

Iconographic Attraction, Iconographic Syntax, and Tableaux of Royal Ritual Power in the Pre- and Proto-Dynastic Rock Inscriptions of the Theban Western Desert

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Introduction: Upper Egyptian Rock Art-Cosmic Order to Human Order

One of the most interesting, but at times most inexplicably dismissed (*cf.* Wengrow & Baines 2004; Wengrow 2006: 111-114), corpora of Predynastic Upper Egyptian artistic production is the rock art of the Western and Eastern Deserts of southern Egypt and Nubia. The Upper Egyptian/Nubian tradition of rock art, absent in the north (Huyge 2003: 60-61) and amply attested in the Western and Eastern Deserts by the dawn of the Predynastic Period, may have origins in the sixth millennium B.C.E., if not earlier (Huyge 1998; 2008; Huyge *et al.* 1998; 2007) and owes much to early traditions of Nubia and the Western Desert. Many of the concentrations of rock art in southern Egypt are associated with routes connecting the Nile Valley with quarries and the Red Sea to the east and those accessing the oases and

points farther removed to the west and south. Within this broad region, the Western Desert of Upper Egypt is the least well represented in publications of rock art and rock inscriptions. Beginning in 1992, the Theban Desert Road Survey has contributed to an augmentation of the known epigraphic material from the gebels of the western hinterland of ancient Thebes. As a result of the subsequent years of discovery, recording, editing, and publication, certain peculiarities of the artistic and epigraphic oeuvres of the Theban Western Desert have emerged, allowing one both to characterize the “personality” of West Theban rock inscriptions; and as an outcome of that characterization, to propose a development of rock art iconography leading directly to narrative pictorial tableaux and proto-hieroglyphic inscriptions by the Naqada III Period.

The painted vessels and decorated objects of the Predynastic Period should not occupy the central position they often receive in

discussions of early Egyptian iconography. White Cross Line depictions do not survive in great numbers; the well-known Decorated Ware is decidedly, albeit not exclusively,¹ funerary in application if not even in purpose. These decorated vessels are, however, most significant in providing dates for some of the parallels to their imagery in the far wealthier iconography of Predynastic and Protodynastic rock art.

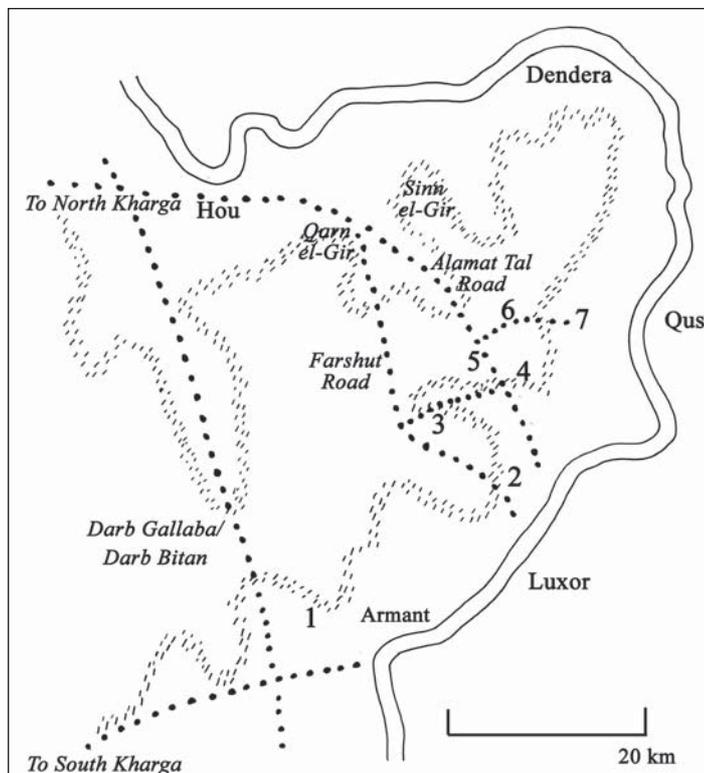
Fig. 1
Map of the
Theban Western
Desert.

- 1) Rayayna Desert;
- 2) Wadi of Amenemhat;
- 3) Wadi Nag el-Birka/ Was-ha-Waset (WHW);
- 4) Wadi of the Horus Qa-a;
- 5) Gebel Tjauti;
- 6) Arqub el-Baghla;
- 7) Wadi Magar.

The Predynastic and Protodynastic Rock Art Sites of the Theban Western Desert (fig. 1)

The Theban Western Desert proper, filling the Qena Bend of the Nile, is bounded to the north by the Darb Naqadiya and to the south by the great bay of the Rayayna Desert. The Rayayna Desert and the great Khor Battagha wadi that almost completely severs the high plateau of the Theban Western

Desert from the expanse of plateau stretching west and south, divert away from Thebes the desert traffic from points further south. North of Thebes and the western hinterland of Naqada, the Darb Naqadiya and its narrow strip of escarpment mark the point north of which no major ancient tracks lead toward the west. Because of such major topographical features as the Khor Battagha wadi to the south and the gebel prongs of Sinn el-Gir and Qarn el-Gir to the west, the Nile Valley termini of the major Upper Egyptian routes linking the Nile Valley with the southern oases focus on the area stretching from Rayayna to Naqada, the region of ancient Thebes (Darnell *et al.* 2002: 39-46). Scattered throughout this area and concentrated almost exclusively along various ancient arteries of desert travel are a number of rock art and inscription sites, many of which preserve Predynastic through to Early Dynastic iconography. Together these sites represent one of the greatest concentrations of rock art and inscriptions in all of Egypt. The unique content and length of active tradition at several of these sites provide an unparalleled laboratory for observing and describing the development of iconographic and ultimately hieroglyphic communication systems in Upper Egypt. Although the present article will focus primarily on the Predynastic and Protodynastic art and inscriptions of the Theban Western Desert, the proposed development of rock art iconography from individual scenes through Protodynastic tableau of royal ritual power is viable for most if not all of the Predynastic and Protodynastic iconography of Upper Egypt and Lower Nubia. The southernmost sites to be considered in the present study are scattered along the northern half of the Rayayna Desert, a crossroads of east-west routes, linking the southern Thebaid with southern Kharga Oasis and the north-south Darb Gallaba/Darb Bitan routes, connecting the northern Thebaid (essentially the region of Hou) with Lower Nubia. The area was home to a mixed culture showing affinities with Nilotic, Western Desert and Nubian cultures of the early Predynastic.



1. Compare Kopp 2006: 41-43 and pls. 7-8; Midant-Reynes & Buchez 2002: figs. 2.26-27; Darnell 2002: 159; Wengrow & Baines 2004: 1089.

Two major routes connected Thebes with the region of Hou and Kharga Oasis. The southernmost of these routes, the Farshût Road, ascends the plateau west of El-Tarif; the northernmost and most significant route during the Predynastic Period, the 'Alamat Tal Road, leads through the great Wadi Omran. Linking the Farshût and 'Alamat Tal Roads is a track through the Wadi Nag el-Birka, throughout which are located several important rock art sites, including the largest of all rock inscription sites in the Theban Western Desert—Was-ha-Waset, near the ascent of the Wadi Nag el-Birka track to its juncture with the Farshût Road. The Was-ha-Waset site (there named in ancient inscriptions [Darnell 2002: 143 and pl. 87] *W3s-h3-W3s.t*, “Dominion Behind Thebes,” henceforth WHW) is divided into four major concentrations, the largest of which stretches for almost three-quarters of a kilometre across the face of the gebel to the east of the track. The 'Alamat Tal Road ascends the plateau at the Gebel Tjauti site (Darnell 2002: pl. 84), a relatively modest but significant concentration of images and texts in a natural rock shelter a short distance up the main ascent. A short distance southwest of the Nile Valley terminus of the 'Alamat Tal Road is the “Wadi of Amenemhat (*t3 in.t Imn-m-h3.t*), so named in a Twenty-First Dynasty inscription at the site, at the head of which is a tableau of First Dynasty date. The northernmost concentrations of Predynastic rock art in the Theban Western Desert have some association with the Arqub el-Baghla track, linking Western Naqada to the 'Alamat Tal Road. On a track branching off of the Wadi 'Alamat Road at the head of a wadi providing potential access to the Arqub el-Baghla track are several concentrations of images, most of them nautical in nature; near the mouth of this wadi is a large tableau of late Predynastic date. We have called this wadi the “Wadi of the Horus Qa-a” after a serekh of this First Dynasty ruler at the head of the wadi. Scattered through the middle desert west of Naqada near and on the track of the Arqub el-Baghla are several small inscription sites, most of late Predynastic date. The northernmost of these are the great crocodile tableau, the flotilla of “Elephant on the Mountain”, and several associated inscriptions in the Wadi Magar.

Marking Place in the Desert

Geology and Ideology

Rather than being the random scribbling of hunters and travellers suddenly seized by artistic ebullience in the desert, many Predynastic Egyptian inscriptions appear to have functioned as a means of creating meaningful space in the desert vastness. Just as later inscriptions could serve as landmarks in the desert (Smither 1945: pl. 3a, l. 12), so Predynastic sites appear often to acquire a particular character through the repetitious predominance of a particular genre of depiction. As did other groups in other areas of the world (compare David & Wilson 2002; Chippindale & Taçon 2000; Bender, ed., 1993; Bender 1999; Chippindale & Nash 2004), the Predynastic Upper Egyptians employed rock art not infrequently as a means of engaging with the desert landscapes, socializing the topography of their peregrinations beyond the Nile Valley by inscribing it with images of their worldview. Utilizing pictographs on the desert to link far flung areas in their annually changing physical world allowed mobile groups and travellers literally to brand their world through inscriptions, linking areas through a network of symbols.

The Rayayna Decorated Boulders

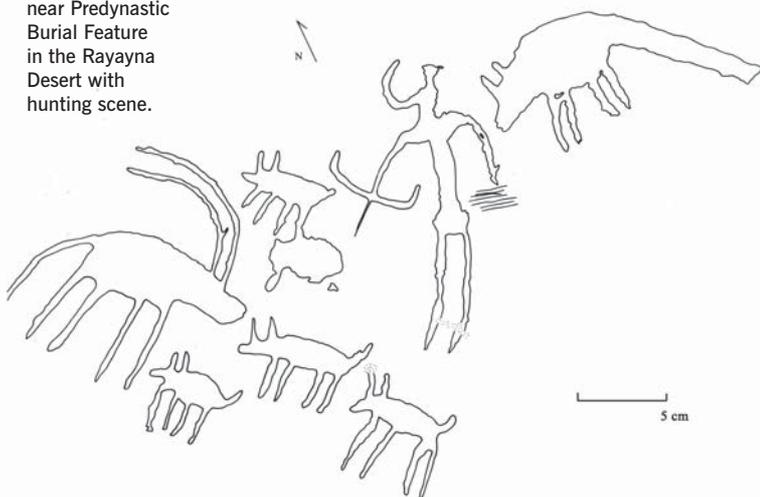
Although most of the rock art sites of the Theban Western Desert are associated with the many desert routes (both north/south and east/west arteries) crisscrossing the area, the rock art sites of the Rayayna Desert (fig. 2) are less sites on a route than markers of specific places within a wide swath of unmarked desert. A

Fig. 2
View of the
Rayayna Desert.



major route heading west to southern Kharga and the north/south tracks of the Darb Gallaba and Darb Bitân, cross in the Rayayna Desert, however most of the rock art sites are somewhat removed from the main tracks. Belonging to a hybrid culture, apparently the result of association with these long distance routes, the major rock art sites concentrate in the northern portions of the great bay of the high plateau that opens west of Rayayna and Rizeiqat. These sites include a dry stone burial feature with associated decorated boulders in the low desert and two cave sites at the base of the escarpment. The Rayaynan artists interacted with the surfaces and geological features of each site. While most of the rock art of the Theban Western Desert is carved on vertical surfaces, the Rayayna region is home to rare painted rock art of Predynastic date and a series of decorated boulders. Except for a single isolated example, all of these boulders are located in the northern half of the region, with the bulk of the boulders radiating out from a large burial feature, a dry stone superstructure constructed over a number of burial pits, some containing ossuary burials of a sort recently identified at Nabta Playa as well. Culturally the burials appear to belong to a rather cosmopolitan branch of the Tasian culture (D. Darnell 2002: 156-162). The pecked designs on the stones are both images of animals (ostriches, giraffes, horned quadrupeds, elephant) and often complicated, abstract designs, for which the closest parallels are in the rock art of Abka².

Fig. 3
Decorated boulder near Predynastic Burial Feature in the Rayayna Desert with hunting scene.

