

The toponym \$n-nxn and its connotation till the end of the middle kingdom of Egypt

Abstract

The present research paper focuses on the term \$n-Nxn as a sign of a geographical region located in Upper Egypt and its connotation in the royal and non-royal texts. It highlights the political and religious significance of the toponym. Moreover, it explores the definable territorial divisions in Upper Egypt that were created in the second half of the Fifth Dynasty since upper Egypt was divided into three administrative unites in conjunction with Agricultural areas, therefore, some high elite titles linked with a specific regions such as, spAwt 9(the ninth provinces).and imy-r spAwt Hryw-ib an overseer of the Middle provinces of Upper Egypt, and consequently , by the second have of sixth Dynasty, the provinces of \$n -Nxn was referred from Archaeological records regarding it as an administrative sector included some Nomes, but it would appear that they didn't give any crucial information on its extensions or its location.

moreover ,by the Middle Kingdom, \$n -Nxn attested for the first time in literary texts as An important geographical region associated with legitimacy of of the throne, the notion of centralization and the power and authority of the King. Nevertheless, it wasn't An independent administrative sector, and it designates to A geographical area situated in wart rsy "the southern administrative sector.

Keywords: upper Egypt, Thebes, nekhn, archival texts, alterations, head of the south

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Introduction

The administrative system has certainly developed in the Old Kingdom as shown by the oldest evidence of provincial administration in Egyptian textual sources attested in the inscriptions of jars that were discovered in the pyramid-complex of Djsor, the founder of the Third Dynasty. (Figure 1)

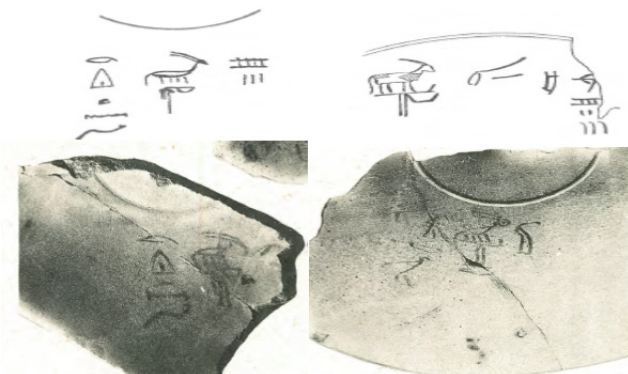


Figure 1 Two jars bearing the oldest evidence of provincial administration—the complex of Djsor.¹

In the second half of the Fifth Dynasty, significant administrative alterations were made, and a major development was attested. According to the titles of the high-rank officials, Upper Egypt was divided into two or three geographical regions.¹

The office of the overseer of Upper Egypt was created. Furthermore, the office of the southern vizier emerged, and the holder of later resided at Akhmim. At the same time, another development was noticeable in connection with the accumulation of official titles [1].²

¹Kanawati. N.,(1992).Akhmim in the OldKingdom,Vol.I,Chronology and Administration,Austratian centre for Egyptology press,Sydeney,p.37.

It is worth noting that some provincial titles occasionally refer to specific regions. In Meir Pepi ankh, for example, imy-r Smaw m spAwt Hryw -ib, "an overseer of the Middle provinces of Upper Egypt" was held.³ It was attested for the first time in the early Fifth Dynasty. There were exceptional titles, such as imy-r wpt m spAwt 9 "the overseer of the expeditions of the nine provinces" and nxt-xrw m spAwt \$n-Nxn "a strong voice in the provinces of \$n -Nxn" of Twaw in Nage El Der in the Eighth Dynasty.⁴ Nevertheless, the titles of the Elephantine Nomarchs of the Sixth Dynasty place a strong emphasis on a certain region known as tp-rsy "the head of the south", which marked out Elephantine as Kanawati concludes,⁵ but Quirke pointed out that it included the seven provinces of Upper Egypt from Elephantine to Abydos.⁶ (Figure 2)



Figure 2 Map elucidates the seven provinces of Upper Egypt from Elephantine to Abydos.²

