

Excerpt with the kind permission of Dr Ryholt, at the occasion of the announcement of the discovery of a king Seneb-Kay in Abydos (January 2014).

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The Political Situation in Egypt  
during  
the Second Intermediate Period  
c. 1800-1550 B.C.

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## The Abydos Dynasty

### A Short-Lived Local Dynasty at Abydos

#### 2.5.1 Kings

2.5.1.1 Wepwawemsaf, Pantjeny, and Snaaib: Three Second Intermediate Period kings, whose names are not preserved in the Turin King-list, are attested only by monuments at Abydos: Wepwawemsaf Sekhemreneferkhaw, Pantjeny Sekhemrekhutawy and Snaaib Menkhawre. In each case, we are dealing with a single stela of exceptionally crude quality.<sup>593</sup> Two of the three kings, Wepwawemsaf and Pantjeny, further have birth-names (nomina) which connect them directly with the Thinite nome. The former is a theophorous nomen constructed with the name of the Abydene god Wepwawet-Re, before whom he is also depicted on the stela. The latter, *p3-n-tny*, means 'He of Thinis' and expresses an affiliation with Thinis, the capital of the Thinite nome.<sup>594</sup> On the basis of these names, the confinement of their stelae to Abydos and their poor quality, it may be suggested that the three kings constitute a local Abydos (or Thinite) Dynasty.<sup>595</sup>

This is clearly not much evidence on which to postulate the existence of a hitherto unrecognized dynasty. There are, however, two further, indirect indications. Below, it will be argued that at the moment when the Fifteenth Dynasty conquered Memphis and brought an end to the Thirteenth Dynasty, a power vacuum was created in Middle and Upper Egypt in which a native dynasty immediately arose at Thebes (the Sixteenth Dynasty) to rival the foreign ruler in the north (§4.2.1.1). This dynasty clearly did not extend much beyond Hu and certainly did not include Abydos (§2.4.2.1). Nor is there any indication that the Fifteenth Dynasty advanced southwards and conquered Abydos immediately after the conquest of Memphis, and it difficult to imagine that Abydos, one of the largest and most prominent cities in Egypt, should have idly waited for the foreign

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593. Wepwawemsaf (BM EA 969): Bourriau, *Pharaohs and Mortals*, 72-73, fig. 58. Pantjeny (BM EA 630): Budge, *Hieroglyphic Texts*, II, 9, pl. 26; text in Helck, *Hist.-biogr. Texte<sup>2</sup>* (1983) 2-3 [4]. Snaaib (Cairo CG 20517): Lange - Schäfer, *Grab- und Denksteine*, I, no. 20517; text in Helck, *op. cit.* 47 [64]. A graffito in a tomb at Beni Hasan may also contain the prenomen of Wepwawemsaf: Von Beckerath, 2. *Zwischenzeit*, 69.

594. Thinis is generally identified with Girga some 20 km. north of Abydos.

595. So too Franke, *Orientalia* 57, 259. Franke would further attribute a certain king Khuiquer to the Abydos Dynasty. This king is also dated to the SIP by von Beckerath (2. *Zwischenzeit*, 70). However, judging from the form of his Horus name, (*hrw*) *mrwt*, Khuiquer belongs in the FIP. There was a tendency for the royal titulary to become more complex with time, and during the SIP all Horus names were compounds, bi- or less common tri-partite, such as (*hrw*) *s.w3d-t3wy* and (*hrw*) *nfr-h3b-t3wy*. It may further be noted that Khuiquer's Horus name is accompanied by his nomen on the only known monument of his. This grouping of royal names would also be exceptional for the SIP, where the prenomen always was included when the Horus name was used.

ruler to take it into possession. Rather, one may expect that the dignitaries at Abydos would have reacted in a manner similar to those at Thebes and immediately have proclaimed their own king to rival the Fifteenth Dynasty. This may also explain why we only hear of a direct confrontation between the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Dynasty some 20 years after the fall of Memphis during the reign of Neferhotep III (§2.3.2.1), since such confrontation was not possible as long as the two states were physically separated by a local dynasty at Abydos.

Secondly, the existence of an Abydos Dynasty in the Late SIP could also explain the presence of a large group of ephemeral kings listed after the Sixteenth Dynasty in the Turin King-list. The overwhelming difficulties in identifying these kings in the previous models of the political structure in Egypt during the SIP have simply resulted in their being completely ignored.<sup>596</sup> Since the Turin King-list proceeds chronologically throughout, except that contemporary dynasties are recorded one at a time in order not to mix kings of different dynasties, it is clear that this group of kings must have been either contemporary with or later than the Sixteenth Dynasty. The territories of the late Fifteenth Dynasty and the Seventeenth Dynasty which arose a few years after the fall of the Sixteenth Dynasty are relatively well defined geographically and do not leave any room for an additional dynasty during the second half of the Late SIP. The group of kings in question must therefore be sought in the first half of the Late SIP, contemporary with the Sixteenth Dynasty, and accordingly it seems likely that they should be identified as the Abydos Dynasty whose existence is argued above.