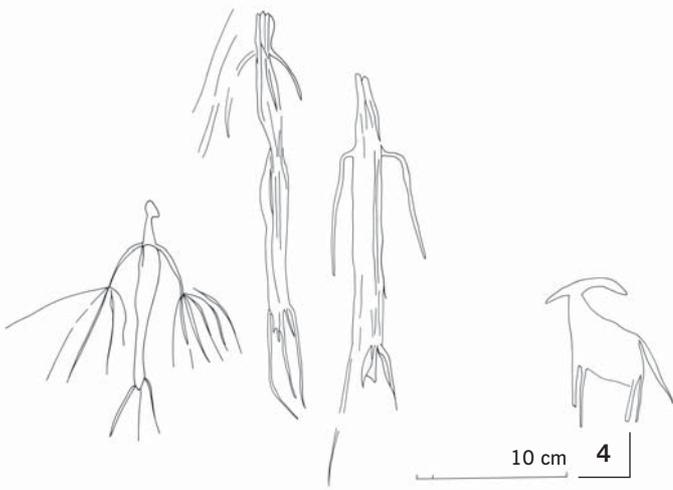


The only boulder with a clear human figure depicts a hunting scene (fig. 3). A hunter holding a bow in one hand and a clutch of arrows in the other appears to wear an elaborate (feathered?) headdress. To the left, a group of hunting dogs heads towards an oryx who turns to face them. To the right, behind and slightly above the hunter is a quadruped with rounded ears and a large, drooping tail, consistent with depictions of *lycaon pictus*, the Cape Hunting Dog. In later Predynastic iconography, the Cape Hunting Dog can evoke elite human hunting activity (Hendrickx 2006), the tail of the beast ultimately becoming an important attribute of human hunters. The Rayayna hunter wears no such tail, but the close proximity of the Cape hunting dog (compare Cervicek 1974: fig. 391) suggests an equating of the two figures, an early stage in the iconographic development that leads to the dog-tail wearing hunters of the Hunter's Tableau at Was-ha-Waset and the Hunters Palette (see below).

The Cave of the Hands

In the northwestern corner of the region is the "Cave of the Hands." The site reveals some limited occupation, restricted primarily to ash deposits, including minimal ceramic and botanical material, atop a shelf of stone to the right of the entrance. The site includes both carved and painted decoration, most of the former limited to exterior surfaces, the latter exclusively on the ceiling of the cavity. Some images at the cave site are paralleled in the imagery of the Rayayna boulders, revealing at least some overlap in the otherwise divergent iconography of the two sites. The main decorated areas of the cave site are: 1) blocks fallen from the upper strata of the gebel, lying in front of the cave, as well as the outer face of the cave entrance; 2) two narrow crevices leading into the gebel to the left of the main entrance to the cave, one giving access to the rear portion of the cavity; and 3) the ceiling of the cave. The images on the blocks in front of the cave (Area 1) are primarily quadrupeds—mostly giraffes, along with other desert animals—other desert fauna, and boats; in one area to the left of the cave opening is a

2. Darnell 2002: 160-161; Hellström *et al.* 1970, particularly corpus group X; similar imagery appears at Bir Nakheila—for now see Osing *et al.* 1982: 39-40 and pl. 9, nos. 47-48 (publication by the Theban Desert Road Survey forthcoming).



series of small hands carved in shallow “sunk” relief. Within the crevices (Area 2) are quadrupeds—including an elephant—and human figures, several of the latter being oddly stylized and altered, some elongated, others with enormous hands (**fig. 4**). In a boat stands a figure with erect phallus, arms curved above his head, wearing a plume. Several images of fish appear, along with abstract designs, similar to those on the Rayayna boulders. The ceiling of the cave (Area 3) is almost entirely covered with red prints of hands (most in outline, **see fig. 5**, but a few made by dipping the hand in pigment), probable evidence of far western influences³. A single large figure in red, depicting what appears to be a running man with elaborate headdress, also appears on the ceiling.

Parallels in style and content in the decoration of the three areas reveal that the rock of the cave site represents a unified decorative plan. Depictions of the terrestrial world dominate the outer portions of the site (Area 1); crevices (Area 2) connecting the cave and the living rock with the outer, “mundane”, world reveal images of organic, terrestrial reality ceding place to inorganic designs, fish, and odd human figures—a world of sight (Area 1) transforms into a world of imagination (Area 2), humans become humanoid, quadrupeds yield to fish, as one slips into the hillside. Within the cave (Area 3), red hands and a large humanoid figure draw attention to the ceiling—for the first time in the decorative scheme, attention is focused directly above the head of the viewer. When examining the rock of the Cave of the Hands site, one passes from the diurnal world outside into a transformed space inside the cave—the natural gives way to the supernatural.

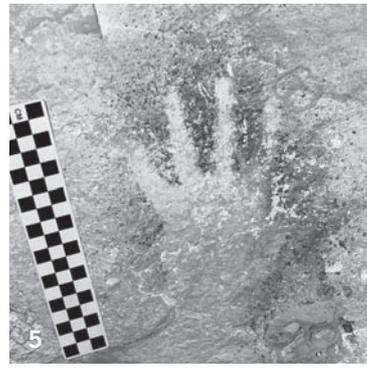


Fig. 4
Human figure with exaggerated hands from the southernmost crack leading into the Cave of the Hands.

Fig. 5
Negative hand print from the ceiling of the Cave of the Hands.

Fig. 6
Decorated boulder near Predynastic Burial Feature in the Rayayna Desert showing two addorsed giraffes head to tail.

The Rayaynan rock art shows some similarities with more standard Predynastic Upper Egyptian iconography. Giraffes are not uncommon on the boulders near the burial feature and in the decoration of the outer areas of the cave site. Addorsed giraffes, oriented head to tail, appear (**fig. 6**) as possible reflections of the two courses of the solar cycle. Nevertheless, the Rayayna sites demonstrate the primacy of location, namely that the geography and geology of the individual sites take precedence over any more broadly applicable iconography. The rock art marks places and characterizes those locations, interacting with the geologic peculiarities of the sites. Human ideology and the symbolic representation thereof seem more to augment the landscape than to transform it.

Niloticizing the Desert

Liminal Singularities and the Inundation

Already during the Naqada I Period, the Upper Egyptians appear to have concentrated much of their rock art oeuvre on images that blended the extremes of Upper Egyptian topography, Nile and desert. As on White Cross Line pottery (Asselberghs 1961: pl. 7 [fig. 11]; Hartmann 2008) and incised palettes (Asselberghs 1961: pl. 46), desert and Nilotic hunting can appear together in rock art (*e.g.* Morrow & Morrow 2002: 42D and 226-227 [= Winkler 1938: pls. 13-14]) and these balanced opposites may combine in images of hunters within vessels, at times with the desert game present as well⁴. At times a simple juxtaposition of boat and game animals, both with and without depic-

3. Darnell 2002: 161 and pls. 90-91; compare outlines of hands at Farafra, Wadi Sora and Uweinat: Huyge 2003: 67-68; Barich 1999: 37-39; Le Quellec & Huyge 2008: 92; Le Quellec 2008: 28-31.

4. Váhala & Cervicek 1999: pls. 48 (no. 183.26, apparently holding a throw-stick), 80 (nos. 316-317), 92 (no. 362); Adams 2000: pl. 27a; Morrow and Morrow 2002: 171A.

tions of humans, at times with an animal occupying the boat⁵ and a juxtaposition of boat with hunters nearby⁶ may convey the same concept. Desert animals may not only appear alongside Nilotic scenes, but desert animals and Nilotic animals may mingle near boats (e.g. Cervicek 1974: fig. 270) and desert game may be hunted directly from boats (Winkler 1938: pl. 23 [fig. 1]; Morrow & Morrow 2002: 49). Boats themselves may even seem to hunt land animals (Rohl 2000: 82-83) and boatmen may carry the bows and throw sticks of their desert hunts (Winkler 1938: pl. 22 [fig. 2], 34 [fig. 24], 37 [figs. 51 and 53]³⁸ [figs. 58 and 61]).

The Hunters Tableau and Hippopotamus Hunting at WHW

As at all of the sites, depictions at WHW reveal both a mingling of desert and Nile Valley imagery within a group or tableau, as well as a use of detailed depictions of Nilotic hunting to transform their desert setting and

rocky medium. In the great Hunters Tableau at WHW (fig. 7), desert huntsmen appear with hounds and desert game. They wear animal tails, probably those of Cape Hunting Dogs (see Hendrickx 2006) and caps, probably of leather, adorned with ostrich feathers, like those of the hunting parties on the Hunters Palette (Spencer 1980: pl. 63), the closest parallel in rock art being a mace-wielding hunter from the Eastern Desert (Winkler 1938: pl. 22 [fig. 1]). Many hold a looped object (cf. Winkler 1938: pl. 24 [figs. 1 and 3]), perhaps a rope, an abbreviated version of a lasso. Nearby, others of their kind appear with desert game, but have images of two hippopotami (*en face*), as though etched on their garments (Darnell 2002: pl. 88). The WHW hunters, wearing hippopotami and hunting desert game, bring together the differing hunting zones; as with certain female images of Predynastic date⁷, the WHW hunters bear hunting images on their bodies. The iconography of Predynastic rock art appears to have entered, through tattooing and leather tooling, the world of Predynastic ritual performance.

Employing Nilotic imagery at desert sites and consciously combining riverine and desert motifs within a single image or grouping of images allowed for a Niloticization of the desert, an incorporation of the desert margins into the ever more important world of the increasingly complex cultures of the Nile Valley. The image of a hunter and his vessel, and the hippopotamus he has harpooned and is about to dispatch (fig. 8), – along with other images of harpooned hippopotami and lone depictions of the animals, – makes of the background the waters of the Nile, thereby transforming the gebel medium into a simulacrum of the Nile. The rock art

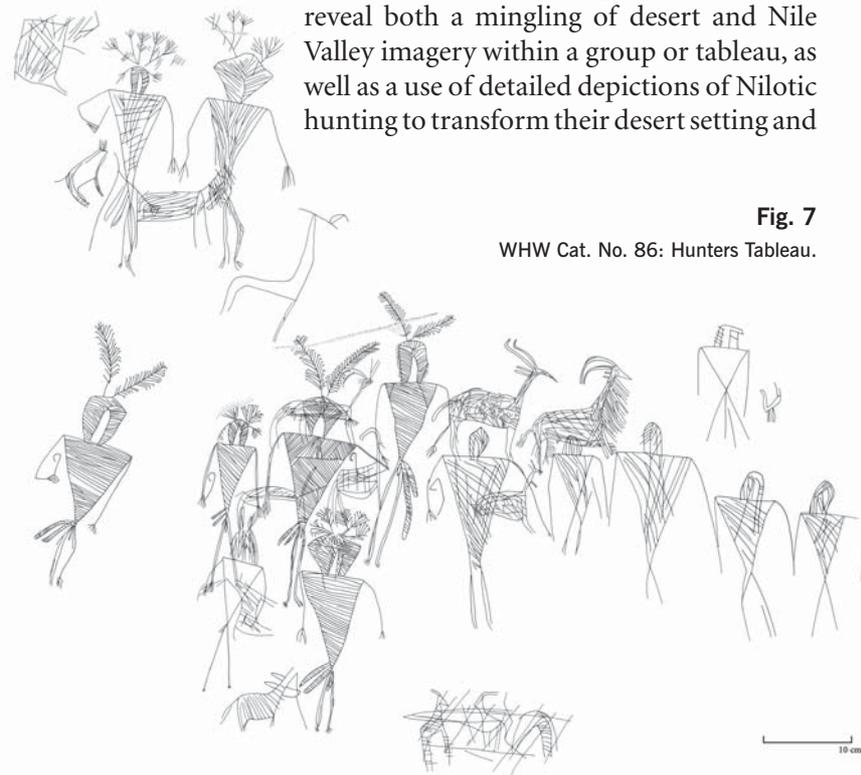


Fig. 7

WHW Cat. No. 86: Hunters Tableau.