It is quite probable that its southern limits reached Wawat according to the shipwrecked tale. Moreover, Abydos appears to be the northern limit of the tp-rsy region, as mentioned in the duties of the Vizier.⁷

On the other hand, the toponym may refer to the southernmost Nomes of Upper Egypt. In the New Kingdom, it was used to designate the Lower Nubia since Turoy, the governor of Kush in the early Eighteenth Dynasty. He held the title of the administrator of the head of the south.⁸

By the late Middle Kingdom, documented resources provided detailed insight into the territorial administration sectors. In this connection, Egypt seems to be divided into three administrative departments:⁹ wart mHtt “the northern administrative sector”, wart rsy “the southern administrative sector”, and wart tp rsy “the head of the south department”¹⁰ (Figure 3)

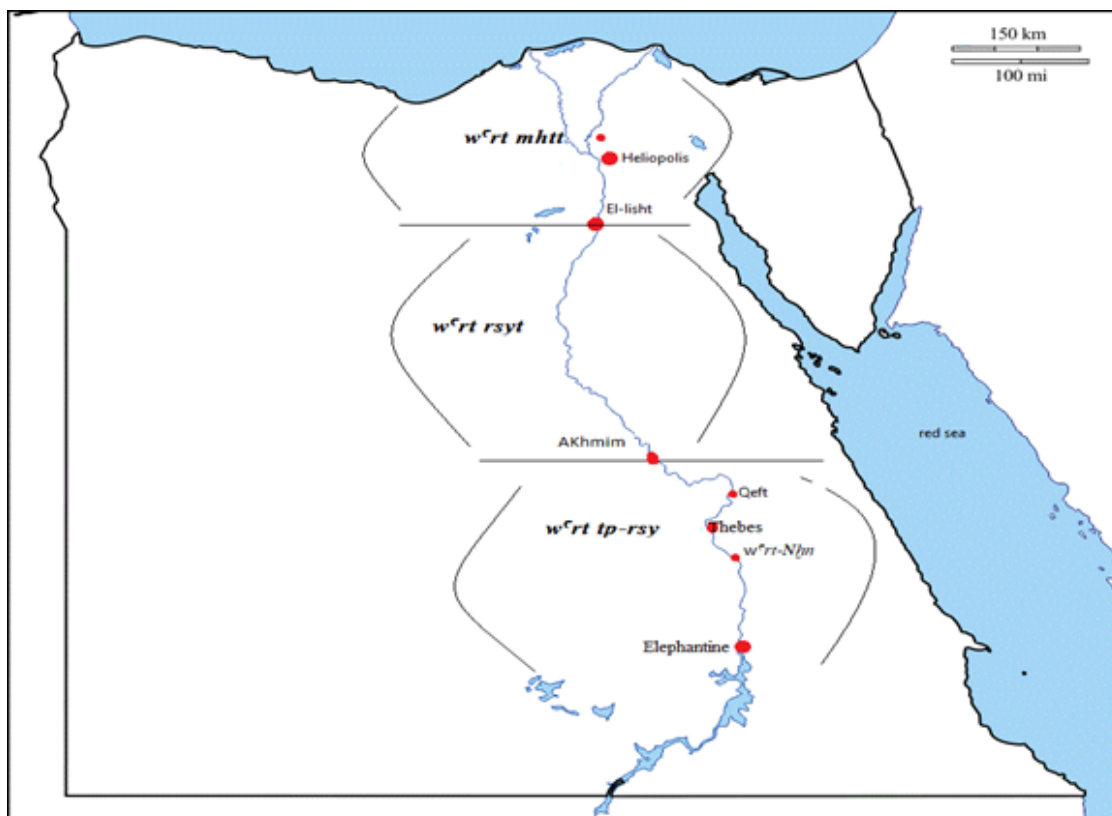


Figure 3 The territorial administration sectors during the late Middle Kingdom (by the author).

It appears that the function of warwt represents the departments of the central government charged with the administration of the territorial sectors.¹¹ Furthermore, the term warwt was likely used to denote Lower, Middle, and Upper Egypt.¹² It is generally accepted that the three administrative sectors were created after the decline of the authority and power of the local administrators at the end of the Twelfth Dynasty.¹³

The aim of this paper to determine the accurate location of the region \$n -Nxn especially the textual sources hardly ever give indication whether it was independent administrative sector or specific area associated with agriculture and its extension more over its importance in conjunction with the power and authority of the King in addition to legitimacy of the King.

