

## Enlightening the Enduring Engravings: The Expeditions of Raneb Caleb Hamilton

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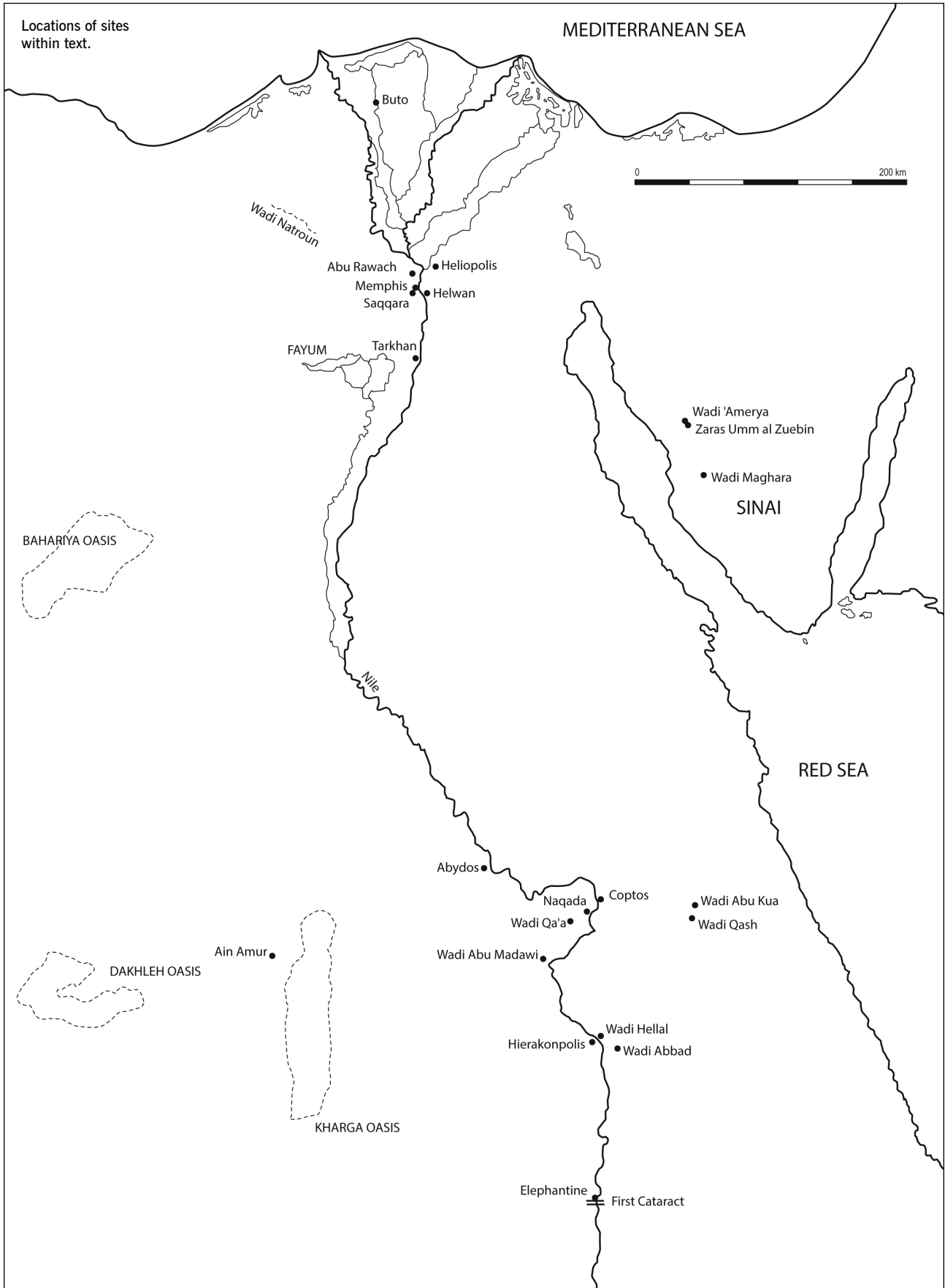
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## Abstract

Raneb, the second king of the 2nd Dynasty, has one of the more obscure reigns from the Early Dynastic Period. His reign has been securely dated to the beginning of this dynasty, preceded by Hetepsekhemwy and followed by Ninetjer. Many details of this dynasty remain unclear ; however, it may be possible to reconstruct aspects of interactions beyond the Nile Valley during this period. Raneb's reign is the only of this dynasty to provide concrete evidence of such interactions, and this forms the subject of the discussion here. This evidence comes in the form of rock-cut serekhs. The first of these was discovered by Winkler during his 1936-37 season, and the second was found by the IFAO in 2012. By re-analysing Raneb's serekh found at Armant, and adding new information from Wadi ' Ameyra through the efforts of the IFAO survey in the Sinai, it is possible to reconstruct the interests of this 2nd Dynasty monarch through expeditions carried out during his reign. This article helps to illuminate Raneb in the historical record by setting out these rock-cut inscriptions within a wider discussion of expeditions during the Early Dynastic Period, gauging their authenticity and relevance with other information from the 2nd Dynasty. By focusing on these records it will be shown that expeditions were still maintained during the 2nd Dynasty, which fits with the well-known evidence from the preceding 1st and subsequent 3rd Dynasties. It may also be possible to suggest that such expeditions were part of an on-going tradition of resource procurement during the Early Dynastic Period.

## Résumé

Nebrê, deuxième roi de la IIe dynastie, a l'un des règnes les plus problématiques de la période thinite. La datation de son règne est solidement établie au début de cette dynastie, précédé par le règne de Hetepsekhemoui et suivi par celui de Ninetjer. Même si bien des détails sur cette dynastie restent flous, la reconstruction de certains aspects d'interactions au-delà de la vallée du Nil durant cette période est possible. Le règne de Nebrê est le seul à offrir une preuve concrète de ces interactions, sujet central de la présente discussion. Cette preuve a pour forme les serekhs, inscriptions taillées dans la roche. Le premier fut découvert pendant les prospections de 1936-37 et le second fut trouvé par une équipe de l'IFAO en 2012. Le réexamen du serekh de Nebrê découvert par Winkler à Armant et les nouvelles informations recueillies au Wadi ' Ameyera par l'IFAO lors de ses travaux dans le Sinaï, permettent d'établir les intérêts de ce roi de la IIe dynastie au cours d'expéditions réalisées pendant son règne. Cet article contribue à apporter un nouveau regard sur la période historique du roi Nebrê par le biais des serekhs et d'inscrire cette analyse dans la discussion des expéditions pendant la période thinite, en évaluant leur authenticité et leur pertinence avec d'autres données concernant la IIe dynastie. En se concentrant sur ces évidences historiques, il sera démontré que les expéditions étaient toujours en cours pendant la IIe dynastie, conclusion qui concorde avec les évidences bien connues de la Ière et de la IIIe dynasties. Il est donc possible de suggérer que de telles expéditions, dont le but était l'approvisionnement en matières premières, faisaient partie d'une tradition thinite.