5. Winkler 1939: pl. 51 (fig. 1); Dunbar 1941: pls. 3 (fig. 7), 7 (fig. 29), 9 (fig. 37), 10 (fig. 40), 11 (fig. 50), 21 (figs. 102-103); Engelmayer 1965: pls. 11 (fig. 1), 45 (fig. 2), 48 (fig. 1), 49 (fig. 2), 53-54, 56, 58 (fig. 1), 59 (fig. 2), 60 and 63 (fig. 2); Hellström 1970: pl. 48, no. 2; Cervicek 1974: figs. 268, 270, 274, 289(?), 359-360 and 471, pl. 6 (fig. 12); Otto & Buschendorf-Otto 1993: pp. 7, 123; Váhala & Cervicek 1999: pls. 29 (no. 102), 38 (no. 136), 39 (no. 144), 42 (no. 161), 57 (no. 221), 73 (no. 285), 74 (no. 287), 79 (no. 311), 83 (no. 328), 84 (no. 334), 134 (no. 530), 165 (no. 649A), 191 (no. 757 and 761B), 192 (no. 761C), 197 (no. 781), 206 (no. 813); Morrow & Morrow 2002: 35B, 87B and H, 91E, 94A, 103B, 110G, 111C, 141B, 143D, 159B, 160, 162D, 173B, 208C, 209D; this continues on Early Dynastic sealings, e.g. Quibell 1904: pl. 6 (figs. 102-104).

6. Winkler 1938: pls. 15, 19 (fig. 3), 22 (fig. 2); Váhala & Cervicek 1999: pl. 82 (no. 326); Cervicek 1974: fig. 73; Morrow and Morrow 2002: 41B, 137.

7. Among the several images possible, compare MMA 07.228.71 and Turin S.1146 (these figures and others will be the subjects of a forthcoming study by S. Hendrickx).

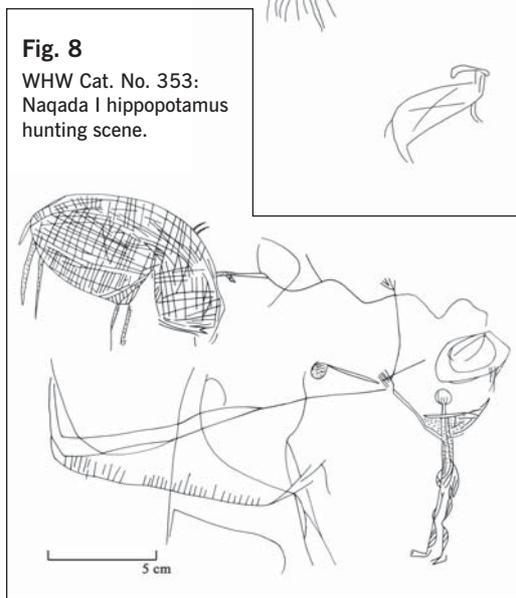


Fig. 8
 WHW Cat. No. 353:
 Naqada I hippopotamus
 hunting scene.

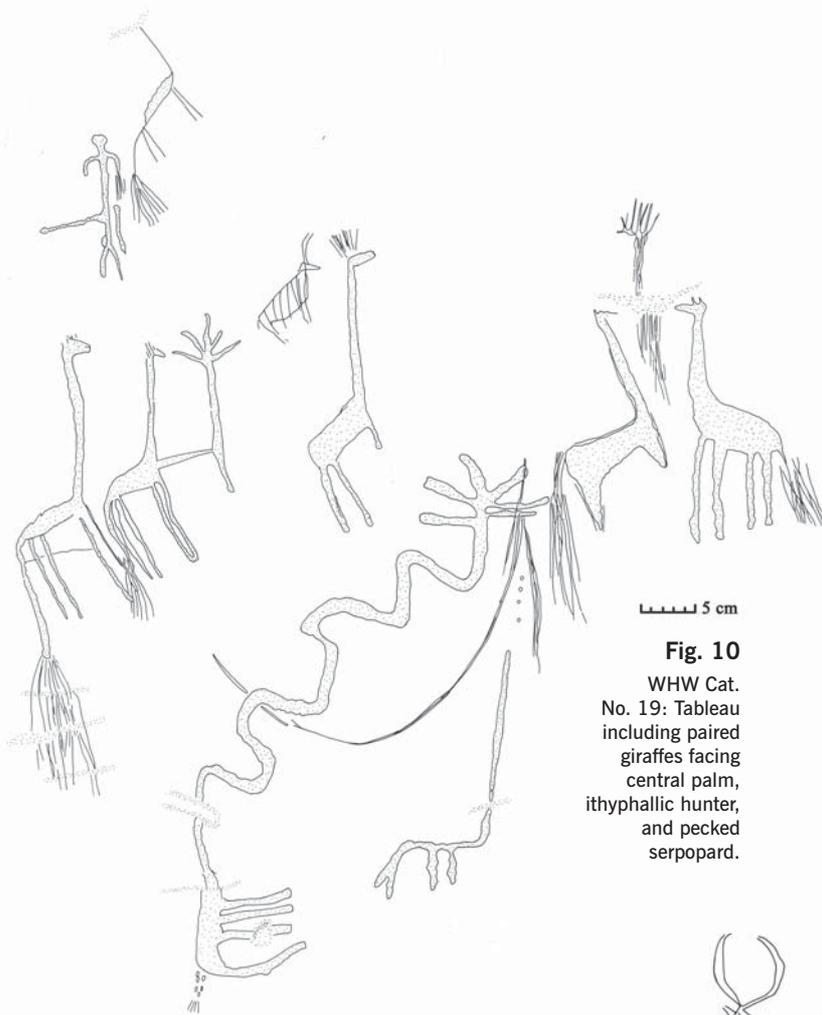


Fig. 10
 WHW Cat.
 No. 19: Tableau
 including paired
 giraffes facing
 central palm,
 ithyphallic hunter,
 and pecked
 serpopard.

in which symbols of desert and Nile interact and in which Nilotic imagery interacts with the desert surfaces, create a liminal singularity in the desert, and an evocation of the one time each year when the Nile could indeed touch the gebel in many portions of the Nile Valley—the Inundation.

Human Intervention in the Solar Cycle and Solar Self-Propulsion

Most of the early Predynastic rock art of Upper Egypt is already symbolic, not purely representational, with a predominance of zoomorphic petroglyphs. An examination of rock art at “Vulture Rock” in the Wadi Hilal east of Elkab suggests that the expression of religious imagery, rather than hunting magic or totemism, is the motivation behind much of the rock art of Predynastic Upper Egypt (Huyge 1999: 48-58; Huyge 2002: 192-206). The orientation and development of rock art at the Elkab site suggest a solar importance of the giraffe image,

in keeping with the concept of the giraffe as an early “solar carrier,” surviving as the later *w3s*-scepter (Westendorf 1966a: 37 and 84-85; 1966b: 207-208; Huyge 2002: 199-200). The solar significance of the giraffe is prominent at WHW, perhaps one of the most striking examples being WHW 19 (fig. 10), a large group of related images, dominated by the depiction of a serpopard-like giraffe with undulating, serpentine neck and a sun burst-like head⁸. The unusual animal is associated with an unusual hunter, a man with bow and arrows and prominent phallus⁹.

An image not infrequently encountered in the area is of the giraffe with a tree, here with doubled giraffe, as known from palettes (Asselberghs 1961: pls. 73, 87, 89 and 91 [fig. 161];

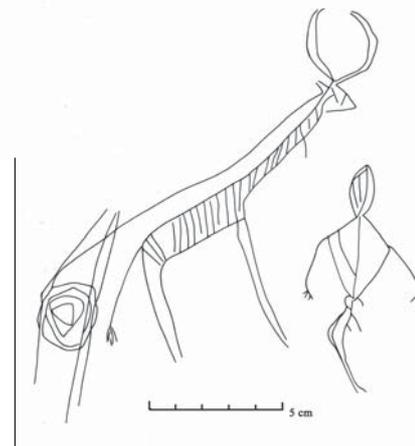


Fig. 9
 WHW Cat.
 No. 328:
 Hunter with
 restrained
 giraffe(?).

8. Solar disks with rays appear on C-Ware vessels – compare Payne 1993: 63 and fig. 30, no. 424. A Naqada I bowl with two mountains in the centre and water on both sides shows two radiate sun disks to either side of the mountains (yet another indicator of the duality of the solar cycle) – Westendorf 1966a: pl. 15, no. 27 and pp. 37-38; Piankoff and Rambova, *Mythological Papyri*, p. 31; Petrie 1923: pl. 23, no. 55 = Petrie 1896: pl. 29 no. 58.

9. For the ithyphallic figure compare the apparent ithyphallic hunter, perhaps with bow, in Váhala & Cervicek 1999: pl. 73 (no. 283 = Cervicek 1974: pl. 5 [fig. 1]); Morrow & Morrow 2002: 181A.

with opposed gerenuks flanking the palm, Spencer 1980: pl. 64). More commonly at WHW and a nearby site, a single giraffe faces a palm or other tree, even attached to the base of the tree (**fig. 11**). This group, known from incised pottery as well (Harvey 1996: 373-378; the image appears to the south as well—compare Hellström *et al.* 1970: pl. 54, figure 5), may lead ultimately to an interchange of the giraffe with the royal serekh, as in a small Early Dynastic tableau at Gebel Tjauti (Darnell *et al.* 2002: 20). Although the group may indicate a plantation (Dreyer 1998: 85), the palm does appear as a general symbol of royalty (compare the palm-from-above on the Scorpion mace head and the Narmer palette). Whatever the exact interpretation here, in the Gebel Tjauti inscription the serekh substitutes for the giraffe. Royal imagery can interchange with solar imagery. As human society during the middle Predynastic became more complex, so some petroglyphic solar mages began to achieve self-propulsion in a solar boat, and the solar giraffes required human control. Human figures sometimes appear as tamers or handlers of the zoomorphic solar carriers, often in the form of men who hold giraffes by ropes (**fig. 9**),¹⁰ later descendants of whom entwine the necks of serpopards on

Fig. 11
WHW Cat.
No. 241: Giraffe
attached to plant.



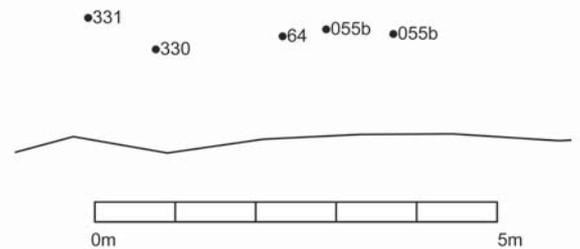
10. A close parallel to **fig. 9** is Winkler 1938: pl. 29 [fig. 1]. See also Winkler 1939: pls. 53 (fig. 1) and 54 (fig. 1); Váhala & Červíček 1999: nos. 24 and 25; Scharff 1929: 150-151 and pl. 14; Dunbar 1941: pl. 3 (figs. 7 and 8); Asselberghs 1961: pl. 17; Darnell 2002: 150.

11. Keimer 1935: 172-173; Winkler 1939: pl. 14 (fig. 2); Westendorf 1979: 432-35; Váhala and Červíček 1999: no. 334; Darnell 2003: 112; Winkler 1939: pl. 14, fig. 2; Morrow & Morrow 2002: 52P and 79A; Engelmayer: 1965: pls. 6, 8, 16 and 23; Váhala & Červíček 1999: pls. 77 and 149; Otto & Buschendorf-Otto 1993: 141.



