country), and does not invalidate Baud's conclusions.

2.6. The 'Thinite royal lists'

The second issue to be considered regarding the contemporary sources from the first dynasties is that of the so-called 'Thinite royal lists' (Cervelló Autuori 2005; 2008 and references). This issue concerns the 1st Dynasty and the first half of the 2nd. Two kinds of Thinite royal lists can be distinguished: those that we might call 'closed' or 'true' lists, namely the lists carved at a single moment on objects that were not reused, such as cylinder seals[2] or statues, and conceived of as lists from the beginning; and those we might call 'resultant' lists, i.e. lists carved on re-used objects such as ritual stone vessels, on which different successive kings had their names carved one after another in a single register and in the same module and similar style.

  To date, four true lists and fifteen resultant lists are recorded, most of them kept at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Cervelló Autuori 2008: 887–890). They list between two and eight kings, always in perfect order of succession. The best known true lists are those recorded on two seal impressions originating from the tombs of Den and Qaa in Umm el-Qaab, which give respectively the Horus names of the first five kings of the 1st Dynasty, starting with Narmer, and the Horus names of the eight kings of the same dynasty, starting with Narmer and ending with Qaa (Dreyer 1987; Dreyer *et al*. 1996: 72–73); and the one carved on the statue of the priest Hetepdief, which gives the Horus names of the first three kings of the 2nd Dynasty (Kahl 2006: 96–98, 102; Cervelló Autuori 2008: 887–888, figs 1–4).

  The best known resultant lists are those carved on stone vessels found in the galleries under the step pyramid at Saqqara where the *nesut-bity* and *nebuy/ nebty* names of the last four kings of the 1st Dynasty, starting from Khasty

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  [2] A cylinder seal can be considered as an object that was not re-used in the sense that it has a 'finite' use, during a single reign or for a single set of objects (for example, part of the furniture of a single tomb), that is to say, it is made for a 'closed' purpose.

(= Horus Den) and ending with Qaa (= Horus Qaa), are recorded (Lacau & Lauer 1959: 10: pl. 4; 1961: 9–12; Kaplony 1968: 20–24, pls 11, 18; 1973: 6, #25, pl. 2, 7, 20; Cervelló Autuori 2008: 889, figs 5–7).

From the analysis of all these documents, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The two lists that show the beginning of the 1st Dynasty start with Narmer, who must be considered the first king of that dynasty (for a full discussion of this issue see Cervelló Autuori 2005; 2021; Kahl 2006: 94–101; Heagy 2014).
2. All the lists that show the end of the 1st Dynasty end with Qaa.
3. The three lists that record the first kings of the 2nd Dynasty start with Hetepsekhemuy. After Ninetjer, the third king of that dynasty, the practice of carving this kind of king lists ends, coinciding with the political unrest that took place in the second half of the dynasty.
4. No lists predate Narmer and so there are no documents in which Narmer is listed with a predecessor. Narmer means an absolute beginning, in this as well as in many other fields (see 3.1.1 below).
5. There are no lists which combine the last king or kings of the 1st Dynasty with the first one or ones of the 2nd.

As can be seen, the boundaries between Dynasty 0 and the 1st Dynasty, and between the 1st and the 2nd Dynasties are clear cut, and they match up perfectly with the boundaries defined by the changes in the patterns of year designation (see 2.5 above).

J. Málek (1997: 17) has written: "Les divisions entre la 1ère et la 2ème, la 2ème et la 3ème (notre division moderne entre l'époque archaïque et l'Ancien Empire), la 3ème et la 4ème, et la 4ème et la 5ème dynasties sont fondées sur les considérations qui dérivent de l'histoire de l'architecture royale et du déplacement de la nécropole royale", that is to say, on the passage from the royal mastaba to the step pyramid and from the latter to the true pyramid; on the construction of the solar temples; and on changes in the location of the royal necropolis from Abydos to Saqqara, and, inside the Memphite necropolis, from Saqqara to Zawiyet el-Aryan, Dahshur, Abu Rawash, Giza and Abusir. However, although these changes had an effect on dynastic division, they are not enough by themselves to explain it,[3] and they are rather to be regarded in dialectic relationship with the chronographical principle of dynastic discontinuity, as manifested in