Meaning of the Term \$n-Nxn

In Ancient Egyptian texts, the earliest reference to Xnwt, as a sign of Upper Egypt, can be found in the inscriptions of PH-r-nfr in his tomb in Saqqara (possibly dated to the time of Userkaf or later). He held the titles "i.e., an overseer of the storehouse of the brewers of Upper Egypt" and "an overseer of the storehouse of the brewers of Lower Egypt".¹⁴ However, the term \$n-nxn was attested in the earliest archival texts. It was well known

in the era of the Sixth Dynasty. It occurred on a limestone false door of the great overlord of Abydos during the reign of King Mery-re.¹⁵ The expression, i.e., according to wb¹⁶ and Wilson,¹⁷ used to denote Upper Egypt. It was used to designate either Thebes¹⁸ or the southern provinces of Upper Egypt.¹⁹

The term also appeared in the geographical sites during the reign of Ptolemy IV in geographical texts inscribed on the walls of Edfu Temple. In this text, the king states that he brought the provinces of \$n-Nxn of Upper Egypt and presented all the components included in them to the god Horus.²⁰ The determinative town comes with the term to designate a geographical place.²¹ The term is sometimes written with the determinative house ,²² which indicates using it to describe the residence of the king as a child rather than a place or a city.²³ since it was written in Literary Texts to refer to the residence and claiming to the throne as in the case of beginning of fifth and twelfth Dynasties.

The Term \$n-Nxn in Literary Texts

The Term occurred in P. Hermitage, which is known as the Prophecies of Neferty. It is considered the main source of the key data of the early years of King Amemnemhat I. The text states the origins of the aforementioned king. For instance, the text (lines 58-60) reads

²Quirek,S,(2010). Provincialising elites:defining Rrgions as Social relation,Cahier de recherche de l'Institut de Papyro-logy et égyptologie de Lille,Vol. 28,pp.51-66



Nsw pw r iit n rsy (Imny) mAa- xrw rn .f sA Hmt pw n &A-sty ms pw n \$n-Nxn

“He is a king who will come from the south, whose name will be Ameny true voice, he shall be the son of a woman from Ta-sety, he will be a child from \$n-Nxn”.²⁵

The aforementioned text handles political propaganda concerning ascending Amemnemhat I to the throne. Thus, Simpson considered \$n-Nxn as the royal residence of Nekhen. Moreover, he pointed out that the king tried to connect himself with the ancient capital in the Proto-Dynastic to ensure his legitimacy for the throne.²⁶ Berman concluded that the location of \$n-Nxn was Upper Egypt, and the term was used especially to describe the southern parts of Upper Egypt, corresponding with the synonym tp-rsy “the head of the south”.²⁷ Similarly, most of the scholars agreed that Amemnemhat I started his rule at Thebes. In the second half of his reign, the capital was moved to Itt-tawy (lisht).²⁸ According to Turin Canon, the kings of the 12th Dynasty reigned from the royal capital Itt-tawy.²⁹ In contrast, Manetho said that the origins of the family of Amenmhat were from Thebes.³⁰

The Term \$n-nxn in Archival Texts

The earliest reference for \$n-Nxn in archival texts was recorded on a limestone false door of the great overlord of Abydos during the reign of King Mery-re I. Although his name was unfortunately lost, he said msy n Xkrt-nsw Idi he was born to the king's ornament Idi since The owner started with his titles and his rank among the officials. He mentions ///awy spAwt \$n-Nxn ipwt /// “the production of the provinces of \$n-Nxn was counted”. It might be administrated by the great overlord of the Thinite nome.³¹

He boasted in his text:



wr m ist .f wr m sA .f wr m HAt imy-r pr nTr Hry tp aA n &A-wr “the great one in his rank, the great one in his dignity, the chief who is in the front, an overseer of the temple, the great overlord of the Thinite nome”. Moreover, the Toponym occurred among the titles of Twaw in the inscriptions of his tomb at Naga-El-Der, which is dated to the end of the Old Kingdom. Twaw mentioned his titles, as follows:



sS-a nswsAb aD-mr

imy-r nsty Xry-tp nsw imy-r AHt

smr -waty imy-r wpt nrt-xrw m spAwt \$n-Nxn &wAw.