Fig. 12

Rock face with concentration of towed boats (above); location chart showing the placement of towed boat inscriptions at WHW (below).



the later Narmer Palette (Asselberghs 1961: pl. 95). The earlier visual descriptions of the cosmic cycle become images of human intervention and earlier hunting scenes develop into more clearly expressed depictions of the subjugation of chaos, both terrestrial and cosmic. In addition to images of boats alone, boats may also be added to earlier giraffe images (Červíček 1974: fig. 71; Engelmayer 1965: pl. 49, fig. 2), the earlier solar carriers thereby receiving a “modernized” visual indication of mobility. Transitional images of the old animal carrier and the “new” solar bark together, animals—particularly giraffes—riding in boats as depictions of solar carriers in control of their own movements, also appear in Upper Egyptian rock art; harbingers of these nautical and theriomorphic numina present already by the Naqada I Period;¹¹ occasionally the boat may seem to ride atop

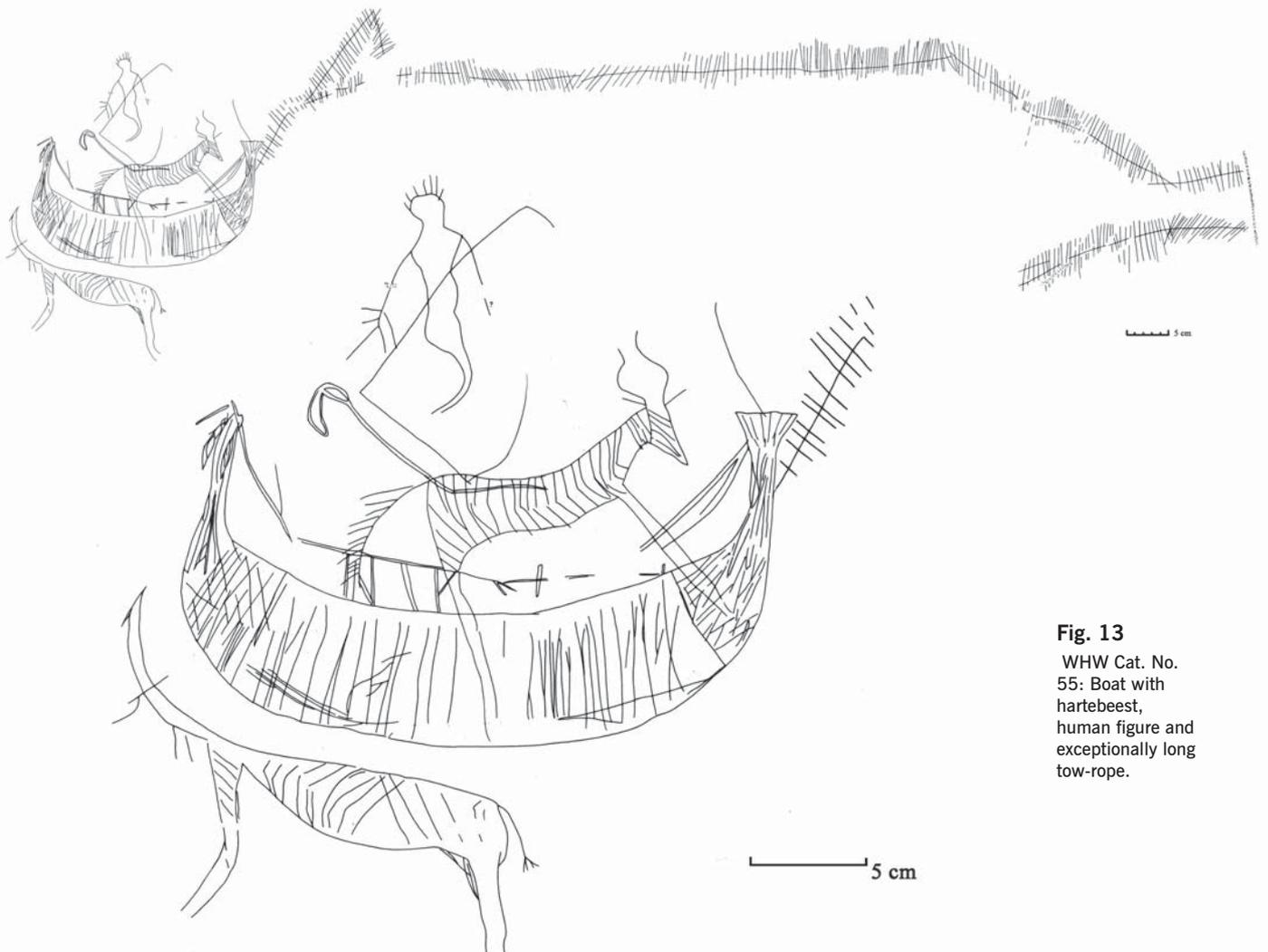


Fig. 13
 WHW Cat. No.
 55: Boat with
 hartebeest,
 human figure and
 exceptionally long
 tow-rope.

the animal (*cf.* the boats atop crocodiles, Payne 1993: no. 600; J.C. Darnell *et al.* 2002: 23-34). Both the “tamed” and nautical carriers, through the images of the handlers and the boats respectively, allude to the human world.

Eventually, the boats themselves may have handlers. Images of boats with long towropes are clustered together at a portion of the WHW site, with the vessels being towed toward a particular vertical cleft in the rock face (**fig. 12**). One of these towed vessels and associated images is particularly enlightening. Inscription WHW 55 (**fig. 13**) represents numerous interactions between iconography and geology. The boat itself follows folds in the rock, and the line of the gunwale is somewhat thicker than one might expect from standard depictions in rock art, so that the hull might coincide with a convex area of stone, the boat appearing as raised

relief on the rock face. The towrope is formed, as with other vessels at the site, by a long line indicating the rope and crossed with great regularity and rapid succession by vertical lines at times slanting up to the right.¹² That these indicate the towers themselves, human figures abbreviated as vertical lines like the crew members of other rock-art vessels, is clear from the presence of more detailed and larger “overseer” figures in nearby depictions of towed vessels at WHW (*cf.* Basch & Gorbea 1968: 179 and 191; Váhala & Červiček 1999: no. 307/B; J.C. Darnell 2003: 113) and by more clearly human figures in other depictions.¹³ In at least two instances these overseers wield what appear to be the Predynastic forerunners of the flail ensigns of pharaonic naval officers. Soon after leaving the vessel, the towrope in WHW 55 encounters a crack and irregularity in the stone, angling up and then down in order to avoid the obstacle.

12. Compare Engelmayer 1965: pls. 21 (figs. 3-4), 23 (fig. 2), 24 (fig. 3b) and 51 (fig. 2); Červiček 1974: fig. 84, pl. 1 (fig. 2); Morrow & Morrow 2002: 36F, 41A, 98A, 102A, 103B, 114A, 158A, 169A; the towrope may also be disconnected from the boat image—compare Engelmayer 1965: pl. 16 (fig. 5b-c); the towers may also be omitted – see Morrow and Morrow 2002: 83A.

13. Winkler 1938: pl. 12 (fig. 1), pl. 33 (fig. 5 = Gatto this volume); Morrow & Morrow 2002: 91A, 226 (fig. 18 = Winkler 1938: pl. 14).

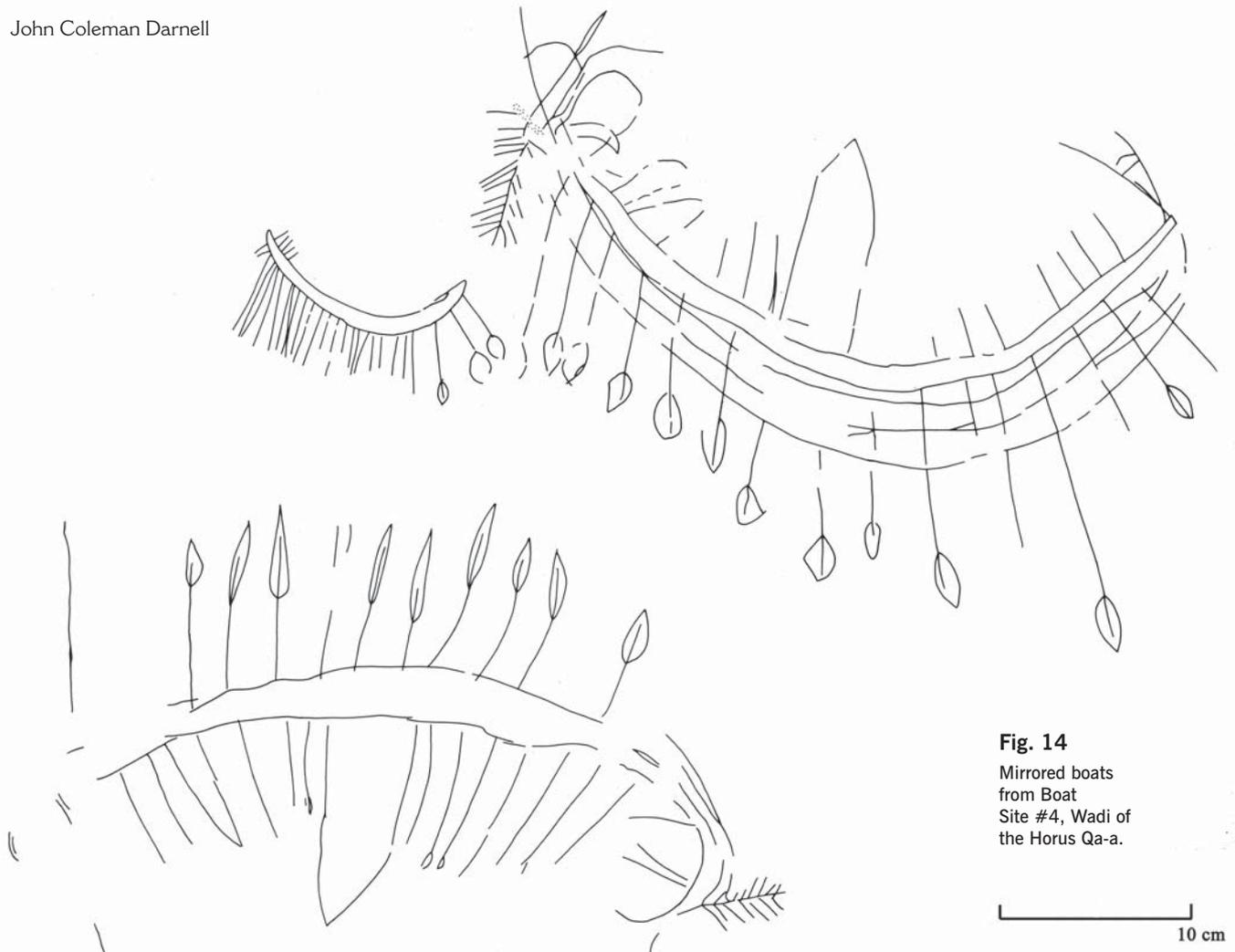


Fig. 14
Mirrored boats
from Boat
Site #4, Wadi of
the Horus Qa-a.

10 cm

After two less abrupt changes in angle, the rope enters into a fissure in the rock, which corresponds to an angle change in the rock face as well.

At first sight, the ancient artist appears to have indicated that the towers are hauling the vessel into the cleft in the rock (for the long tow-rope, compare Dunbar 1941: pl. 9 [fig. 34]). Fortunately, support for such a conclusion is the portion of another rope pulled by stick-like towers out of the same crack into which the tow-rope of WHW 55 is entering. The small bit of tow-rope emerging from the crack indicates that just as the one vessel enters into the opening into the mountain, another vessel emerges. For an Egyptian, the inevitable conclusion is that this is the earliest depiction of solar barks meeting prow to prow.

The dual nature of the solar bark already during the Predynastic Period finds additional support at Boat Site 4 in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a. The group of images centres on a depiction of two vessels, one inverted relative to both the viewer and the

other main vessel, of which it is essentially a mirror image (fig. 14; compare Engel-mayer 1965: pl. 24 [nos. 3a and 3b]). From an Egyptian perspective, the mirrored vessels, in a sense the updated descendents of the addorsed giraffes of Rayayna, probably represent the diurnal and nocturnal courses of the sun.

Additional evidence for the concept of a specific night bark during the Predynastic Period appears in WHW 55. The vessel there appears to have been carved at the same time as the hartebeest that rides in the boat. Although horned quadrupeds are not uncommon at WHW, in fact representing one of the most frequently attested mammals, the hartebeest is relatively rare, particularly such a clear and detailed depiction as we have in WHW 55 (for close parallel to the hartebeest—dated to Naqada IIa—see Friedman 1999: 60). The hartebeest in pharaonic religious iconography appears to represent the cardinal points of the Netherworld (Manassa 2006:117-118).

The Creation of Tableaux

Spontaneous Iconographic Attraction to Iconographic Syntax

The creators of rock art appear often to have tailored their work to match earlier petroglyphs near their own worksite. By the Naqada II Period this tendency of iconographic attraction results in groupings of particular images at given areas of larger sites, and in the almost exclusive dominance of a particular image or genre of image at other sites. Examples of iconographic attraction in the rock art of the Theban Western Desert abound: at WHW all boats with tow-ropes cluster in a single area (**fig. 12**); near the Hunters Tableau (**fig. 7**) are other depictions of similar hunters; certain areas of the rock face also contain concentrations of boat depictions, a feature also present at the head of the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a.

Wadi of the Horus Qa-a–Flotillas of Like Kind

Near the head of a wadi northeast of Gebel Tjauti, on a track branching north from the 'Alamat Tal Road, are a group of rock inscription sites revealing further and remarkably extreme evidence of the clustering of a particular genre of image in one area, and the dominance of one genre of representation at a site. At the head of the wadi are five concentrations of rock inscriptions. Iconographic parallels – supported by associated ceramic material – date the majority of the predominately nautical images to the Naqada II Period, a temporal restriction heightening the interest of the differentiation of boat typologies amongst the sites. Images of boats dominate all of these sites, although a number of geometric and zoomorphic images are present as well. The five major sites in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a are not separate agglomerations of interchangeable images, however, but form a group of sites, each with a remarkable iconographic specialization. A particular style of boat and other decorative elements characterize each of the sites in the ensemble – so at Site 2, vessels with



Fig. 15

Concentration of large sunk-relief boats from Boat Site #2, Wadi of the Horus Qa-a.

large, domed central cabins and palm-frond(?) antennae (**fig. 15**) predominate and abound.¹⁴ Groupings of images at various points along the extensive main face of WHW are close parallels to the more complete segregation of iconographies in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a.