# Enlightening the Enduring Engravings: The Expeditions of Raneb<sup>1</sup>

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*Raneb, the second king of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, has one of the more obscure reigns from the Early Dynastic Period. His reign has been securely dated to the beginning of this dynasty, preceded by Hetepsekhemwy and followed by Ninetjer. Many details of this dynasty remain unclear; however, it may be possible to reconstruct aspects of interactions beyond the Nile Valley during this period. Raneb's reign is the only of this dynasty to provide concrete evidence of such interactions, and this forms the subject of the discussion here. This evidence comes in the form of rock-cut serekhs. The first of these was discovered by Winkler during his 1936-37 season, and the second was found by the IFAO in 2012. By re-analysing Raneb's serekh found at Armant, and adding new information from Wadi 'Ameyra through the efforts of the IFAO survey in the Sinai, it is possible to reconstruct the interests of this 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty monarch through expeditions carried out during his reign. This article helps*

*to illuminate Raneb in the historical record by setting out these rock-cut inscriptions within a wider discussion of expeditions during the Early Dynastic Period, gauging their authenticity and relevance with other information from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty. By focusing on these records it will be shown that expeditions were still maintained during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, which fits with the well-known evidence from the preceding 1<sup>st</sup> and subsequent 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasties. It may also be possible to suggest that such expeditions were part of an on-going tradition of resource procurement during the Early Dynastic Period.*

*Nebrè, deuxième roi de la II<sup>e</sup> dynastie, a l'un des règnes les plus problématiques de la période thinite. La datation de son règne est solidement établie au début de cette dynastie, précédé par le règne de Hetepsekhemoui et suivi par celui de Ninetjer. Même si bien des détails sur cette dynastie restent flous, la recon-*

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*struction de certains aspects d'interactions au-delà de la vallée du Nil durant cette période est possible. Le règne de Nebrê est le seul à offrir une preuve concrète de ces interactions, sujet central de la présente discussion. Cette preuve a pour forme les serekhs, inscriptions taillées dans la roche. Le premier fut découvert pendant les prospections de 1936-37 et le second fut trouvé par une équipe de l'IFAO en 2012. Le réexamen du serekh de Nebrê découvert par Winkler à Armant et les nouvelles informations recueillies au Wadi 'Amevera par l'IFAO lors de ses travaux dans le Sinaï, permettent d'établir les intérêts de ce roi de la II<sup>e</sup> dynastie au cours d'expéditions réalisées pendant son règne. Cet article contribue à apporter un nouveau regard sur la période historique du roi Nebrê par le biais des serekhs et d'inscrire cette analyse dans la discussion des expéditions pendant la période thinite, en évaluant leur authenticité et leur pertinence avec d'autres données concernant la II<sup>e</sup> dynastie. En se concentrant sur ces évidences historiques, il sera démontré que les expéditions étaient toujours en cours pendant la II<sup>e</sup> dynastie, conclusion qui concorde avec les évidences bien connues de la I<sup>re</sup> et de la III<sup>e</sup> dynasties. Il est donc possible de suggérer que de telles expéditions, dont le but était l'approvisionnement en matières premières, faisaient partie d'une tradition thinite.*

Fresh evidence attesting to Raneb, the second king of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, demonstrates that this monarch was more active through expeditions than previously realised. While this has not always been evident, it now seems that there were at least two expeditions which took place during his reign, with evidence of a possible third. Raneb's time as king is one of the more obscure reigns during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, a dynasty which has perplexed Egyptologists for many decades. The aim of this paper is to highlight aspects of Raneb's rule relating to these expeditions, with a particular focus on the rock-cut engravings that name this ruler. These rock-cut inscriptions incorporate Raneb's *serekh*, a form of writing a Protodynastic or Early Dynastic rulers name that classically consists of a palace-façade adorned by a Horus falcon (or infre-

quently a Seth animal) and incorporates a box with an Egyptian king's name (O'Brien 1996: 123; Wilkinson 1999: 201; Jiménez-Serrano 2003: 94; Regulski 2010: 158–159). The first of the engravings with Raneb's *serekh* was found by Winkler (1938: 10, pl. XI.4) in the Wadi Abu Madawi, near Armant, during his 1936-37 season. Another possible *serekh* of Raneb's may have been identified by Winkler (1938: 10, pl. XI.5) in the Wadi Abu Kua, though the reading of this is difficult at best. These two *serekh*-signs have been supplemented by the recent discovery of Raneb's *serekh* in the Wadi 'Amevera by an expedition of the IFAO in 2012 (Tallet 2012a: 1652; Tallet & Laisney 2012: 389; Tallet 2015a: 33, pl. 41). This article will analyse these inscriptions, outlining information contained within them relating to their interpretation and reading. This is followed by a discussion to place the rock-cut engravings within the broader context of expeditions during the Early Dynastic Period. It is hoped that this will help to illuminate some of the evidence of foreign interaction during a critical phase of the Early Dynastic Period, when activity during the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty continued the solidification of the nascent Egyptian state, foreshadowing increased expansion around the Nile Valley during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty with more targeted and aggressive expeditions to peripheral regions. The similarities in placement of the rock-cut *serekh*-signs of Raneb show this continuation with similarities in expeditions akin to Narmer in the Eastern Desert, Djer and Den in the Sinai, and Qa'a in the Thebaid, Kharga, and Elkab, perhaps in an attempt to control routes to certain resources in the Western Desert and Sinai. This may reflect Raneb's ambition to control resource procurement during his reign, which is an aspect of the Early Dynastic state that will solidify in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty.

## Who was Raneb?

Before outlining the details of Raneb's rock-cut inscriptions, it is important to establish who he was, and how *serekh*-signs can

be used as evidence for expeditions within the Nile Valley and into peripheral regions. Raneb is one of three kings securely dated to the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty (Kahl 2006: 102; Wilkinson 2010: 50; 2014: 2). The sequence of these kings is known from several sources of contemporary evidence, including the inscription on the shoulder of a statue found at Mit Rahina, now housed in the Cairo Museum (Kahl 2006: 112, doc. 18). This statue depicts the kneeling priest Hetepdief (CG 1), with an inscription on his right shoulder listing the Horus names of Hetepsekhemwy, Raneb, and Ninetjer sequentially (Fischer 1961: 45–46; Kahl 2006: 10).

This inscription evidently places Raneb as the second ruler during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, with other proof helping to corroborate him as the successor of Hetepsekhemwy. Such evidence comes in the form of bowl fragments that name Hetepsekhemwy and Raneb, with each king's name incised by a different hand, most likely indicating that the addition of Raneb's name took place after Hetepsekhemwy's had been engraved on the item (Fischer 1961: 46–47; Kahl 2006: 102, 113 & doc. 19–20). This raises the possibility of Raneb burying Hetepsekhemwy in his tomb at south Saqqara. Other bowl fragments show the addition of the name of Ninetjer, indicating that he also came after Hetepsekhemwy (Kahl 2006: 102, 113 & doc. 21–22).

The tomb of the first king of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, Hetepsekhemwy, was discovered at Saqqara in 1901 by Italian archaeologist Alessandro Barsanti (Dodson 1996: 21; Lacher 2008: 427–428). Sealings found in this tomb are inscribed with the *serekh*-signs of Hetepsekhemwy and also those of Raneb (Barsanti 1902: 183; Maspero 1902: 187; Wilkinson 1999: 84; Engel 2006: 25–33). Like the aforementioned bowl fragments, the sealings allude to the notion that Raneb buried Hetepsekhemwy at south Saqqara, and this strengthens the notion that Raneb was indeed the successor to Hetepsekhemwy. Significantly, the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty is characterised by a break in royal burial provenance, with the burials

of at least two of the first three kings now situated at south Saqqara rather than Abydos (Regulski 2009: 222–223; Bestock 2013: 2250). The tombs at the new royal necropolis were constructed 1 km south of a 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty cemetery (van Wetering 2004; Dreyer 2007; Regulski 2009: 223). It is worth noting that only the tombs of Hetepsekhemwy and Ninetjer have been convincingly identified at this royal necropolis (Engel 2006; Dreyer 2007; Regulski 2009: 223; Lacher 2011: 215). However, Fischer (1961: 47) suggested that the tomb of Hetepsekhemwy may also have been the resting place of Raneb when he was buried at the new necropolis. More recently this proposal has been followed by Lacher (2011: 217). While such a notion has not yet been confirmed, it is accepted here that Raneb's burial is likely to be in close proximity due to the discovery of a stele at Mit Rahina, discussed below (Engel 2006; Regulski 2009: 223). It is notable that both the tomb of Hetepsekhemwy and the tomb of Ninetjer have similar design features, showing the continuity in construction practices during the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty (Lacher 2011: 219–222).