“the scribe of the royal documents,.....judge, liegeman of the King's district official, overseer of the two thrones, overseer of the field, chief of the commissions, strong voice in the nomes of Ghn-nkhn Twaw”.³²

Peck dated the tomb of Twaw to the Sixth Dynasty comparing his titles with the titles of the officials of the Sixth Dynasty at Dendera and Edfu.³³

The limestone stela of Hetepy dated to the reign of Wahankh (Antef, II) was found at El-kab. It is now preserved in the magazine of Edfu sheds with some details about the geographical term \$nw -Nxn.³⁴ It is certain that the term, according to this stela, was used to describe the first seventh provinces of Upper Egypt, as the text of the stela mentions:



iw Dd .n bAk im rA .f m Hry ib spAwt 7 nt \$n -Nxn AbDw ,&A - wr sk nn Dd rA .f m Nxn WTst- @r &A sty wpw - r bAk im

“When this servant said his words in the middle of the seventh provinces of \$n -Nxn, Abydos and Thinite nome. No one said his speech in Nekhen, Edfu and Elephantine except for this humble servant”.³⁶ (Figure 4)



Figure 4 The limestone stela of Hetepy dated to the reign of Wahankh.³⁵

A further reference to \$n-Nxn can be found in the texts of tomb no.3 of Tef-ibi, the nomarch of Asuit during the First Intermediate Period. In his biography, he says



n KA nXt ir s bw iqr n rsw HAt mSa..... n nb.f n pXr n Hr aqA Hr
mTn.f nn Abwt /iAbwt xnt HA Dd mdw n tp-rsy sDm.f t \$n-Nxn iw Hm
h.....

“For the strong bull. A man did a good task for.....south, who was in the front of Army Of his lord. No straight-lined face turned to his way. There was no end to the travel southward for... Would like to say a word to the southern head, (and) he hears.... \$n-Nxn, he didn't”

Furthermore, there is An additional evidence reveals that wart-Nxn was administrative region employees join it, since, the scribe of wart-Nxn was mentioned among the members of An expedition to Gebel El-Asr in Lower Nubia led by Dedusobek and his father Sabastet to bring xmnt stone according to a sandstone stela of Cairo Museum JE 59499, which is dated back to the time of Amenemhat III.³⁸ as the text declares in line 10



Ss wart Nxn Imny mAa-xrw nb imAx msy n GHst mAat-xrw nbt imAx

“the scribe of Nekhen region ,true of voice, revered, born to Gehest justified, the revered” (Figure 5)

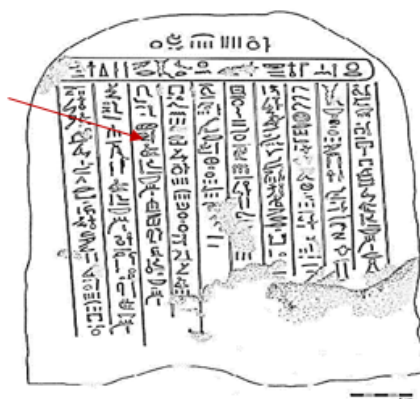
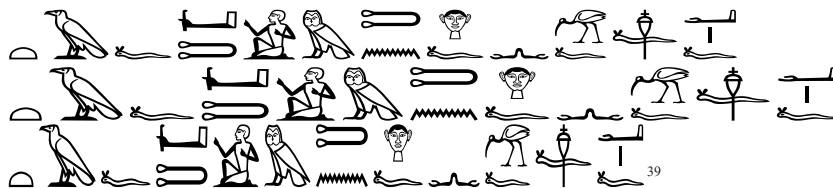