Preconceived Iconographic Attraction and Iconographic Syntax–Arqub el-Baghla

At the end of the Naqada II Period, the composers of even larger and more complex rock art tableaux grouped examples and derivatives of the earlier icons into meaningful – if at times repetitive – compositions. Even on small objects such groups occur, with particular images occupying an accepted proper position in different compositions. Images of animals marching in regularized files, with a proper ordering of certain specific groups and symbols, may take the earlier concept of iconographic attraction to a formal extreme, creating an iconographic syntax out of the earlier iconographic attraction by the late Naqada II Period.

The image of birds marching in lines, beneath the larger images of a stork followed by a crocodile (**fig. 16**), recalls the decoration of the Davis comb, with a stork and serpent followed

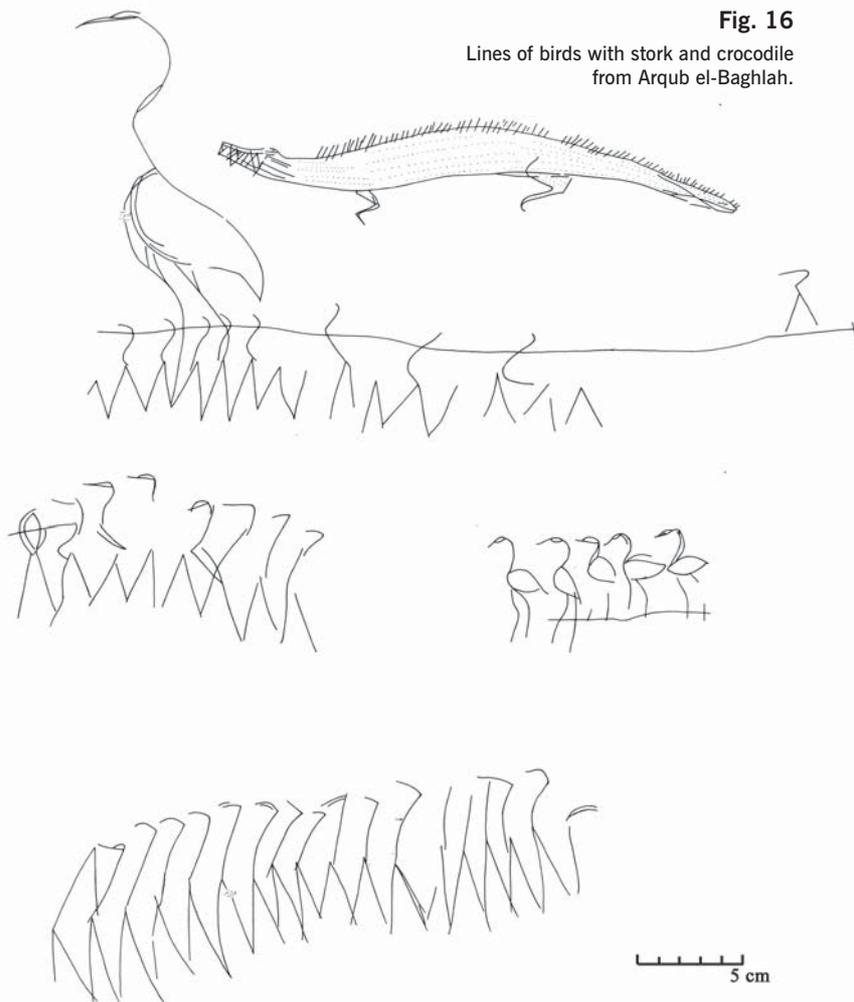
¹⁴. Compare Winkler 1938: pls. 37 (no. 57) and 40 (no. 82); for the antennae compare the prow ornaments in Winkler, 1938: pl. 36 (nos. 35-39); Resch 1967: pl. 16.

by a giraffe as a heading. The initial bird with following crocodile suggests the introductory bird with serpent of the Davis comb (Asselberghs 1961: pl. 28), the Abu Zeidan knife handle (Asselberghs 1961: pl. 29), and the Carnarvon knife handle (Asselberghs 1961: pl. 32 [fig. 44]), the latter also – as here – omitting the serpent beneath the bird’s beak. A certain syntax of imagery exists on a number of portable objects of the late Predynastic Period¹⁵ and could be transferred to the rock art, if it did not indeed already exist there. So in rows of animals marching in horizontal lines by kind, elephants – usually trampling or standing atop serpents (Huyge 2004: 832-833) – occupy the upper register; a bird with a serpent rearing beneath the beak heads the second register; a dog or a star may close a row of animals.

The bird with serpent heading the second register in lines of animals appears to signify the triumph of order over chaos. When the giraffe follows, as on the Davis comb, the image of the solar cycle follows a group symbolizing order. That one is to read the group of bird-with-serpent plus giraffe as “triumph of solar order” is probable, and finds support in the Scorpion tableau, where the bird-with-serpent heads the image of ruler-with-enemy – altering the second element in the group transforms “triumph of solar order” into “triumph of human order,” the Predynastic equivalent of the New Kingdom loyalist hymn heading “victory be to the ruler!” (Epigraphic Survey 1994: commentary p. 35; Manassa 2003: 127). The combining of the bird-with-serpent with following giraffe into the giraffe with serpent on the vessel Berlin 15129 (Asselberghs 1961: pls. 17-19), and the apparent omission of the serpent here and on the Carnarvon knife handle, suggest that the individual signs were well known within certain circles; the use of these images in rock art at desert road sites suggests that this knowledge was rather widely distributed, or at least that the practitioners of this proto-writing were well and widely travelled.

Fig. 16

Lines of birds with stork and crocodile from Arqub el-Baghlah.



The Creation of Tableaux – Human Order Mimics Cosmic Order

Vignettes of the Jubilee Cycle

By the late Naqada II Period the symbolic imagery developed as visual expression of the solar cycle, first finding elaborate expression in rock art, becomes a means of describing the human world and its political organization. Both the Gebelein Linen (Donadoni Roveri *et al.* 1994: 21-22, figs. 4-7) and Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis (Quibell & Green 1902: pls. 75-79) preserve early representations of a thereafter much-repeated cycle of images associated with what would soon become the royal Jubilee (Williams & Logan 1987: 245-285; Adams & Cialowicz 1997: 34-48), a juxtaposition of

15. Bénédite 1918; Cialowicz 1992; Huyge 2004; Hendrickx 2006; repetitive lines of birds also appear in A-Group iconography – Williams 1986: 157, fig. 57, 239, fig. 89k and pl. 9, fig. d; Williams 1989: 20, fig. 5c and 102, fig. 59f.

hunting and warfare imagery (already present for Naqada I—*cf.* Dreyer *et al.*, 2003: 81 and 84, fig. 5 and pl. 15a) in a ritual setting involving a nautical procession. Although not generally recognized, similar tableaux—scenes of riverine processions, hunting and associations of flotillas and animal groups—appear at rock art sites in Upper Egypt and Nubia (*cf.* Basch & Gorbea 1968: 35-36; Váhala & Červiček 1999: nos. 170, 172, 221 and 287).

Some individual elements of such a cycle begin to appear at rock art sites already during the Naqada I Period, large vessels with their tenders being prominent amongst these,¹⁶ in some examples accompanying scenes of ritual activity. By the late Naqada II Period, contemporaneous with Tomb 100, large tableaux begin to appear at rock art sites, the most accomplished of these being the great tableau near the mouth of the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a. Already redolent of the ruler and his activities, the rock art tableau

acquires multiple layers of royal imagery during the Naqada III Period, becoming an even more insistent manifesto of royal ritual power in the great Wadi Magar tableau.

Lassoing a Bull

A scene at WHW evokes later tableaux, depicting a single ritual event in relation to a summarily indicated structure and a pair of vessels (fig. 17). At the top of the scene a crescent shaped vessel and a smaller, low-sterned “galley” hover above the representation of a man holding a bull by a rope attached to the horns, in front of a structure. The whole composition suggests a snippet from the great cycle of the Predynastic Period, with a close parallel in the scene of bull roping near the barks in the Painted Tomb at Hierakonpolis. An opening sequence in the meat offering ritual of lassoing the *ng3*-bull (Decker 1980: 938; Otto 1950: 172-174), the ritual may relate to slaughtering

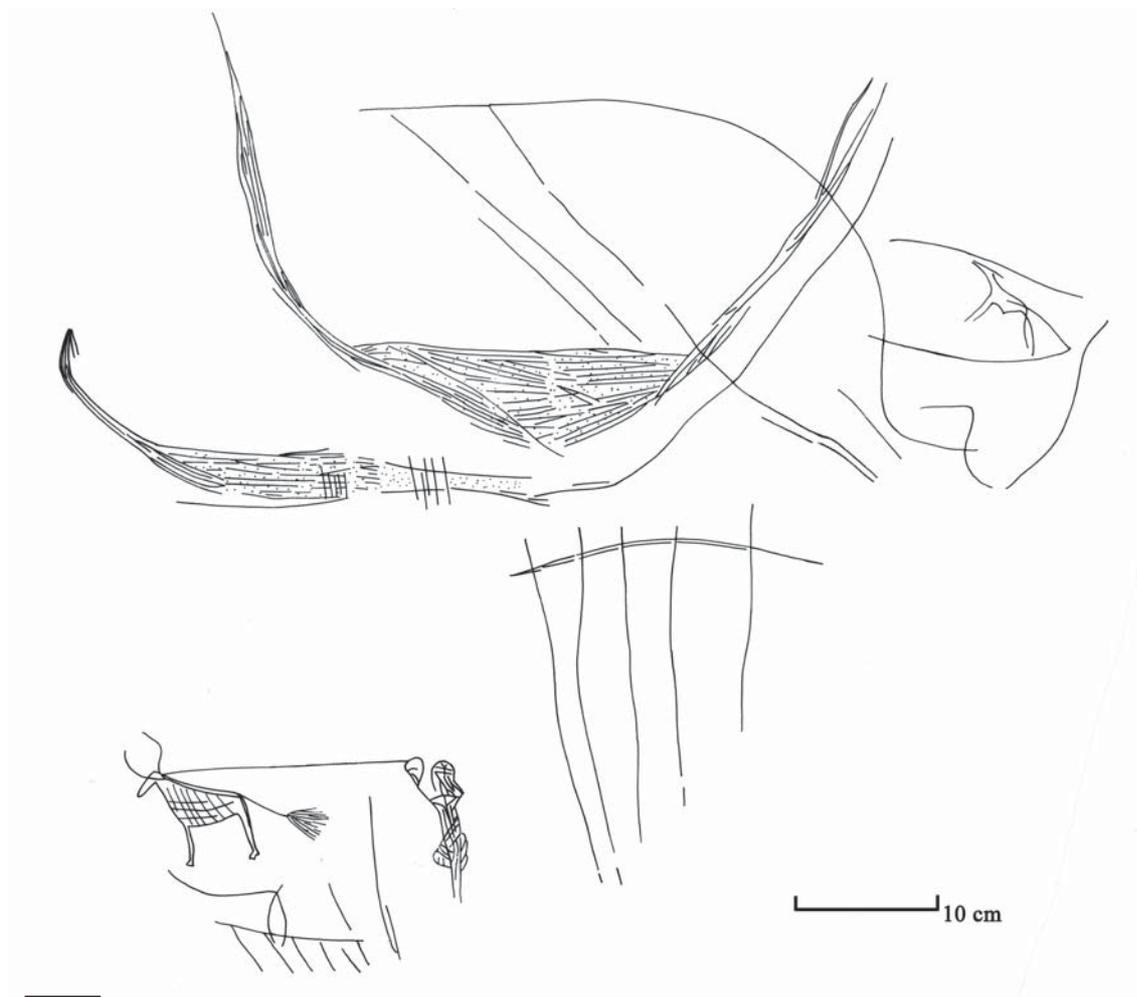


Fig. 17
WHW Cat. No. 334: Tableau with flotilla and man lassoing bull in front of structure.