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[3] Some changes in the structure and/or location of the royal tomb did not entail a dynastic change, such as those of Peribsen in the middle of the 2nd Dynasty, Khaba in the middle of the 3rd, Snofru-Khufu-Djedefre at the beginning of the 4th, or Shepseskaf at the end of the 4th (Baud 2010: 67–68). Conversely, some continuities in the structure, location, and ritual meaning of the royal tomb occurred between different dynasties, as is the case with Unis, the last king of the 5th Dynasty, and Teti, the first king of the 6th.

king lists and year designations (events or numbers). In fact, these topographi-
cal and monumental changes took place in brief moments when many other
cultural and political changes occurred. Indeed, as M. Bárta (2015) has recently
shown, the history of Old Kingdom Egypt seems to be marked by short periods
of multiple and fundamental changes, alternating with long periods of continu-
ity and absence of significant change. This historiographical pattern is inspired
by the biological theory of 'punctuated equilibrium'. However, at least in part,
these periods of multiple changes, which Bárta calls 'multiplier effect periods'
(MEP), coincide perfectly with the boundaries between dynasties, since he
describes the first three as MEP 1: Netjerikhet Djoser; MEP 2: Sneferu; MEP 3:
transition between the 4th and 5th Dynasties. Bárta fixed a fourth MEP in the
reign of Niuserre, but he does not distinguish another one in the transition from
the 5th to the 6th Dynasties because he believes that from Niuserre to the end of
the Old Kingdom "the periods of relatively long stasis dividing individual
major events or periods of change cease to be present" (Bárta 2015: 9) since
important and constant changes occur in all the reigns. Be that as it may, at
least regarding the three first MEPs, the accumulation of cultural and political
change could be perceived by contemporaries as the sign of disruption in the
succession of kings. Another indication of the awareness of belonging to dif-
ferent units on the part of the kings of the successive dynasties of the Old
Kingdom can be found in the special link that the kings of the 6th Dynasty
established with those of the 4th, as different sources suggest: "It, therefore,
seems that the kings of the 6th Dynasty […] looked back with nostalgia at the
past grandeur of Snefru and his lineage, turning their backs on their immediate
predecessors of the 5th Dynasty" (Baud 2010: 69–70).

3. Evidence of disruption between the first three dynasties and concluding remarks

On the basis of the above, let us review which concrete bodies of evidence
allow us to conclude that Egyptians contemporary to the first three dynasties
already conceived of them as three different and well defined units, and the
boundaries between them as qualitative disruptions in the kings' sequence,
according to their chronographical conception.

3.1. Evidence that the Egyptians conceptualised disruption between Dynasty 0 and the 1st Dynasty

1. Narmer as the 'absolute founder'. Narmer was not only the founder of
   a dynasty, such as Hetepsekhemuy, Netjerikhet, Snefru, Userkaf and Teti (for
   the Early Dynastic Period and the Old Kingdom), but he was also the founder
   of the historical Egyptian kingship in absolute terms, since his reign marks

a before and an after in the development of Egyptian civilisation: it can be considered as a 'hinge' between Predynastic and dynastic times. Indeed, some defining features of the Predynastic culture end with Narmer, such as the use of decorated votive palettes and mace heads as a means of expressing royal ideology (these objects will disappear after him); the use of the 'elamite motifs' and the representation of the king as a wild beast in iconography; and the small dual-chamber funerary complex at Umm el-Qaab. And some defining features of the dynastic culture start with Narmer, such as the formal iconographic motifs of the pharaoh smiting the enemy (Narmer palette), the ritual stage for the *Sed*-festival (Narmer mace head), and the four standards accompanying the king (both Narmer palette & mace head); the representation of the king wearing the white crown and the red crown in a single document (Narmer palette); the annalistic tradition, the king lists, and the year designations (Baud 2002: 53–54); the second or 'birth' name of the kings (Cervelló Autuori 2005; 2021); and the foundation and designation of royal estates (Spencer 1980: 64, pls 48, 52, #456).

2. The first annalistic labels (Spencer 1980: 64, pls 48, 52, #456; Dreyer 2000) and, in consequence, the beginning of the annalistic tradition date back to the reign of Narmer (Baud 1999: 114–117).

3. In the context of this initial annalistic tradition, Narmer is the creator of year designations by event names (Baud 2002: 53–54), which his successors will continue to use up to Qaa, the last king of the 1st Dynasty.

4. The earliest royal lists were compiled during the 1st Dynasty and they do not record any king previous to Narmer. As we have seen (2.6 above), the two lists that show the beginning of the 1st Dynasty start with him, which probably means that he was perceived as its founder.