A red granite stele, clearly identified by Raneb's *serekh* (Fig. 1), came onto the antiquities market in the 1960s (Dodson 1996: 21), and



**Fig. 1**  
Stele of Raneb,  
The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art,  
New York.

was subsequently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fischer 1961: 45; Roehrig & Serotta 2011: 210, 262; MMA 60.144). The stele may have originated from the royal necropolis at south Saqqara (Regulski 2009: 223; Wilkinson 2014: 4), though was perhaps reused in nearby Mit Rahina, ancient Memphis, where it may have been transported after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty tombs came into disrepair sometime between their construction and reign of the last king of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, Unas. By the time Unas came to erect his pyramid at Saqqara, south of the pyramid of Netjerikhet, it seems that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty tombs were dilapidated (Fischer 1961: 48; Lacher 2011: 215). Aside from the fine carved quality of the stele, the importance of this item stems from the fact that it is the earliest example of a royal stele from a site other than Abydos, which helps to attest the break in tradition of Early Dynastic kings being buried at Saqqara (Wilkinson 1999: 84).

Thus far the discussion has focused on identifying archaeological evidence that clarifies the identity of Raneb within the royal succession. A brief comment here on the interpretation and reading of Raneb's name will help with the analysis of the rock-cut *serekh*-signs below. Although the king's name has traditionally been interpreted as Nebra (Wilkinson 1999: 84, 293; Kahl 2007: table 1; Cervelló-Autuori 2011: 1131; Reader 2014: 427), the onomatological study by Kahl (2007: 7–12) convincingly argues for a reading of his name (see also Quirke 2009: 299). Kahl (2006: 102–103; 2007: 12) also argues that the *nsw bity* name of Weneg should be associated with Raneb, going so far as

to propose that they are actually the same ruler (see also Regulski 2010: 50; Wilkinson 2014: 2). The name of Weneg is only attested from inscriptions on stone vessels found in Netjerikhet's pyramid, in Tomb S3014, and from a re-used stone vessel found at Abydos (Petrie 1901: pl. VIII.12; Kahl 2006: 102; 2007: 12, 18–28). In total there are 12 examples of the *nsw bity* Weneg.<sup>2</sup> There are now 11 examples of the Horus name Raneb, including the newly discovered inscription at Wadi 'Ameyra.<sup>3</sup> The example from Umm al-Qa'ab is the only example of an inscription that incorporates both Raneb and Weneg. Wilkinson (1999: 169) as well as Tallet & Laisney (2012: 389) suggest that a *serekh* in the Wadi Abu Kua could be attributed to Raneb, though as outlined below, Winkler (1938: 10, pl. XI.5) as well as Porter and Moss (1951: 328) were not so certain. Due to this uncertainty this example has not been attributed to Raneb here.

An inscription on the volcanic ash bowl fragment found in Tomb P, the tomb of Peribsen at Umm al-Qa'ab (BM EA35556), includes the partial erasure of Raneb's name, facing the name of his successor, Ninetjer. Under scrutiny it is evident that Ninetjer's name is written over that of Weneg, which Kahl (2006: 102, 114, doc. 22; 2007: 8–12, fig. 4–5) has reconstructed to show that the names of Raneb and Weneg should be associated with the same ruler. This means that Ninetjer had to be a successor to Weneg, as his name was later inscribed over that of Weneg. Therefore, given that Raneb's name is also evident in this inscription, facing the name Weneg, these two names are associated with each other, and precede the name

2. Seven from vessels found in the Step Pyramid of Netjerikhet (Kahl 1994: 354–355, Quelle 2849, 2850, 2851, 2852, 2853, 2854, 2855; 2007: 22–24), three from vessels found in Tomb S3014 (Kahl 1994: 355, Quelle 2856, 2857, 2858; 2007: 24–25), one from a vessel found in Tomb P of Peribsen at Umm al-Qa'ab (Petrie 1901: pl. VIII.12; Kahl 1994: 313, Quelle 2097; 2007: 21), and one on a vessel of unknown provenance (Kahl 1994: 355, Quelle 2862; 2007: 26–27).

3. Four from seals found in Royal Tomb A of Hetepsekhemwy at Saqqara (Kahl 1994: 312–313, Quelle 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090; Engel 2006: 28–29, fig. 6–9; Kahl 2007: 18–20), one found on a vessel found in the Step Pyramid of Netjerikhet (Kahl 1994: 313, Quelle 2093; 2007: 21), one from a vessel found in Tomb P of Peribsen at Umm al-Qa'ab (Petrie 1901: pl. VIII.12; Kahl 1994: 313, Quelle 2087, 2097; 2007: 21), one from a vessel found in the valley temple of Menkaure at Giza (Fischer 1961: 46–48; Kahl 1994: 313, Quelle 2095; 2007: 25–26), one on a vessel of unknown provenance (Kahl 1994: 313, Quelle 2096; 2007: 26), one on a stela found at Mit Rahina (Fischer 1961: 45–56, fig. 2; Kahl 1994: 313, Quelle 2094; 2007: 27), one in a rock inscription at Armant (Winkler 1938: 10, pl. XI.4; Kahl 1994: 312, Quelle 2085; 2007: 27), and one in a rock-cut inscription at Wadi 'Ameyra (Tallet & Laisney 2012: 389; Tallet 2015a: 33, pl. 41).

of the king Ninetjer. It is this which has led Kahl to suggest that Raneb and Weneg are the same ruler (Kahl 2006: 103; Kahl 2007: 12, 21). Thus, this inscription seems to consolidate these two names to one ruler, and therefore allows the evidence found at Saqqara in Netjerikhet's pyramid, and Tomb S3014, to be attributed to Raneb (Kahl 2007: 21).

### The use of *serekh*-signs as evidence for expeditions

Rock-art in the form of incised scenes, captions and inscriptions, as well as images of animal, human figures, and boats are evident throughout the human occupation of the Nile Valley and the neighbouring peripheral regions (see Judd 2009; Döhl 2013; Lankester 2013). Bradley (2000: 29) has characterised such rock-art as the marking of places with signs, which formed part of a system of communication. Chippindale & Nash (2004: 22), in commenting on approaches to the interpretation of rock-art, have noted that this term 'rock-art' lends to inscribed representational meanings and that such inscriptions can provide certainty and meaning in the places where they are engraved, suggesting that the placement of rock-art was not arbitrary and represents intentional interaction with the landscape. Darnell (2009: 85–87), furthers this discussion through the notion that marking places in the desert regions of Egypt can be seen as a form of incorporating landmarks and socialising the landscape, adding that inscriptions functioned as a method of creating meaningful space. This is done as a means of engaging with the landscape, with Darnell (2009: 85) suggesting that this is a way of socialising their surroundings through their excursions beyond the Nile Valley, inscribing it with their worldview, even allowing for the Niloticisation of regions in the deserts bordering the Nile Valley. Importantly, Riemer & Förster (2013: 42) note that the meaning of these rock-cut pictograms and symbols may vary according to their location, as well as the

role, status, and background of the person who inscribed them. The sites that were inscribed with rock-art helped to mark corridors through the landscape or significant entry and exit points. The notions that these scholars raise about rock-art can be applied to the Protodynastic and Early Dynastic Periods through signs that expeditions have left, both in and outside of the Nile Valley.