Figure 5 sandstone stela of Cairo Museum JE 59499 elucidating the title scribe of Nekhen region- the reign of Amenemhat.³⁶

It is worth noting that the documents indicate the toponym in the historical royal texts. The triumphal stela of King Piye, which was discovered at Gebel Barkal, Cairo Museum, nos. 48862, 47086, and 47081 seem to refer to tA Smaw and spAwt nw \$n-Nxn as two different regions. The text reads:



Wn nn n wrw HAtyw-a imyw-r mSa nty m niwt .sn hAb n Hm .f mi ra nb m-Dd
In iw gr n .k r smx tA Smaw ,spAwt nw \$n-Nxn, &Ay.f nXt m iTt n Hr .f,
n gmt .f xsf- a.f

“Then these great ones, mayors, chiefs of the Army who were in their towns sent to his majesty in every day saying: did you keep silent to ignore Upper Egypt and the nomes of Hen-nkhen. Tef-nakhet seized power on what is before him, without he finds oppose against him”.⁴⁰



In (.i) n .k nTrw nw \$n-Nxn Hr dwA KA .k m Hwtwt .k spAwt llllll

“I brought to you the gods of \$n-nxn with make praise your ka in your estates, which are in the provinces of //” (Figure 6)

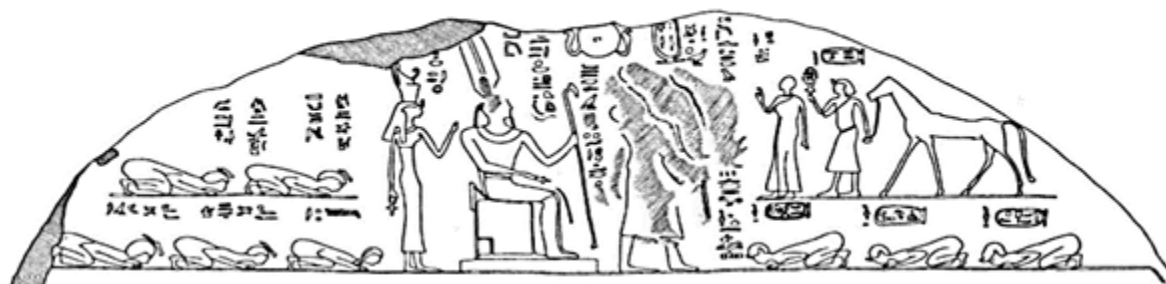


Figure 6 The triumphal stela of King Piye, from Gebel Barkal, now at Cairo Museum, nos. 48862, 47086, and 47081.⁴⁰

Discussion

The term \$n-Nxn involves two elements: \$n and NxN. The latter was the name of a city that was known as Hieraknopolis in Greek and modern Kom el Ahmar. It was regarded as the capital of Upper Egypt in the Predynastic Period. Furthermore, it is the name of the third Nome of Upper Egypt.⁴² In contrast, the former means interior or residence. However, its significance is not certain. According to its determinative, it seems to have been either the residence of the King at Memphis or a specific region situated at the south. Thus, the term could be translated as “the interior of Nekhen” to imply the Nomes located in the north and the south of Nekhen.⁴³

It is noteworthy that Nekhen was considered as the main center of the authority and the power of the rulers of Upper Egypt in the Predynastic Period since it was regarded as the capital of Upper Egypt. Moreover, it indicates that unification was done by the sun god and in connection with the triumphal of his religion. In the meantime, there was a place called Nekhen to equip the ruler in his lifetime and after his death with equipment.⁴⁴ Userkaf, the founder of the Fifth Dynasty, named his sun temple NxN-Ra to confirm his legitimacy and his authority upon all Egypt and to link himself with the sun god. He demonstrated that he was the successor of the kings who ruled from Nekhen in the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Periods.⁴⁵ Furthermore the term NxN probably means fort as an indication to the forts of Abydos associating with rites of the King.⁴⁶

It is worth noting that the exact limits of #n-Nxn are not known. It may be as a part or all of Upper Egypt. Therefore, there is a debate between the scholars concerning its limits. Posener states that spAwt nw #n-Nxn in archival texts allude to the geographical region located in Upper Egypt to describe the southern parts of Upper Egypt or the entire of Upper Egypt.⁴⁷