16. Compare Darnell 2007: 33 (fig. 3.3, from WHW); Váhala & Červiček 1999: pl. 238 (no. 930).



Fig. 18
Tableau with
boat containing
a standard of
"Elephant on the
Mountain".

of bulls *m wsh.t*, "in the broad-court" (Kitchen 1979: 510, ll. 1-12.); indeed the WHW depiction of the lassoing occurs in front of the façade of a structure, thus *m wsh.t*.

The man appears to have long hair streaming behind, holding the rope high (compare Ayrton & Loat 1911: pl. 27 [fig. 13]). The oddly "busy" internal details of the man are characteristic of human figures on C-Ware vessels (compare Petrie 1920: pl. 18 [no. 74]). The horizontal lines with diagonal crossing lines in-filling the bull are also consistent with a Naqada I date for the tableau (compare Petrie & Quibell 1896: pl. 29, no. 91). Although the lowered head of the bull recalls certain Naqada II examples (Berger 1992: 108, fig. 1; Wildung 1997: 43, no. 34 [see Hendrickx 2002: 305]; Quibell 1904: pl. 32, no. 11733), the WHW bull lacks the slightly bent legs and apparent forward running motion of those later images. The closest parallel is carved on a slate palette from Naqada tomb 1515 (Ashmolean Museum 95.825; Petrie and Quibell 1896: pl. 51 [no. 15a]; Payne 1993: 227, no. 1868), Sequence Date 31-34 (Petrie 1920: pl. 51), early Naqada I Period. The boats, however, seem more part of the Naqada II world (the upper vessel corresponding to the "crescent" boats of D-Ware pottery decoration), although they appear to be original elements of the tableau. A date at the cusp of the Naqada I/II Periods seems most likely, corresponding to the date of the Gebelein Shroud.

Although the relatively small surfaces of C-Ware vessels and their D-Ware successors constrain the content and scope of artists and dictate the style and complexity of the painted iconography, the more expansive surfaces of rock art sites, and the textiles to which the Gebelein shroud attests, allowed for the creation of complex tableaux, and therefore allowed for more subtle and extended strings of iconographic communication. Iconographic attraction continues in painted pottery and at rock art sites, but truly complex iconographic syntax – multiple restatements of a series of concepts in a visual and interpretive sequence – is the ideological contribution of Upper Egyptian and Lower Nubian rock art.

The Vignette of Elephant-on-the-Gebel in the Wadi Magar

At least one vignette, however, reveals the addition of what appears to be a reference to Late Predynastic royalty, and reveals that these vignettes ultimately belonging to the later Jubilee Cycle alone can have some royal associations is more than likely, and finds strong support in a vignette from the Wadi Magar (fig. 18). In addition to the large tableau discussed below, a smaller tableau, of late Naqada II date, is located on an eminence about one quarter of a kilometre to the north. The smaller tableau shows an animal-headed boat, with twin cabins and large, round-bladed steering oars (compare Červíček 1974: fig. 474). The prow

of the vessel reveals a series of internal protrusions, recalling the prow of the bark of Sokar (for the Henu-bark-like protrusions compare Engelmayer 1965: pl. 12 [no. 4]). From the deck of the vessel emerges a pole, which has a large standard showing a large elephant atop a four-peaked mountain. Below the vessel is a smaller, high-prowed boat; behind is another, smaller image of the elephant atop the mountain. A close parallel for this elephant standard on a boat is the elephant standard on a painted Marl A1 vessel in the Ashmolean Museum (No. 865; Payne 1993: 107-108 [Naqada IId1]; Asselberghs 1961: pls. 10-11) and the elephant-on-mountain standards atop vessels on the Metropolitan Knife Handle (see the displayed facsimile in the MMA; Friedman 2004: 162). The elephant on the mountain, appearing on the Coptos colossus at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, at Gebel Tjauti, and in tomb Uj at Abydos may represent the name of a Predynastic Upper Egyptian ruler (J.C. Darnell *et al.* 2002: 17-18 and 20-24; Dreyer 1998: 175-180;

Kahl 2003: 129-130; Anselin 2004: 554-562; Jiménez-Serrano 2004: 847-858). With Hierakonpolis, Naqada is a centre of Predynastic depictions of elephants. Without the rounded ears of Naqada I elephants and the butterfly ears and jutting jaw of early Naqada II elephants, the shapes of the Wadi Magar elephants, with ears large and lines within the bodies and large and prominent tusks, are parallel to the representations that resume in a royal context during the Naqada IID Period (Friedman 2004).

Tableaux of Royal Ritual Power

The Late Naqada II Period Tableau in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a

Near the mouth of the wadi of the Horus Qa-a is one of the most artistically accomplished and complexly composed of the rock art tableaux of the Theban Western Desert, a true rock art version of the Jubilee and parallel to the decoration of Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis (fig. 19). Dating

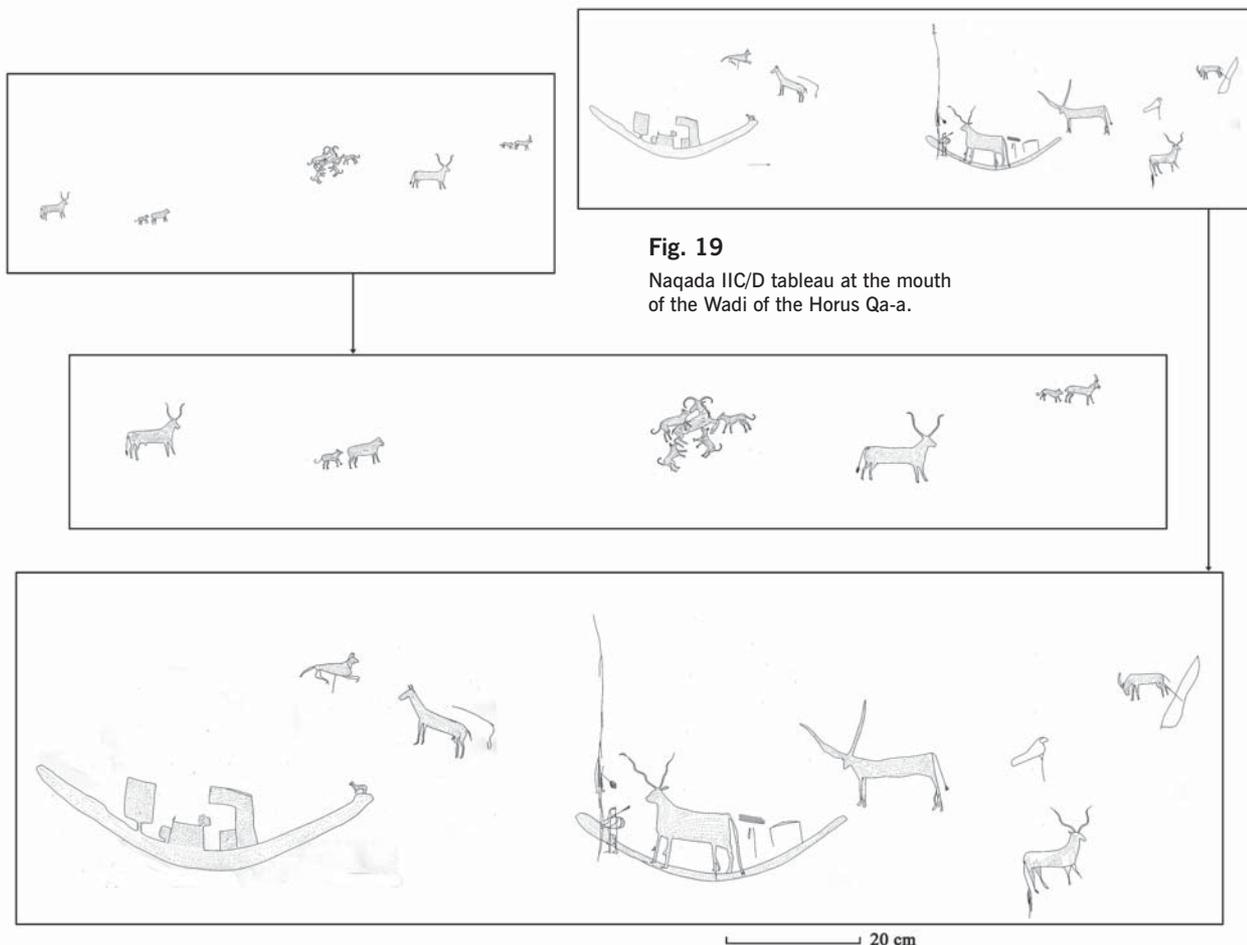


Fig. 19
Naqada IIC/D tableau at the mouth of the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a.

to the late Naqada II Period, the elements of the tableau contain a number of features unknown from other rock inscriptions, and the scene of four canids attacking a Barbary sheep is a masterpiece of Predynastic art.

The tableau divides into two portions: the initial left section, entirely zoomorphic, with an almost exclusive apparent motion from left to right; the concluding right section, is a combination of animals and the products of human ingenuity, along with a single human enemy, shot with an arrow and bound to a pole. Three scenes showing a bull on the left, facing right, behind a hunted animal, tie together the elements of the tableau. In the left portion of the tableau, exclusively the animal world, the bull is to the left of a dog following an animal (a calf in the left scene, an oryx in the middle scene); in the right portion of the tableau the bull is to the left of an animal caught in the trap of an unseen hunter.

The Left Portion of the Tableau

The left portion of the tableau is a balanced composition, with a scene of a bull facing a group composed of a canid following an animal – a calf to the left with an oryx to the right – all facing to the right, to either side of the circular group of a Barbary Sheep beset by four canids (fig 20). Close parallels for these canids, apparently examples of *lycaon pictus*, appear on the Naqada IId Decorated Ware

Fig. 20
Four dogs attacking a barbery sheep from the Naqada IIC/D tableau at the mouth of the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a.



vessels in the Ashmolean Museum 873 (Payne 1993: 108-109 and fig. 44; Gransard-Desmond 2004: 30-31) and Lyon Musée Guimet 1591 (Cénival 1973: 33, fig. 31; Durand *et al.* 1990: 59, fig. 310). The dogs following animals to either side of the hunting group dominate the lead animals (compare Morrow & Morrow 2002: 204D), these groups being abbreviations of the late Predynastic lines of beasts with a dog following and dominating the line (Hendrickx 2006: 728 and 736-739). The calf on the left, a product of human domestication, is balanced by the wild animal on the right, that desert animal abutting the human-dominated right portion of the tableau.

The central event in the left section is a circular scene of canids attacking an *Ammotragus*, recalling the circular game trap in the Tomb 100 scene. Such groupings of dogs surrounding their prey appear already in the decoration of C-Ware pottery¹⁷ and on the recto of the Two Dog palette (Quibell & Green 1902: pl. 28).

The Right Portion of the Tableau

In the right portion of the tableau, the products of human activity – including boats, standards, a bow and a human enemy pierced by an arrow – vie for prominence with the animal world. Like the left portion of the tableau, the right half terminates with the image of an antelope. Unlike the left half, the right portion of the tableau contains elements oriented right to left, and even the final group of bull and hunted animal reveals both orientations.

The Two Vessels

Both vessels have crescent-shaped hulls, like those on D-Ware vessels, consistent with the parallels in the Naqada IIC decoration of Tomb 100. The first vessel from the left is one of a very small number of early depictions of vessels with sails in Egyptian (Červiček 1974: fig. 156; Casson 1973: 12; Winkler 1938: pl. 34 [fig. 16]; Dürring 1995: 134-135; Fabre 2005: 89 n. 1) and Nubian (Engelmayer 1965: pls. 30 and 45; Otto & Buschendorf-Otto 1993: 26-27 and fig. 4a1, with Foto 4) art. The vessel

17. Compare Petrie & Quibell 1896: pl. 29, figs. 91, 93 and 95; Payne 1993: 62 and fig. 30, nos. 422-423; Bourriau 1981: 28, no. 34; Hendrickx 1992: 5-27.

with sail in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a, and the other boat with arrow-pierced prisoner, together recall the vessel with similarly forward mounted sail carrying a bound prisoner on the most elaborate incense burner from Qustul (Williams 1986: pl. 34). Most of the early Egyptian depictions of vessels with sails have high upturned prows and sterns and are of Naqada III date. The vessel in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a, however, belongs to the tradition of Naqada II D-Ware boats as well as those of the Tomb 100 scene and appears to be the earliest depiction of a sail from Egypt (if the upper vessel in Červiček 1974: fig. 156, indeed has a sail, it may also be of Naqada II date). The animal atop the stern of the first (left) vessel is a feature apparent in other rock art depictions of watercraft (cf. Winkler 1938: pl. 13, fig. 34; Morrow & Morrow 2002: 157K).