An important collection of rock-cut inscriptions can be found in the form of *serekh* motifs which early Egyptian rulers had cut into the landscape (though they are also found incised on pottery as well). These rock-cut depictions may have helped to communicate with travellers passing through regions extending from the Nile Valley and beyond, though the signs could also influence the part of a region in which they were inscribed. The development of *serekh*-signs can be traced during the Protodynastic Period and the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (see Jiménez-Serrano 2003), and coincided with the increased evolution of the hieroglyphic script (Regulski 2010: 158–159 & 236). It is evident that these *serekh*-signs were used within inscriptions through the incorporation of signs that embodied symbolic meaning, akin to Chippindale and Nash's notion described above. For example, the classical *serekh* incorporates the use of a palace-façade, a name of a ruler, and/or the incising of a falcon (or at times a Seth animal) (O'Brien 1996: 123; Jiménez-Serrano 2003: 94; Darnell 2007: 34; Regulski 2010: 158–159 & 236–239). All of these elements have representational meaning, and when combined they may also have signified the ability of the ruler named in the *serekh* to dominate the landscape on which it was inscribed, communicating a message to those that view the mark.

Thus, *serekh*-signs are one way in which the inhabitants of the Nile Valley have left their mark on the landscape, and can be seen as a form of rock-art. Indeed rock-art, monuments, and other expressions of place marking reflect a cultural presence and give the landscape a social significance (Wilson & David 2002: 1). These landscapes, such as the Wadi Abu Madawi and the Wadi 'Ameyra,



exist in relation to the human actors who have engaged with them, such as an expedition sent by a ruler, who then imbues the landscape with meaning through the incising of images such as *serekh*-signs. Darnell (2007: 34) notes that *serekh*-signs were used to annex the cliff on which it is inscribed, or at least to extend the boundaries of the pharaonic realm (Darnell 2002: 109), perhaps even establishing ownership over it. This is one way in which a human actor engaged with a landscape, imbuing meaning through the imagery the *serekh* evokes. This certainly agrees with Bender's (1993: 2) notion that engagement with the landscape is conscious and can be seen as a way of laying claim, justifying, or legitimating a particular place. There are numerous examples of this during the different stages of Egyptian history and prehistory, with the Early Dynastic Period no exception. However, the middle of this period during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty has left us only two instances of clearly datable engravings of this nature, with the only examples extant from the reign of Raneb. As such, these rock-cut inscriptions have been used by scholars as a source for detailing Egyptian interest in the desert regions bordering the Nile Valley (Darnell 2007: 34; Ibrahim & Tallet 2009: 179). This is because these markings line the routes that were taken by the mining teams to bring back raw resources such as minerals and stones used in the construction of monuments, or for prestige items and burial goods, and have been noted from the earliest parts of Egyptian history.

The practice of inscribing the landscape has been described as a way in which those inscribing it were able to socialise this landscape in an important and long-term way, showing such intent by leaving their mark (Darnell 2009: 85; Bloxam 2011: 152–154, 156–161; Bloxam et al. 2014: 25). An early 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty example of this is the rock-cut *serekh* of Narmer identified in the Eastern Desert in the Wadi Qash, on a track that may have led to copper mines (Winkler 1938: 10, pl. XI.4; Porter & Moss 1951: 327; Wilkinson 1999: 169; Wengrow 2006: 147; Rothe et al. 2008: 90, 93; Regulski 2010: 45). The Pro-

to-dynastic and Early Dynastic inscriptions that have been found in the Wadi 'Ameyra, including that of Raneb, can be indicative of not only Egyptian interest in this region, but also the ability of the fledgling Egyptian state to organise and execute expeditions to the peripheral regions surrounding the Nile Valley and to leave their mark there (Darnell 2013: 788). Notably the inscriptions in the Wadi 'Ameyra push back the documented interest of Egypt in the southern Sinai, allowing it to fit in with Egyptian activity in other regions during the Early Dynastic Period, such as Nubia (van Wetering & Tassie 2006: 846–848; Roy 2011: 301–302), the Sinai (Beit-Arieh 2003; Sowada 2009: 45–47); the southern Levant (Mumford 2006: 52–54; Sowada 2009: 25–53; Braun 2014), the Western Desert (Ikram & Rossi 2004: 4; Darnell 2011: 1151) and Eastern Desert (Wilkinson 1999: 169–173; Klemm & Klemm 2013: 3–4).

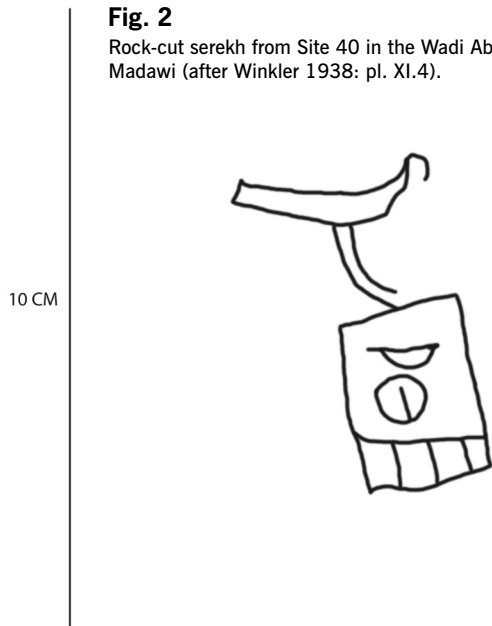
## The Armant Inscription

Before the discovery of Raneb's *serekh* in the Wadi 'Ameyra, the only other rock-cut inscription securely dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty was found near Armant, dating to Raneb's reign (Fig. 2). This inscription is found at Winkler's Site 40, in the Wadi Abu Madawi (Winkler 1938: 10, pl. XI.4; Emery 1961: 93, fig. 56; Kahl 2007: 27; Regulski 2010: 45).

The reading of this inscription, however, has been questioned by Regulski (2010: 45–46). This inquiry is based on the epigraphy and the palaeographic nature of the inscription, with Regulski noting that the *nb*-sign (Gardiner 1957: 525, sign-list V30) precedes the sun disk (Gardiner 1957: 485, sign-list N5). This is an unusual form of writing of Raneb's name, even when taking into account the debated reading of this particular inscription (Kahl 2007: 7). The translation for the inscription is *Nb(=i)-r<sup>w</sup>* or *Neb-Ra*. A possible explanation for the inversion of the signs in the Wadi Abu Madawi *serekh* could be due to the use of retrograde sign order, which is not unexpected with Early Dynastic hieroglyphic texts (Kahl 1994: 42–47).

**Fig. 2**

Rock-cut serekh from Site 40 in the Wadi Abu Madawi (after Winkler 1938: pl. XI.4).