Probably, the term is analogous with the toponym tp-rsy as Peck and Fischer suggest. This view was accepted by Gabra who added that both #n-Nxn and tp-rsy were geographical regions, and the toponym tp-rsy was replaced by #n-

Nxn on the victory stela of Piye. It is quite probable that the latter may be used to designate Elephantine or the Lower Nubia, especially in the Middle Kingdom period. An inscription from Dayr-el-Ballas dating to the reign of Montuhotep Neb-hepet-re reports the annexation of Lower Nubia to Upper Egypt.

It is most likely that #n-Nxn involved the seventh southernmost nomes of Upper Egypt according to the stela of Hetepi. It was apparently that Abydos was not a part of this administrative unit. A similar reference to the seventh southernmost nomes occurred in the decree of King Nefer-kau-Hor of the Eighth Dynasty addressed to Shmay to inform him that the king appointed his son Idy as the nomarch of the seventh southernmost provinces of Upper Egypt.

It might be noted that the aim of Ankhtyfy's fights, the nomarch of Nekhen against the so-called Theban-Coptite coalition was to control the definable region #n-Nxn and to make centralization in administration in the First Intermediate Period.

It is worthwhile saying that #n-Nxn was an administrative sector that played an important role in the ancient Egyptian economy in connection with agriculture and collecting taxes. Since the titles of Twaw of Naga-el-Der reveal that it represented an administrative and economic unit that was closely linked to the central government, higher officials bore the titles imy-r spAwt n #n-Nxn “overseer of the provinces of #n-Nxn”, imy-r AHt “the overseer of the field in addition to nrt -xrw m spAwt n #n-Nxn a strong voice in the provinces of #n-Nxn [3]. The holder of the latter title was responsible for agriculture activities and checking the production of the estates that belonged to the king or the high-rank officials in the districts. Nevertheless, the text of Ptolemy IV in Karnak proved that the king brought the production of the estates of #n-Nxn to the god Hours.

Conclusion

Analyzing the previous data reveal that the term \$n-Nxn was attested for the first time in the Fourth dynasty in the form of \$nw to designate the whole of Upper Egypt. By the middle of the Sixth Dynasty, the definable toponym \$n-Nxn was created to distinguish an administrative unit in Upper Egypt centered at Nekhen (the third province of Upper Egypt). By the rise of the Eleventh Dynasty, it was used to describe a geographical region formed by the Seventh Nomes to the southernmost of Upper Egypt. Abydos was not a part of this administrative sector.

The wart \$n-Nxn was created along with other administrative sectors, such as tp-rsy and spAwt Hryw-ib Smaw due to the trend of the central government to control the sources in those administrative units and to end the decentralization in the kingdom during the Sixth Dynasty. The wart \$n-Nxn was administrated by a high-rank official charged with the supervision of the agricultural lands and collecting taxes. King Amenmhat I tried to connect himself with \$n-Nxn centred in NxN; the ancient capital in the Proto-Dynastic to ensure his legitimacy for the throne.

#n-Nxn as a geographical region formed by the seventh Nomes southernmost of Upper Egypt. It started with the meaning of the term and the determinatives attached to it. Nekhen played an important role in the Proto-dynastic period. #n-Nxn was attested in both the literary texts and the various archival texts to designate specific areas in Upper Egypt. Additionally, #n-Nxn region was rich with agricultural

³Peck, C.N. (1959). Some decorated Tombs of the First Intermediate Period at Naga ed-Der, Ann Arbor press. New York, pl.2. & Brovarski, E., (1989). Inscribed Material of the First Intermediate Period from Naga-ed-Der, Ph.D. Dissertation, Howell company, Chicago, p.291.

lands and administrated by the great overlord of Abydos who charged with over vision and collecting taxes imposed on this region.

It is most likely that the term \$n-Nxn refers to the provinces which were under the authority of Thebes during first intermediate period, and that region was named with the famous and holly city Nkhen, later it was considered as administrative sector.

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Conflicts of interests

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