The enemy on the prow of the second (right) vessel recalls the bound prisoner and hanging enemy on the incense burner from Qustul. Similarly, a bound enemy, pierced by an arrow, is tied to the prow of a vessel in the Gebel Sheikh Suleiman tableau from Nubia (compare also the image of an enemy transfixed by an arrow in Hayes 1953: 29, fig. 23; Asselberghs 1961: pl. 96, fig. 171). The mace hanging above the head of the man pierced by the arrow finds close parallels in the mace hanging above the head of the kneeling, bound prisoner on a vessel on the Gebelein shroud (Donadoni Roveri *et al.* 1994: 21-22, figs. 4-7), and to a lesser degree a parallel is also found in the mace crossing the vertical pole of a Wepwawet standard on a label (Dreyer *et al.* 2003: 94 and pl. 18g) and a seal (Kaplony 1963: pl. 59, no. 211; possibly also Petrie 1900: pl. 32, fig. 39) from the reign of Den, and as determinative to the term *šmsw-Hr* in PT Š1245c. The second vessel in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a tableau also carries a standard – a relatively rare depiction in rock art –¹⁸ possibly a version of the Min standard (a possible parallel is Petrie & Mace 1901: pl. 16 no. 40b; Petrie 1920: pl. 23; Aksamit 2006: 585).

The Standards

Two standards, one with a recumbent jackal at the top, the other with a falcon, appear in the upper portion of the right half of the tableau. The shape of the falcon, with rounded tail, is parallel to the form of falcons on serekhs from “Horizon A” of Kaiser and Dreyer’s typology (Kaiser & Dreyer 1982: 211-69); this shape also corresponds to van den Brink’s Type IIa (van den Brink 1996: 142 and 150-153 [Naqada IIIb1]). A similar body shape appears on the stone falcon BM EA32135 (Donadoni Roveri & Tiradritti 1998: 177, fig. 106).

The Conclusion of the Tableau

The tableau ends with a recapitulation of the introductory section, a parallel to the bull-following-canid-pursuing animal images of the left side, here with the animal not pursued but trapped, the result of human agency and parallel to the arrow-pierced human at the prow of the second vessel. The animal appears to be caught in a spiked trap, perhaps with a log or stone attached thereto,¹⁹ corresponding to the spiked foot trap of the Tomb 100 scene. Just as at left end of the tableau a wild dog follows a domesticated animal of the human, not natural world, so at the right end of the tableau a wild animal succumbs to human agency in the form of a trap – mankind intrudes into the natural world at the far ends of the Qa-a wadi tableau. Other elements link different sections of the tableau. The calf in the introductory scene to the left presages the appearance of a calf image atop the stern of the left vessel. The bull in the third scene, with exaggeratedly long tail, appears to be labelled by a falcon standard, an apparent interpretation in the human world of the bull appearing in the three scenes of bull and hunted animal.

18. Note the standards—often of animals—atop the cabins of vessels in Engelmayer 1965: pls. 8, 22 and 47 (fig. 2); Červiček 1974: no. 241; Resch 1967: pl. 75a and b; Dunbar 1941: pl. 9, figs. 35-37 and pl. 10 (fig. 40).

19. Compare Winkler 1938: pl. 18, fig. 2 (= Morrow and Morrow 2002: 179C); Randall-McIver & Mace 1902: pl. 15 (17); Gattinara 2000: 99; Barker ed. 1996: 102-103; Mori 2000: 208-211; Le Quellec 1993: 449-468. For the bow-like shape of the object to which the animal in the Qa-a wadi scene is attached, compare Winkler 1938: pp. 21-22 and pl. 19, fig. 2.

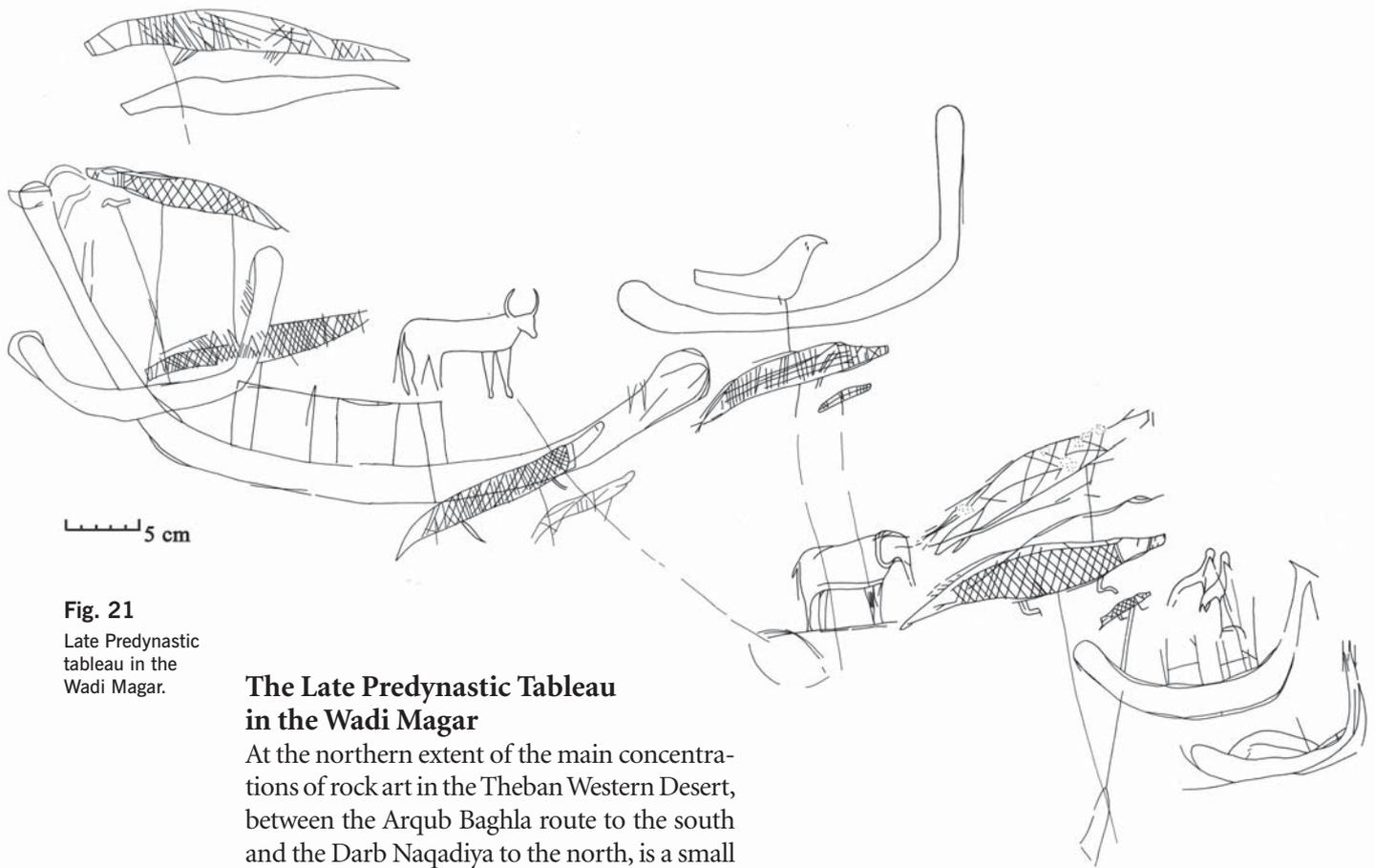


Fig. 21
Late Predynastic
tableau in the
Wadi Magar.

The Late Predynastic Tableau in the Wadi Magar

At the northern extent of the main concentrations of rock art in the Theban Western Desert, between the Arqub Baghla route to the south and the Darb Naqadiya to the north, is a small concentration of rock art that makes up for its modest extent by preserving two important late Predynastic tableaux. In its final appearance, with a flotilla of boats, a forest of crocodile standards and several zoomorphic icons of divine/royal power, the larger tableau (**fig. 21**) is a worthy, if even somewhat more enigmatic, counterpart to the Horus Scorpion tableau of Gebel Tjauti. Perhaps somewhat surprising are the Nubian sources that best parallel the falcons in the boats and the crocodile standards of the tableau.

Carved over earlier animal representations, including giraffes with plant fronds, ostrich and horned quadrupeds (one a deer—see already Joleaud 1935), is a large and complex tableau of Naqada III date. Boats form a visual anchor for the scene (for a scene of boats, hunters and animals carved over earlier giraffe images, see Engelmayer 1965: pl. 49 [fig. 2]). One vessel has protrusions from the upper interior of the prow, as in the nearby tableau

of Elephant-on-the-Mountain, the other with twin cabins (*cf.* Otto & Buschendorf-Otto 1993: 85). The royal falcon appears, both as large occupant of a vessel (as in Williams 1986: pls. 33-34) and as the diminutive top to a tall standard on another vessel.²⁰

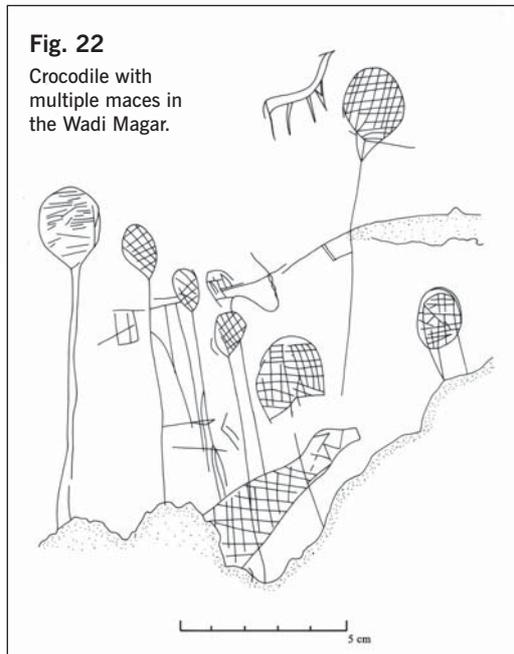
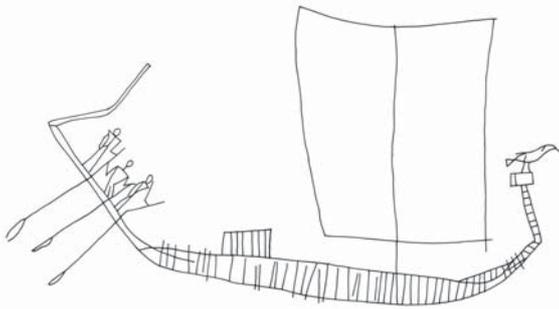
The bull over the boat is best paralleled in a rock inscription at Hierakonpolis Locality 61.²¹ The boats, Petroglyph A and C at HK 61 (Berger 1982: 61-63) are animal-headed, as is the largest of the five vessels in the Wadi Magar tableau.²² The twin water birds over the boat with twin cabins most closely resemble the twin birds of the Scorpion Tableau at Gebel Tjauti (Darnell *et al.* 2002: 15). In terms of numbers, impaled crocodiles dominate the tableau (compare the impaled human figures in Winkler 1938: pl. 31, fig. 2). The only parallels for the Wadi Magar crocodiles-on-poles are the apparent crocodile standards on a Marl A-1 painted bowl from the Naqada III Period cemetery at Qustul.²³

20. According to S. Hendrickx the falcon has the typical horizontal position placing it during the end of the period of Aha or Djer—see Müller 1938: 21-23. Note also the falcon in the smaller vessel atop the Sokarian bark on a label of Horus Aha—Seipel, ed. 2003: 105 and 107, cat. No. 3.2.11).

21. Berger 1982: 61-62; compare also Engelmayer 1965: pls. 28 and 36; Váhala and Červiček 1999: pl. 57 (no. 221) and a rock inscription in the Wadi Mineh (Rohl 2000: 82-83, figs. 10-12). A bull appears more to ride within a vessel in Engelmayer 1965: pl. 16 (no. 5).

22. See also Berger 1992: 107-120 and compare Otto and Buschendorf-Otto 1993: 129, fig. 247; Červiček 1974: figs. 73-74 and 276 (= Winkler 1938 pl. 34, 21).