Another example of an unusual writing of Raneb's name can be found on a schist bowl (Kahl 2007: 26), where Raneb's name is written without a *serekh* incorporating it. It is possible to suggest that the writing of a king's name was not always done to a standard format, with abbreviations, alterations, omissions and even mistakes made by the different hands inscribing each name.

Notably in the Armant inscription, the sun disk includes a stroke inside the circle rather than the usual dot, which seems to contrast other ways in which the sun disk sign is written with Raneb's name (Regulski 2010: 46, 514).<sup>4</sup> Regulski, while questioning the attribution of this inscription, does not offer an alternative king to whom to ascribe it, nor does she dismiss the notion that it does not belong to Raneb. Earlier Kahl (2007: 27) also noted the inversion of the signs for this inscription, though he still assigns it to the reign of Raneb. It is possible that the person who was responsible for incising this engraving did so incorrectly and produced an inverted reading of the king's name.

Notably, the hieratic form of the disc often incorporates a line or stroke as a representation of the inner dot from the hieroglyphic script (see Möller 1936: 28, n. 303). Early hieratic writing seems to have been used from at least the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty (Regulski 2009: 265), thus this could explain the writing of Raneb's *serekh* here.

It is also equally possible that this may refer to another person besides the king; though if the reading of Raneb's name as advocated recently by Kahl (2007: 7–12) is to be accepted, then any evidence for a ruler or king, as evidenced by the use of a *serekh* motif and the Horus falcon, who was named Nebra, is lacking. It is most probable that the engraving should be assigned to Raneb, as an indication for an expedition passing through this region during his reign.

This inscription may be indicative of expeditions into the Western Desert during Raneb's reign, taking trade routes from the Armant region towards the western oases' (Wilkinson 1995: 208; 1999: 84, 173).<sup>5</sup> An interesting thought regarding inscriptions has been raised by David & Wilson (2002: 6). They note that because inscriptions are often long-lasting or intended to be permanent marks on the landscape in which they are inscribed, they may trigger a memory with anyone viewing the inscription. This is noteworthy because Raneb's inscription at Armant can be viewed in the wider scope of the landscape there, where other earlier inscriptions have been left by an as-yet-unidentified king. These two *serekh*-signs are similar in design, and have been found 12 kilometres away from Raneb's (Winkler 1938: 10, pl. XI.2 and XI.3). The reading of these is not settled, and they may be the name of a late Protodynastic ruler (Wilkinson 1995; 1999: 173).<sup>6</sup> While the two unidentified *serekh*-signs and Raneb's *serekh* are separated by a distinct distance of desert and gebel (and thus not

4. For an example of the use of the dot inside the circle of the sun disk see Engel (2006: 28, fig. 27), or Kahl (2007: 22, fig. 14).

5. The Persian rock inscriptions at the same site appear to refer to Kharga Oasis, see Di Cerbo & Jasnow (1996: 32–38).

6. Tallet (2015: 10–11, pl. 7–8, 10) has raised the possibility that there may be a parallel between the name in these *serekh*-signs and a recently discovered *serekh* in the Wadi 'Ameyra.

**Fig. 3**  
Rock-cut serekh  
from Site 5 in the  
Wadi Abu Kua  
(after Winkler  
1938: pl. XI.5).

necessarily meant to be read in conjunction with each other), they may have been left in this general area as a mark for an entry or exit point from the Armant region into the Western Desert, perhaps onto Kharga Oasis. Raneb may have had his *serekh* left here in an attempt to evoke his ability to send expeditions to the Armant region and perhaps further afield. The same argument could also be made for multiple rulers *serekh*-signs incised at Wadi ‘Ameyra (Tallet 2015a: 57–58, fig. 24–25). The combination of all three inscriptions would indicate that this area near Armant could have been an important departure point for the Western Desert from the Protodynastic and into the Early Dynastic Period.

That the Egyptians undertook expeditions to the oases during the Early Dynastic Period is supported by the presence of another *serekh* in Kharga Oasis, near the Darb Ain Amur. This was discovered during the 2003–2004 season for the North Kharga Oasis Survey. The initial reading of the name in this inscription was unclear (Ikram & Rossi 2004: 4), though it has been proposed that it belongs to Qa’a, the last king of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (Hendrickx et al. 2009: 230; Darnell 2011: 1181). The *serekh* evidently shows an early Egyptian interest in the Kharga region, though the scope and range of this Egyptian interest in Kharga or beyond into the Dakhleh region is difficult to gauge due to the limited archaeological evidence for this period this far into the Western Desert (see Hope & Pettman 2012: 157–158).

### The Wadi Abu Kua Inscription

Wilkinson (1999: 169), and recently Tallet & Laisney (2012: 389), suggest that another inscription could be dated to the reign of Raneb (Fig. 3). This can be found at Site 5 near the mouth of Wadi Abu Kua, within the Wadi Hammamat system, east of Qift (Winkler 1938: 10, pl. XI.5). Wilkinson notes that the reading of the text is difficult to interpret, though he suggests it includes the name of this king. Porter & Moss



(1951: 328) go no further than to suggest that it is a Horus-name, without prescribing an owner. If this inscription was attributed to Raneb, it would link expeditions through the Wadi Hammamat system out towards the Red Sea coast, and would fit within the growing body of evidence that shows this ruler had several recorded expeditions during his reign. However, due to the limited interpretation of the rock-cut *serekh*, and until it is re-identified for a clearer interpretation, it is left open to who it can be securely attributed.

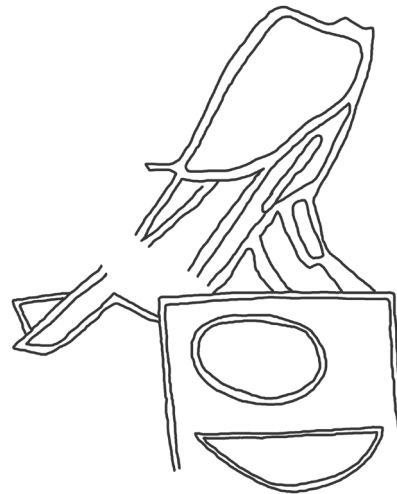
### The Wadi ‘Ameyra Inscription

Among multiple late Protodynastic and Early Dynastic rock-carved depictions at the entrance to the Wadi ‘Ameyra, is the *serekh* of Raneb (Tallet & Laisney 2012: 389, fig. 12; Tallet 2015a: 33, pl. 41). This *serekh* (Fig. 4) is the latest datable inscription at this site, culminating in around four centuries of activity here (Tallet 2012b: 1652). The earliest secured name at this site is that of Iry-Hor (Tallet & Laisney 2012: 385–387, fig. 9; Tallet 2015a: 13–15, pl. 13–15), through to other kings such as Ka (Tallet & Laisney 2012: 384–385, fig. 8; Tallet 2015a: 10–11, pl. 7–8, 10), with other incising’s of Egyptian rulers including Narmer (Tallet

& Laisney 2012: 387, fig. 10; Tallet 2015a: 18–20, pl. 25–26), Djer (Tallet & Laisney 2012: 387–389, fig. 11; Tallet 2015a: 23–27, pl. 32–34, 36), and the name of Neith-Hotep (Tallet 2012b: 1652; Tallet & Laisney 2012: 388; Tallet 2013: 123, fig. 4; Tallet 2015a: 28–29, pl. 137). The inscription of Raneb's *serekh* is on the extreme left of a rock face, and shows a method of engraving that is much finer than others present at the site.