5. At present, the identity between Narmer and Menes appears to be well established (Cervelló Autuori 2005; 2021, with references; Kahl 2006: 94–95, n. 4; Heagy 2014, with references), and Menes is the first king of the 1st Dynasty and the founder of Egyptian kingship in all the Ramesside and classical king lists and 'historical' sources. As for Dynasty 0, the kings preceding Narmer are unknown to Manetho and the pharaonic chronographical sources (annals and king lists), which suggests that the chronographical practice itself was unknown before Narmer and only established under his reign.

3.2. Evidence that the Egyptians conceptualised disruption between the 1st and 2nd Dynasties

1. Hetepsekhemuy, the founder of the 2nd Dynasty, leaves the ancestral cemetery of Umm el-Qaab and moves his funerary complex and cult northwards to Saqqara, the necropolis of Memphis.

2. The annalistic labels are a feature of the 1st Dynasty only: the last known ones were carved in the reign of Qaa, the last king of that dynasty. After him, they stopped being made. From that moment, the annalistic data must have continued to be registered, but on other supports unknown to us, as evidenced by the annals compiled in the 5th Dynasty.

3. Hetepsekhemuy is the creator of the numerical way of year designation, which remained in use throughout the 2nd Dynasty.

4. As has been stated above (see 2.6), all the king lists that record the last kings of the 1st Dynasty end with Qaa; all the lists that record the first kings of the 2nd Dynasty start with Hetepsekhemuy; and there are no lists which combine the last king or kings of the 1st Dynasty with the first one or ones of the 2nd.

5. The identity between the first five kings of the 2nd Dynasty according to contemporary sources and according to Manetho is clear.

3.3. *Evidence that the Egyptians conceptualised disruption between the 2nd and 3rd Dynasties*

1. After the second half of the 2nd Dynasty, in which the kings returned to Umm el-Qaab as the place of burial for the last time, Netjerikhet, the founder of the 3rd Dynasty, comes back to Saqqara. Undoubtedly as a result of his close contact with Imhotep, the high priest of the solar cult at Heliopolis (Baud 2002: 140–142, 199–202; Cervelló Autuori 2011: 1128–1130), he builds for himself the first pyramid in Egyptian history, in the centre of a monumental funerary enclosure made entirely of stone for the first time.

2. Netjerikhet returns to the year designation by event names, which remained in use throughout the 3rd Dynasty. This will be changed again by Snefru, the first king of the 4th Dynasty, who will return definitively to dating by numbered regnal years.

3. In the RCT, the entries of king Djeserit and king Huni, the first and the last kings of the 3rd Dynasty, are emphasised through the use of red ink for the royal title (the first one) and through a specific textual remark (both). By these means, which are quite exceptional in the RCT, both kings remain clearly identified within the sequence of the Old Kingdom reigns (see 2.1 above).

As we have seen, the RCT clearly isolates dynasties by means of its headings and summations starting from the 6th Dynasty. This means that the Ramesside Egyptians were well aware of the fact that royal succession was 'punctuated' by a certain number of disruptions motivated by a major reason: in the specific case of the RCT, a change of the capital city. However, it is obvious that this chronographical principle is not an invention of the Ramesside chronographers

and that it comes from the previous king lists and annalistic tradition. Evidence like, above all, the 'Thinite royal lists' and the changes in year designation through the first four dynasties seem to confirm that the notion of disruption in the kings' sequence or, what is the same, the notion of 'dynasty', is inherent to the Egyptian chronographical practice from the very beginning. The second Abydos seal impression, which gives the Horus names of the eight kings of the 1st Dynasty in perfect order of succession from Narmer to Qaa (see 2.6 above), can be seen as an eloquent piece of evidence for that. Line and segment, continued succession and punctuated disruption: in fact, these temporal concepts, at once opposing and complementary, were deeply rooted in Egyptian culture and expressed through the dichotomy between *djet*-time and *neheh*-time. Just as, in the spatial field, the early dynastic Egyptians accommodated their view of the country and state to the cosmological dual principle, according to which perfection lies in the dialectics between two spatially complementary opposites, in the temporal field they could read royal succession through the principle of the double cosmic time, according to which eternity has both a continuous and a cyclical dimension at the same time (Hornung 1992: 64–69; Assmann 2001: 73–80; 2011: 13–85; Servajean 2007; 2008). By these means, the actual space and time can be incorporated in the mythical sphere, which is the ultimate origin of the meaning of life and society in a culture of 'mythical ontology' like the Egyptian one.

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