2.5.1.2 Turin King-list (fig. 14): The group of kings discussed in the preceding paragraph are recorded after the summation of the Sixteenth Dynasty in the Turin King-list (11/15), and occupy the rest of the column. Whether further kings of this dynasty were listed in the next column is impossible to say since the rest of the papyrus was cut away in ancient times. Column 11 can be estimated to have held 31 lines, originally and accordingly some 16 kings would have been recorded in this column. Unfortunately, eight lines are completely lost, while the remaining eight lines are all damaged. The latter partially preserve five prenomina and the reign-lengths of five kings.

2.5.1.3 Summary: The Abydos Dynasty is recorded in the Turin King-list 11/16-35. After this column, the rest of the king-list has been cut away and it remains unclear whether further kings were listed in the next column. On chronological grounds there would hardly be room for more kings. The kings recorded in col. 11 add up to 16. The names of only five of these kings are preserved and each of them only partly. Three further kings whose names are no longer preserved can be ascribed to the dynasty through contemporary sources.

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596. Even the study of von Beckerath (2. *Zwischenzeit*), which has served as the main reference for the SIP during the past 30 years, does not discuss these kings.

No.	Nomen	Prenomen	TK Entry
1	—	Woser[...]re	11/16: <i>wsr</i> -[...]— <i>r</i> <sup>c</sup>
2	—	Woser[...]re	11/17: <i>wsr</i> -[...]— <i>r</i> <sup>c</sup>
3-10	THE NAMES OF THESE 8 KINGS ARE ENTIRELY LOST		
11	—	[...]hebre	11/26: [...]— <i>hb</i> -[ <i>r</i> <sup>c</sup> ]
12-14	THE NAMES OF THESE 3 KINGS ARE ENTIRELY LOST		
15	—	[...]hebre (?)	11/30: [...]— <i>hb</i> (?)-[ <i>r</i> <sup>c</sup> ]
16	—	[...]webenre	11/31: [...]— <i>wbn</i> -[ <i>r</i> <sup>c</sup> ]

Table 26: Chronological List of the Kings of the Abydos Dynasty.

Nomen	Prenomen	File
Wepwawemsaf	Sekhemreneferkhaw	Abyd/a
Pantjeny	Sekhemrekhutawy	Abyd/b
Snaaib	Menkhawre	Abyd/c

Table 27: Unplaced Kings of the Abydos Dynasty.

## §2.5.2 Territory

§2.5.2.1 **Residence:** The fact that the few surviving monuments of the kings here discussed were found at Abydos, one of the most important religious centres in Egypt, would suggest that the royal residence was situated here or possibly at Thinis, the capital of the nome.

§2.5.2.2 **Royal Necropolis:** Owing to the religious role of Abydos, it seems likely that the kings would have been buried at Abydos, although no royal burials of this dynasty have been identified. Above, it has been argued that the Fifteenth Dynasty practised a scorched-earth policy when they withdrew from the south, and there is some evidence that this dynasty was responsible for the plundering of the royal tombs of the Sixteenth Dynasty and other older royal tombs. If the Fifteenth Dynasty had the royal tombs of the Sixteenth Dynasty systematically plundered after the defeat of the latter, or when the Fifteenth Dynasty was forced to withdraw from the south, it would seem likely that the royal tombs of the Abydos Dynasty were treated in a similar manner.

§2.5.2.3 **Domain:** Von Beckerath has suggested that the prenomen of Wepwawemsaf is to be identified in a hieratic graffito inside Tomb 2 of Beni Hasan.<sup>597</sup> In that case, the dynasty would seem initially to have stretched some 250 km. north of Abydos to Beni Hasan. Unfortunately, the reading of the graffito is not beyond doubt, and we have to rely on a hand-copy from Lepsius' expedition since the original is apparently lost.<sup>598</sup>

597. Lepsius, *Denkmäler*, II (n.d.), 152 [h]; idem., *Denkmäler, Text*, II, 76; PM IV (1934) 143; von Beckerath, 2. *Zwischenzeit*, 69.

598. If in fact the graffito does name Wepwawemsaf, then he is likely to have been one of the first kings of the Abydos Dynasty since its territory would gradually have decreased towards the north as the Fifteenth

To the south, the dynasty cannot have stretched much beyond Abydos since the contemporary Sixteenth Dynasty is attested as far north as Hu, some 50 km. from Abydos.

5.2.4

Foreign Relations: No material has been identified as having a bearing on the foreign relations of the Sixteenth Dynasty. Since the Fifteenth Dynasty seems to have had an imperialistic foundation and evidently engaged their armies in conquering the south, it may be speculated that the Abydos Dynasty would have had few relations with the Fifteenth Dynasty and the world beyond. To the south, matters are more obscure. There is no evidence of conflict with the Sixteenth Dynasty or any indication that the Sixteenth Dynasty expanded northwards into the territory of the Abydos Dynasty, but both indications may be fortuitous.