The reading of this inscription is beyond doubt, with the name clearly identifiable in this example. This is unlike those inscriptions of Raneb mentioned above, with some scholars highlighting the issues in the reading of the *serekh* at Armant (see Kahl 2007: 27; Regulski 2010: 45). The Wadi 'Ameyra inscription, therefore, definitively identifies the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty king as one of the rulers that undertook expeditions to the Sinai during the Early Dynastic Period. These expeditions may have taken an overland route, setting out from Memphis, or *jnb ḥd* the 'White Wall', which is associated with the inscription attributed to Iry-Hor at this site (Tallet 2012b: 1654–1656, fig. 5; Tallet & Laisney 2012: 385, fig. 9; Tallet 2015a: 14–15, pl. 13–15). It is probable that some expeditions during the reign of Raneb may have set out from Memphis, especially given that his rule was based around the site of Memphis (Tallet 2015a: 39). This is evident from Raneb's activity in the Memphite region, burying his predecessor Hetepsekhemwy nearby at Saqqara, with his own burial is most likely at the same site. It is also possible that expeditions from Memphis may have ventured to Ayn Soukhna on the Red Sea coast, setting out across the Red Sea via boats to the Sinai coast. There is a small amount of archaeological evidence to suggest that Egyptian activity at this site during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasties, which may have used the harbour for expeditions to the Sinai (Abdel-Motelib et al. 2012: 30; Tallet 2015a: 40–41; Tallet 2015b: 59, n. 54).

During the Early Dynastic Period, a growing administrative base was becoming increasingly centralised within the Memphite region (Engel 2013: 21; Papazoan 2013: 46). It is possible that some expeditions to



**Fig. 4**  
Rock-cut serekh  
from Wadi  
'Ameyra (after  
Laisney & Tallet  
2012: fig. 12).

regions beyond the Nile Valley and Delta set out from here, with Tallet (2015: 39) suggesting that the Sinai was one destination. Other locations that could support expeditions to the Sinai may include Tell el-Farkha, though this site was in decline during the Early Dynastic Period, especially after the shift of overland to maritime trade in the Levant during mid-1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty (Sowada 2009: 247; Czarnowicz 2011: 133). Notably a link between copper originating from the Sinai and Tell el-Farkha has been established (Rehren & Pernicka 2014), suggesting that expeditions from the eastern Delta region to the Sinai took place during the late Protodynastic and the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty. Kafr Hassan Dawood, located in the southern edge of the Wadi Tumilat, may have been another Delta site capable of supporting expeditions, though like Tell el-Farkha, Kafr Hassan Dawood was also in decline by the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty (Hassan et al. 2015: 75). Copper passing through Kafr Hassan Dawood may have supplied other areas of the Delta, as well as the Memphite region, before the decline of the eastern Delta site (Hassan et al. 2015: 83). The *serekh*-signs of Ka and Narmer found at Kafr Hassan Dawood (Tassie et al. 2008), attest to the importance of this site and link well with interest from this region into the Sinai where the same rulers are also attested in the Wadi 'Ameyra, along with Djer and Raneb (Tallet & Laisney 2012: 384–389).

Importantly, two other inscriptions in the Wadi 'Ameyra allude to the expedition which resulted in the carving of Raneb's *serekh*. The first is the name of a scribe, Inekhi, who has his name and scribal palette incised to the left of a boat (Tallet 2015a: 34, pl. 143). Based on the palaeography of this inscription, a general date to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty has been proposed, with Tallet (2015: 34) suggesting that Inekhi may have been part of the expedition under Raneb. The second inscription at the site, dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, is eroded making reading this inscription difficult. However, it has been proposed based on the palaeography of the hieroglyphs that the inscription dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty (Tallet 2015a: 36). This second inscription reads 'the controller of the Asiatic country, [one who is leading?] of the private house of the King, Ny-Hedj' (Tallet 2015a: 36, pl. 46–47). Ny-Hedj may have been part of an expedition under Raneb, leading it to the Sinai with its rich resources well-known to Egyptians at this stage of the nascent states development. Indeed, evidence for the growth and development of the Egyptian administration can be seen from the titles at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty that may relate to the administration of regions outside the Egyptian notion of their territorial state (Wilkinson 1999: 157; Engel 2013: 32–34). Another inscription in the Wadi 'Ameyra alludes to an 'administrator of foreign countries', though the dating of this inscription is not secure, with this title attested to from the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty onwards (Tallet 2015a: 30–31, pl. 39).

At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty an institution that was responsible for the desert regions is mentioned in an inscription in Tomb S3505, of the official Merka (Emery 1958: pl. 39; Engel 2013: 32–33). Merka had the title *ꜥd-mr smj.t qr h3st*, the 'administrator of the desert region' (Kahl 1994: 601, n. 1338; Jones 2000: 361, n. 1339). Another title, *hꜣp smj.t*, the 'director of the desert' was found on a seal impression in the same tomb, though it is associated with a different official (Kaplony 1963: Fig. 406; Engel 2013: 33). According to Engel (2013: 33), there is an increase in the frequency in late

2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty to early 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty of the use of such titles. While many of the texts left in the Eastern Desert are little more than descriptive notes which give a name and/or title of an Egyptian official, the presence of such inscriptions indicates a specific knowledge of the desert area and also alludes to the routes taken by the Egyptians at the time of inscribing. Such titles and inscriptions may attest to the development of part of the Egyptian administration with a focus on peripheral territories from the late 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty and into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty (Tallet 2015a: 39). That expeditions and excursions took place during this period helps to bolster the sentiment of a continuation from the platform established at least during the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty.

## Discussion: Expeditions in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty and Early Dynastic Period

So, how does the evidence that has been set out above, fit within the broader knowledge and context of expeditions during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, and also the wider Early Dynastic Period? In order to answer this it is necessary to draw on other evidence from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty, and to also fit the expeditions from the reign of Raneb into what we know about expeditions and resource procurement during this time period.

Multiple attestations of epigraphic evidence for expeditions during the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty have been found in the Nile Valley as well as peripheral regions. That the aim of at least some of these was resource procurement seems highly likely given the proximity of the evidence. Examples of these can be found in the Eastern Desert, with the already mentioned *serekh* of Narmer in the Wadi Qash (Winkler 1938: 10, pl. XI.1; Porter & Moss 1951: 327). Evidence of mining during the Early Dynastic Period can be found at numerous quarries in the Eastern Desert, though in particular the greywacke quarries in the Wadi Hammamat system may also relate to the expeditions in this region (see

Bloxam et al. 2014).<sup>7</sup> Other evidence from the reign of Narmer can be found at Wadi 'Ameyra, like that of Raneb. The *serekh* of Narmer can be identified close to the inscription of Iry-Hor, and it sits as a cabin within a boat (Tallet 2012b: 1654–1655, fig. 4; Tallet & Laisney 2012: 387, Fig. 10; Tallet 2015a: 18–20, pl. 25–26). There are also numerous examples of his incised *serekh* found on ceramics unearthed at sites such as Small Tel Malhata, the Lahav Terrace, Arad, and Tel Erani (Jiménez-Serrano 2003: 117; Braun 2009: 29; Mumford 2014: 71). Narmer also had an interest into the fringes of the Western Desert as well, with his *serekh* seemingly extant at Gebel Tjauti within the Thebaid region (Friedman et al. 2002: 19–24; Friedman & Hendrickx 2003: 95–109).