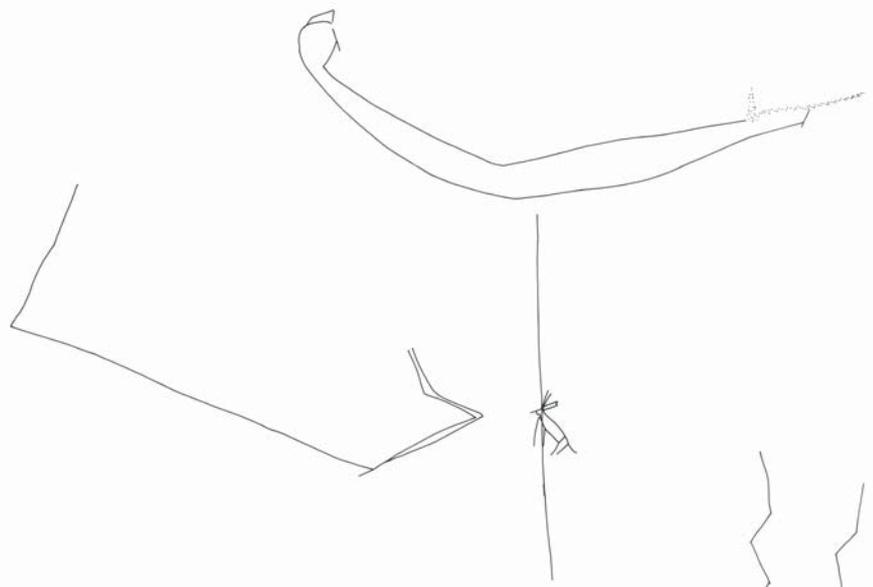
23. Williams 1986: 84, 153-154 and pls. 84-85; similarly made crocodiles appear in Cerny & Sadek 1970: pl. 28, no. 1794. For two possible speared crocs beneath a later image see Sadek & Shimy 1974: pl. 224, no. 3311.



Within two meters of the great tableau are the sad remains of another, smaller set of images (**fig. 22**). Although boats were once present, what survives is most of yet another crocodile, with a repetitive set of images crossing over it. These are most likely maces, and find their closest parallels in images from the region of the Second Cataract (Hellström 1970: corpus W27-44 and 46), particularly a scene including animals, a boat, and a forest of approximately thirty maces at a site near Abka (Hellström 1970: pl. 88 [no. 2 = 378i1], pp. 171-172). As with the scenes in the great tableau at the head

24. See above; for the hull and sail compare also the poorly drawn and possibly later vessel in Váhala and Červíček 1999: pl. 94 (no. 368.2).

25. The pot and the design of the sailing vessel belong to the Naqada III Period (I thank D. Huyge for looking at the object with me in the British Museum on August 1, 2008); the decoration style echoes that of Naqada II D-Ware decoration.



5cm

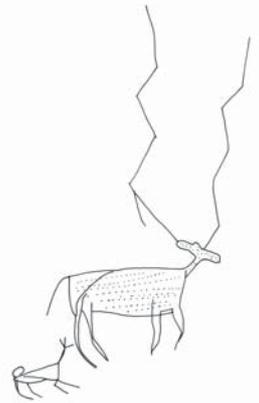


Fig. 23
Early Dynastic tableau in the Wadi of Amenemhat.

of the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a, the mace, without the need for a representation of the ruler, may reveal the ruler's presence and domination. The maces crossing the crocodile suggest that the impaled creatures in the main Wadi Magar tableau are impaled as foes, not hoisted as standards.

Early Dynastic Tableau in the Wadi of Amenemhat

At the head of a wadi south of the 'Alamat Tal Road is a syncopated version of the Jubilee tableau (**fig. 23**). A large vessel with sickle-shaped hull – the shape of the Early Dynastic/Old Kingdom *M3'.ty*-vessel (compare Drioton 1933: 220 and pl. 9) – and sail²⁴ faces an incomplete version of the same image, shown only in the outline of the hull. The vessel, steered by three men at the stern, bears a falcon atop the high prow, a feature attested on a few Naqada III through Early Dynastic images of vessels (compare the Naqada III D-Ware vessel BM 35324: Asselberghs 1961: pls. 12 and 14; Williams 1988: 18-19;²⁵ a rock art depiction in the Wadi Mineh, Eastern Desert: Rohl 2000: 82-83, figs. 10-12; the label on a

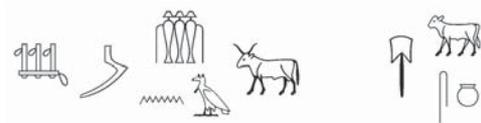
fragment of an Early Dynastic stone vessel from Abydos: Petrie 1903: 29 and pl. 12, no. 279; Boreux 1925: 60). The falcon appears to be of Naqada III or Early Dynastic date (compare Köhler 2004: 309, fig. 8; van den Brink 2001: 44, no. 20; and the close parallel Spencer 1980: 51 and pl. 22, no. 350 [reign of Semerkhet]).

The Head of the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a—Early Dynastic Inscriptions

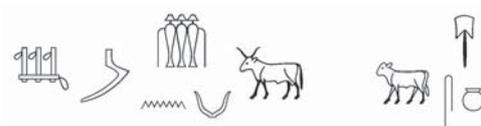
At Site No. 2 are two depictions with accompanying Early Hieroglyphic Annotations, assignable on palaeographic grounds to the First Dynasty and most likely to the reign of Qa-a, whose serekh (fig. 24) is present at the site (for Eastern Desert serekhs of Qa-a see Huyge 1984: 5-9). The scenes and inscriptions (fig. 25) are essentially mirror images, facing in towards a small space created by a large slab of rock fallen against the inscribed surface – similar to the earlier images of boats towed toward the crack at WHW, the vessels appear to sail into the space behind the fallen rock. Each depiction shows a vessel, with multiple rowers, steered by a large figure at the stern; atop each vessel is a small bark, with *m3*-sickle shaped

profile and upturned steering oar. The two annotations appear to refer to the arrival of a type of vessel, consistent with the scenes they accompany, and may represent a final, literate addition to the inscriptions of the site, a hieroglyphic commentary revealing something of the Early Dynastic Egyptians' understanding of their own Proto-historic iconography.

LEFT INSCRIPTION



RIGHT INSCRIPTION



TRANSLITERATION

s3h m3 (c.ty) hnt n(?) nh/wp k3
s3b-snw

TRANSLATION

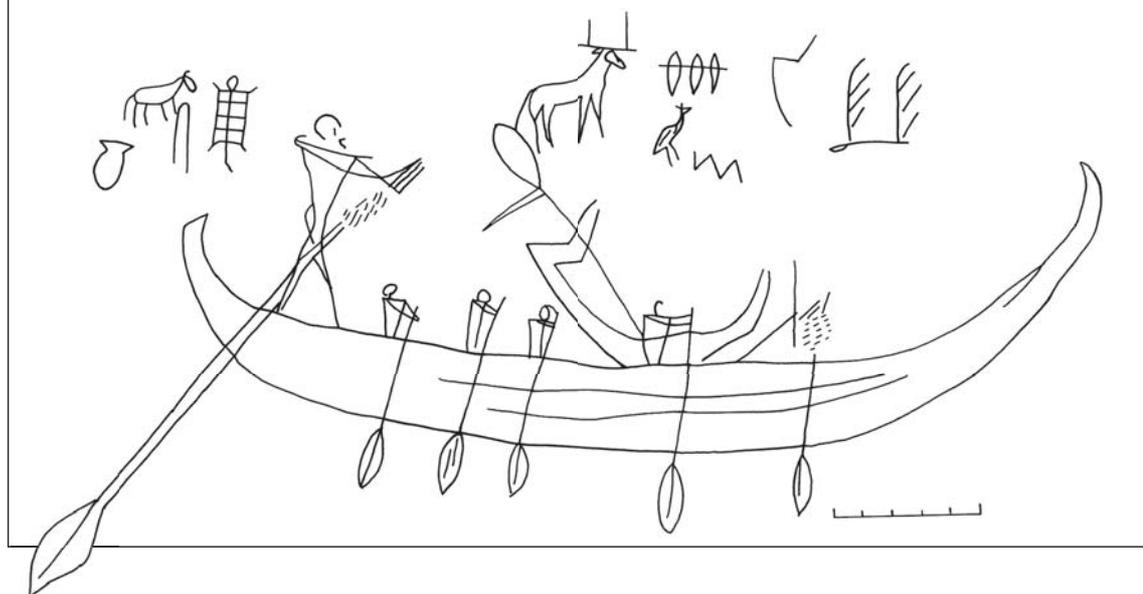
Arrival of the Maaty bark at the forefront of/during(?) Nehka ("requesting the *K3*?")/Wepka ("Opening the *K3*-festival?"). Sabsenu.

The association of the Maaty bark with the Festival of Sokar recalls the Sokarian features of several of the vessels in the late Predynastic tableaux of the Theban Western Desert (compare fig. 21 and Engelmayr

Fig. 24
Serekh of Horus Qa-a from Boat Site #2 in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a.



Fig. 25 • Late First Dynasty hieroglyphic inscription from Boat Site #2 in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a.



1965: pl. 4 [fig. 2]). The Maaty barks appear to be solar as well in the annual, solar New Year celebration (Anthes 1957: 85-89; Gaballa and Kitchen 1969: 13-19; Miosi 1975: 46-66). In PT §1785b-c (Sethe 1910: 435), where the king “guides Re in the two Maaty barks of his father(?), on the day of completing the year” (*sšm N R^c m M³.t(y) it=f hrw hts rnp. t*). A Sokar festival appears to have been celebrated on at least three occasions during the reign of Qa-a (Dreyer *et al.* 1996: 75); at those rites, and during the New Year celebrations, he would probably have steered the Maaty vessels. The dual aspect of the vessel, apparent in the vignettes of the Wadi of Qa-a, recalls the dual vessels at the nearby Boat Site 4 (fig. 14) and supports the antiquity of the concept of the dual solar barks (Altenmüller 2004: 11-33). The probable reference to a bull in a festival context may allude to the early association of the solar deity with the bull (Eyre 2002: 145-146 [note the solar deity as the *k3 i3hw*, “bull of light,” in PT §§513a and 889d]).

The Maaty bark is associated with the *šms-Hr* vessel and with several other boats, a falcon apparently occupying each. A falcon rides in two vessels in the Wadi Magar Great Tableau, the forward vessel in the Wadi of the Horus Qa-a tableau bears a standard with crossing mace, like the determinative to *šms-Hr* in PT §1245c, and the vessel in the Wadi of Amenemhat bears a falcon on its prow. The Sokarian associations of the Maaty vessel in turn explain the presence of the head of the horned animal in the Wadi Magar Great Tableau and also the presence of the head of a horned animal on the vessel carrying the royal standard of Elephant-on-the-Gebel in the Wadi Magar.

Conclusion

Although the Theban Western Desert sites preserve perhaps the most artistically accomplished and iconographically rich and informative versions of the tableaux of ritual and support ships and hunting scenes of the genre of Jubilee scenes (Williams & Logan 1987: 245-285), others exist in the southern rock art repertoire. Along with groups preserving early royal images in the Upper Egyptian deserts (Winkler 1938: pl. 14, figs. 1-2; Hendrickx *et al.* this volume), at least three such tableaux appear at Lower Nubian sites.²⁶ Together with the Qustul Incense Burner these Nubian rock art groups are evidence for the early spread of Naqada II and Dynasty 0 royal and ritual iconography into Nubia.²⁷

Rock inscriptions as memorials of specific events appear by the beginning of Dynasty 0. The Scorpion tableau from Gebel Tjauti in the Theban Western Desert (Darnell *et al.* 2002: 10-19 and pls. 9-11) reveals the application of symbolic groups, derived from the animal cosmographs of the solar cycle, as annotations to a scene of human activity – military victory depicted in the proper cosmic and religious context.²⁸ The Gebel Sheikh Suleiman inscription in Nubia, though not ascribed to a particular ruler, is an important document for understanding the expansion of pharaonic hegemony over Lower Nubia.²⁹ These early tableaux contain elements of historical events and the ritualization thereof, the celebration of the event in terms of its cosmic significance by means of incorporation within the royal Jubilee imagery (Hornung 1966; Jiménez-Serrano 2002).

26. Váhala & Červíček 1999: pls. 29 (102), 57 (221) and 74 (287); note also the apparent tableau pl. 39 (no. 144).

27. With a few exceptions, such as the Gebel Sheikh Suleiman tableau, the contribution of rock inscriptions to the understanding of early royal iconography is all but unexplored; compare Logan 1999: 261-276.

28. Darnell *et al.* 2002: 10-19; Hendrickx & Friedman 2003; Campagno 2004; the suggestion of Hartung 2006, is not consistent with the unity of imagery and composition of the Scorpion Tableau.

29. Williams & Logan 1987: 282-285; Cialowicz 2001: 62-63; note also the small Scorpion tableau from Gebel Sheikh Suleiman – Wilkinson 1999: 177-179.

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