The rulers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty seem to have had a keen interest in the Sinai, as evident with Djer's *serekh* in the Wadi 'Ameyra (Tallet & Laisney 2012: 387–389, fig. 11; Tallet 2013: 122–123, fig. 3; Tallet 2015a: 23–27 pl. 32–34, 36) and the *serekh* of Den at Faras Oum al-Zuebin, in the Wadi al-Homr (Ibrahim & Tallet 2008; 2009; Tallet 2010; 2012a: 15–20, doc. 1–3; Tallet & Laisney 2012: 388). It is likely that turquoise and copper were sought from the southern Sinai, as both commodities were traded from the local inhabitants through the trade networks established here (Mumford 2006: 54; Sowada 2009: 46; Pfeiffer 2013: 95). Further south of Egypt, it has also been suggested that either Ka or most likely Djer left an inscription at Gebel Sheikh Suleiman, in Nubia (Jiménez-Serrano 2003: 111; Regulski 2010: 45; Somaglino & Tallet 2014: 27–30, 39). The *serekh* of Djet has also been found in the Eastern Desert at the intersection of the Wadi Miyah and Wadi Chagab, within the Wadi Abbad, 25 km east of Elkab (Porter & Moss 1951: 321; Wilkinson 1999: 167).

From elsewhere in Egypt it has been suggested that the last ruler of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, Qa'a, left his *serekh* in the Western Desert near Kharga Oasis (Hendrickx et al. 2009:

230).<sup>8</sup> Qa'a was also active closer to the Nile Valley, with his *serekh* discovered at Site 2 at the head of a wadi between the Wadi Alamat Road that leads west of Thebes and the Arqub Baghla track from southern Naqada (Regulski 2010: 45; Darnell 2011: 1161, 1180–1187 & fig. 16). The *serekh* of Qa'a has also been found at two sites in the desert margin near Elkab. The first of these is at Naga el-Oqbiya, 12 km downstream from Elkab, and the second can be found on the southern edge of the Wadi Hellal on an isolated sandstone butte (Huyge 1984: 6–7, fig. 1–4).

What all of these examples indicate is a willingness by the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty rulers to venture beyond the Nile Valley and commission expeditions to other regions. This process was most likely motivated by resource procurement and the defence of Egyptian interests, real or imagined, in regions that they exploited. This was continued into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, as evident by the *serekh*-signs of Raneb, found in the Wadi 'Ameyra and Wadi Abu Madawi, which are testament to the furtherance of these expeditions. At least in the case of the inscription at Wadi 'Ameyra, the end goal would have been the resource-rich southern Sinai.

Unfortunately, any other evidence of expeditions from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty is scant. Aside from the *serekh*-signs of Raneb, other evidence can be seen with the fragment of a limestone stele dating to the reign of Khasekhem, who may have campaigned into Nubia (Wilkinson 1999: 177–179; Roy 2011: 301). It has been suggested that Khasekhem (meaning 'the power has appeared'), whose attestation is mostly restricted to Upper Egypt and especially Hierakonpolis, changed his name to the dual form of Khasekhemwy (meaning 'the two powers are at peace in him'), and may have defeated a northern enemy, which is depicted on two statues found by Quibell at Hierakonpolis (Quibell 1900: pl. XXXIX & XLI; Bestock 2013: 2250). This name change has been

7. For a recent survey of gold mining in the Eastern Desert, see Klemm & Klemm (2013).

8. Ikram & Rossi (2004: 213) originally suggested that this *serekh* may belong to an unidentified ruler, 'Aa'.

argued as reflecting the re-unification of a divided Egypt at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, which may reflect expeditions, though these would be internal in nature (Dodson 1996: 26; Wilkinson 1999: 85, 91–92).

Notably, a vessel was found at Hierakonpolis which shows the goddess Nekhbet standing on a ring containing the word *bš*, or rebel (Quibell 1900: pl. XXXVI-XXXVIII). Accompanying this is the image of a Horus falcon wearing the White Crown which takes place during the ‘year of fighting the northern enemy.’ Wilkinson (1999: 91) speculates that this scene may represent a campaign of Khasekhem against a rebellious north to reunite this area with Upper Egypt. He goes on to suggest that the name change to Khasekhemwy was to commemorate this success. The well-known statues of Khasekhemwy, also found at Hierakonpolis, show defeated enemies labelled as ‘northern enemies 47,209.’ This seems to confirm aggressive activities against an unidentified northern enemy. Khasekhem may have preceded this campaign with one in Nubia against the Ta-Sety, which was commemorated with a stele dedicated at Hierakonpolis (Quibell & Green 1902: pl. LVIII; Wilkinson 1999: 92). This evidence, however, is only suggestive of expeditions, and does not geographically indicate their existence, when compared with the rock-cut inscriptions already mentioned.

Archaeological evidence is also hard to gauge during this dynasty, especially when one considers that no ceramics from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty were found along the northern Sinai, when the surveys and excavations of this area were undertaken (Yekutieli 2002: 423; Sowada 2009: 46). This is certainly surprising, given that it was a heavily used area for trade between Egypt and the southern Levant. However, due to a re-orientation of trade and the means by which it was organised, the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty saw a shift from land trade to a more dominant maritime exchange system (Redford 1992: 37; Wengrow 2006: 147; Sowada 2009: 247). As already stated, the inscriptions at Wadi ‘Ameyra, however, do indicate that some over land trade took place during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty.

It is well known that by the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty expeditions to the southern Sinai are well organised, with the inscriptions at Wadi Maghara advocating the ability of the king to defeat an enemy within this region; though whether there is actual military engagement is difficult to tell from this evidence alone. This was a tone set much earlier during the reigns of the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty rulers such as Narmer, Djer, and Den, who set a template in presentation that subsequent rulers employed. Wadi Maghara was an important source for copper and turquoise mining from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasties, as indicated by the rock-cut inscriptions found here (Strudwick 2005: 135). The importance of these minerals during the Early Dynastic Period is heralded by the images of king Nebka/Sanakht (Seidlmayer 2006: 121), Netjerikhet, and Sekhemkhet (Hall 1986: 7–8; Parcak 2004: 52–53; Baud 2010: 72). Several of the captions with the rock-cut reliefs allude to roles that expedition members undertook, such as can be found in the inscriptions of Netjerikhet (Gardiner et al. 1952: pl. I.2; 1955: 54; Kahl et al. 1995: 121; Strudwick 2005: 135) and Sekhemkhet (Gardiner et al. 1952: pl. I.1; 1955: 52–53; Kahl et al. 1995: 137; Tallet 2012a: 25–26). The inscriptions of Nebka/Sanakht reveals similarities between the images of Den described above, with these inscriptions showing the king in a similar pose, with the standard of Wepwawet evident, a similarity seen in the reliefs of Den in the Wadi al-Homr, and also a reference mentioning ‘[*m*]fk3t’ or turquoise (Gardiner et al. 1952: pls. I.4, IV.3; 1955: 54–56; Kahl et al. 1995: 151). These images help to book-end the evidence of expeditions during the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, and also those undertaken in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty by Raneb.

## Conclusion

It is sufficient to state that from the evidence discussed here, expeditions during the reign of Raneb continued Egyptian interaction with peripheral regions during Dynasty Two. Expeditions were under-

taken to the Sinai and into the desert margin of the Nile Valley, possibly towards the Western Desert. While the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty was once seen as a time of internal strife, new evidence can advocate for a continuation of processes and procedures that were established during the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty and progressed into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty (Wilkinson 2010: 49; 2014: 1).

Though there is no doubt in the reading of Raneb's *serekh* in the Wadi 'Ameyra, it seems quite plausible that the *serekh* at Wadi Abu Madawi should also be assigned to Raneb, though the disputable reading of the latter inscription is noted. Thus, the second king of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty evidently had an active policy in sending expeditions away from the Nile Valley. These expeditions were recorded in a manner and tradition that was established well before his reign, and which would continue after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty. Somaglino & Tallet (2014: 30–31) have recently raised the notion of traditional iconography and images employed in rock-cut reliefs. In comparing the scene from Gebel Sheikh Suleiman to other scenes that are dated to the Pre- and Early Dynastic Periods they note that similarities exist between images from scenes in the Narmer Palette (Quibell 1900: pl. XXIX; Hendrickx & Förster 2010: figs. 37.1a–37.1b; JE 32169 = CG 14717), the Gebel el-Arak knife (Louvre E11517), the scenes of Den from Faras Oum al-Zuebin (Ibrahim & Tallet 2008: figs. 1–2, 5–6, 11–2; 2009: figs. 2–5), and the images on the base of the statues of Khasekhemwy (Quibell 1900: pls. 39–40; Robins 1997: figs. 32, 34; Oxford AM E.517 and JE32161 = CG3056). Somaglino & Tallet postulate that the Gebel Sheikh Suleiman scene may reflect the conquest of the A-Group or least the idea that the scene may make a link to a time when this may have occurred, which is a notion that may still have existed in the Egyptian cultural memory. It may be evoking the defeat and triumph over this region of Nubia (*stj*), much like other images and iconography in scenes which date to the Early Dynastic Period.

The relief at Gebel Sheikh Suleiman is an example of communication via the land-

scape, and a parallel can be drawn here with the *serekh*-signs near Armant and Wadi 'Ameyra. At the latter site, regardless of the tangibility of any of the expeditions to this region, the inscriptions here follow a tradition or pattern of incising the name of a ruler and Raneb is no exception to this. His *serekh* is left here amongst others, in a region that was frequented by expeditions during the Proto- and Early Dynastic Periods. The incising of Raneb's name should also be seen as evidence of the memorisation of Egyptian interaction with the region, and a signal on the landscape of the ability to send expeditions to the area. This may align with Darnell's (2007: 34) notion of the annexation of the cliff on which the inscription was made; or possibly the general area in which it was inscribed, though it can certainly be seen as a marker to anyone viewing it. Such markers are evident in the Wadi 'Ameyra from the reign of Iry-Hor before the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, which establishes a long tradition of inscribing the landscape there.

It is possible to see Raneb's Wadi Abu Madawi *serekh* in the same way. Raneb may have been linking himself to the inscribed landscape in this area, with existing *serekh*-signs of a late Predynastic or Protodynastic ruler extant close by at Winkler's Site 34. Raneb's rock-cut *serekh* perpetuates a continuation here in two ways. The first is through the use of this region by expeditions for access to the Western Desert. The presence of the earlier *serekh*-signs may already allude to this notion. The second is the continuation of marking the landscape and socialising it through the use of a *serekh* to signify the importance of this area as an entry or departure point from the Nile Valley to the desert, or vice versa. The location of Raneb's *serekh* at Site 40 is approximately 22 kilometres west of Armant, past the escarpment into the desert margin. This is further from the Nile Valley than Site 34, which is approximately 12 kilometres from Armant and a further 12 kilometres from site 40 (Wilkinson 1999: 173). Winkler's (1938: 8–9) Sites 29, 32, 33, and 37 are also located in the same area. This highlights the



activity in the general area, and perhaps signals an importance ascribed to the area as well, one worth inscribing.

The marking of the landscape also signified the ability of the king to organise and undertake expeditions to peripheral regions, which previous rulers had done before him. Expeditions of this nature had important economic and social ramifications during the Early Dynastic Period. These included the implication of resource procurement and trade for raw materials and prestige items, the practical importance of being able to conduct affairs away from the Nile Valley which reflects the king's dominance over foreign areas, and the associated ideological aspects tied in with the ability of the king to conduct affairs beyond the Egyptian realm (whether militaristic or economic). This in turn, helps to convey his ability to maintain a sense of order and to perpetuate the notion of Egyptian supremacy over the regions around the territorial notion of their state. Parallels for this can be seen in the Gebel Sheikh Suleiman relief or those of Den from Faras Oum al-Zuebin mentioned above.

Thus, the expeditions undertaken during Raneb's reign reflect a continuation of activity that was established and had taken place since at least the Protodynastic Period and through the reigns of different kings during the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty. Evidence of these expeditions can be found at various sites throughout the Nile Valley and also into the peripheral regions beyond. All of the regions around the Nile Valley have been marked with inscriptions or images that indicate an Egyptian interest and presence. Those of Qa'a in the Thebaid, Kharga, and Elkab, as well as those of Raneb in the Armant and Sinai region reveal an effort to control routes to or through the Eastern and Western Deserts, and the mines in the Sinai. This is not unexpected, and builds on earlier efforts of rulers such as Narmer, Djer, and Den, and perhaps reflects the ambitions of the Egyptian state during the Early Dynastic Period to control and direct the resource procurement for the benefit of the elites within Egyptian society. The two

firmly dated expeditions of Raneb show that into the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, the Egyptian state still undertook excursions, most likely for resource procurement. Evidence for expeditions from the middle and later reigns of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty is unfortunately lacking. As described above, evidence from the reign of Khasekhemwy alludes to expeditions and foreign interaction though caution is needed with this material before establishing it as fact. However, these expeditions clearly continued into the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, with increased detail in the inscriptions for these expeditions, as seen at Wadi Maghara (Gardiner al. 1952: pls. II-III (no. 7); Gardiner et al. 1955: 57–58; Strudwick 2005: 135) and Khor el-Aquiba (Helck 1974: 216–217; Roccati 1982: 269; Strudwick 2005: 150).

The nature of expeditions during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty is unclear due to the brevity of extant evidence. It is possible that certain members of the expedition during Raneb's reign left their names and roles in the Wadi 'Ameyra. Interestingly, the belligerent nature in the presentation of Narmer, Djer, and Den from the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, as well as Nebka, Netjerikhet, and Sekhemkhet from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty is not found in relation to the reliefs that reflect expeditions for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty. Apart from the aforementioned statues of Khasekhemwy, which only allude to expeditions, the inscribed evidence from the reign of Raneb does not exhibit an aggressive attitude towards resource procurement and those inhabitants in the areas where such resources are located. This may be due to internal events during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, which took precedent over any emphasis on distinct foreign interaction. Though, as shown above, the transition of the beginning of this dynasty was secure, with the first three kings having seemingly stable and productive reigns. Thus, it may be possible that such expeditions during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty could have continued an aggressive policy (if one did exist), as alluded to during the reign of Khasekhemwy. Indeed, the *ex silentio* nature of Raneb's inscriptions can be interpreted multiple ways in this regard.

Finally it is important to note that the discovery and publication of the inscriptions from Wadi 'Ameyra has helped to supplement and enhance the understanding of expeditions to this region; it has also improved the understanding of the individual reigns of each king that

are inscribed there. Such evidence, and any which is found in the future, will only advance the knowledge and comprehension of this crucial period of Egyptian history, and allows for a clearer picture of the historical development that took place during this period.

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