

# Current Research in Egyptology 2021

Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Symposium,  
University of the Aegean, 9-16 May 2021

Edited by

Electra Apostola and Christos Kekes



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Ceremonial shields featuring smiting scenes, TT40. Davies and Gardiner 1926: pl. 25.

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# The ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’: some remarks about a high military title in the Second Intermediate Period and the Egyptian army in the 17th dynasty

Francesco De Gaetano

## Abstract

It is difficult to gain a clear view of Egyptian military organisation and warfare in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC, due to the absence of clear and telling evidence in archaeological and literary record. However, it is possible to produce an overall picture by evaluating the number of records for military-ranked men and their effect on Egypt’s social and political history. Among the more recorded military titles in the Second Intermediate Period, the ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’ (*ḳtꜣw n ꜥt ḥꜣꜣ*), which probably refers to the command of naval forces, becomes more relevant amongst the high military officers, and more important at the Royal Court and the leadership of the Egyptian troops. While the 13th dynasty records show close familial and political ties within the echelons of the Late Middle Kingdom administration, these military officers could be considered the core officers of the Egyptian army by the 17th dynasty, who oversaw the defence of the Theban Kingdom. In this period, they seem to be, far more than just naval officers, more evidently the ‘senior officers’ of the 17th dynasty army. This paper describes and explains the role of the ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’, and considers the emergence and characteristics of the title, his records, and military tasks, until the sudden disappearance of the role at the beginning of the New Kingdom.

## Keywords

Army; Egyptian warfare; Military organisation; Middle Kingdom; Second Intermediate Period

## The ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’: Translations and writings and of the title

It remains difficult to gain an overview of the Egyptian military system in the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, despite the considerable number of sources. The nature of the records and the events they involve often obscure a full comprehension of the meaning and relevance of a military title, as well as the clear hierarchy of the offices. Egyptian warfare could be difficult to understand, and even misleading, without knowledge of the ancient titles. It is necessary to make a wide use of many types of archaeological data (funerary stelae, seals, rock, and funerary inscription) to study administration and society of this period. Previous prosopographies of the known officers of the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period are also needed. In addition to the fundamental *Personendaten* with hundreds of dossiers concerning recorded individuals of the Middle Kingdom (Franke 1984a) and a later integration (Grajetzki and Stefanović 2012), there are two prosopographical studies on the army and the naval officers in this period (Chevereau 1991; 1992), and a more recent compendium of the holders of military titles (Stefanović 2006). For the translation of the military titles, Ward’s work (Ward 1982) on Middle Kingdom titles and epithets is useful. With the use of data of the prosopographies for the study of military titles, it is now possible to trace one of the most important

military titles of the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, along with the history of its translation and interpretation.

### ***What was then an $\text{ḥ}t\text{w } n \text{ ḥ}t \text{ ḥ}q\text{ḳ}$ ? A brief history of interpretations and translations***

The frequency of mentions of the officials  $\text{ḥ}t\text{w } n \text{ ḥ}t \text{ ḥ}q\text{ḳ}$  seems to have drawn an earlier interest. In 1905 a contribution by R. Weill shows this interest, highlighting two basic points: first, the connection between an official title and the ‘royal table’ as expressed in hieroglyphics (the  $\text{ḥ}t \text{ ḥ}q\text{ḳ}$  which will be interpreted shortly); and secondly, the presence of a different kind of official related to this ‘royal table’ called  $\text{ḥ}n\text{ḥ}w$  (Weill 1905). Still, the meaning of the title  $\text{ḥ}t\text{w } n \text{ ḥ}t \text{ ḥ}q\text{ḳ}$  has for decades remained partly misunderstood. The first part of the title, the leg-Gardiner sign D56, has long kept a reading  $w^crtw$ , due to the near homograph word  $w^crt$  ‘region, part’ (Spiegelberg 1896: 55-56; Erman and Grapow 1926-1931, Vol. I: 287-288) and the following  $\text{ḥ}t \text{ ḥ}q\text{ḳ}$  had a literal meaning, as a royal institution in charge of provisioning a class of officers, the  $\text{ḥ}n\text{ḥ}w.w$ . The reading of  $w^crtw \text{ } n \text{ ḥ}t \text{ ḥ}q\text{ḳ}$  has for a long time been accepted by scholars and translated as ‘district commandant’ (Breasted 1906: 696), ‘overseer of the ruler’s table’ (Erman and Grapow 1926-1931, Vol. I: 288.13), ‘attendant of the ruler’s table’ (Ward 1982: 7 [13]). According to G. Posener, a new reading of the leg-sign D56 showed a connection between the former  $w^crtw$  title and the verbal root  $\text{ḥ}t$ , with the meaning ‘raise’ or ‘instruct’, mainly applying to the young people, as the related word  $\text{ḥ}t\text{y}t$  ‘nurse’ clearly demonstrates (Erman and Grapow 1926-1931, Vol. I: 23.10). This argument revealed a link between the officials of the Middle Kingdom and the older  $\text{ḥ}t\text{w}.w$  officers of the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period, who were identified as tutors of a kind, or regional administrators (Jones 2000: 3-4 [14]; Posener 1963). The reading of  $\text{ḥ}t\text{w}$  instead of  $w^crtw$  was then accepted (Franke 1984b: 115).

The second part of the title, the ‘royal table’, has revealed an even more complex meaning than that previously considered. Evaluating the number of uses of the word  $\text{ḥ}t$  and combining this with differences in writings, it seems reasonable to consider three different meanings:

- Written with the hobble sign V13 as the first consonant: building wood for a ship, such as the wood needed for the ship of Amun in the Report of Wenamun (Erman and Grapow 1926-1931, Vol. V: 339.13; Goedicke 1975).
- Written likewise: a meal table or offering table, comparable to the word  $w\text{d}\text{ḥ}w$  (Erman and Grapow 1926-1931, Vol. V: 338.9-339.11).
- With the determinative sign A1 and plural strokes: staff or gang of people (Erman and Grapow 1926-1931, Vol. V: 338.1-6). In later sources, written sometimes with the sign Y1, it describes a staff of scribes in a religious institution (Gardiner 1938).

Alan H. Gardiner (1938: 171) considered the various translations of  $\text{ḥ}t$  and the transition of meaning from ‘wooden board’ to ‘table’, ‘tablemate’ and then ‘staff’. It has been pointed out that the  $\text{ḥ}t\text{w}$ -titles describe a class of officers related to military tasks, and that the  $\text{ḥ}n\text{ḥ}w$  are their subordinates (Berlev 1967; 1971). The records used by Berlev to determine this part of the Middle Kingdom military organisation led to the  $\text{ḥ}t \text{ ḥ}q\text{ḳ}$  being defined as a squad of soldiers, or more precisely a crew of ‘marines’. When evaluating those records, after the Early Middle Kingdom, the collective word  $\text{ḥ}t$  appears connected to the definition of staff: a staff of workers in a household in the ‘Heqanakhte Papers’ (James 1962: II.43 – XIV.11), in a construction project in the tomb of the nomarch Djehutihotep in Deir el-Bersheh (Newberry 1895: pl. XV) or involved in shipbuilding and transport by river in the P. Reisner I and II



(Simpson 1963: J.2-10-11-17-18, K.9; 1965: D.9-E.6). More importantly, an inscription by a mining expedition found in Wadi Hammamat and dated to the reign of Senwosret I counts in the list of the escorting *ḥꜣwtj.w*-soldiers three hundred *ꜥnhw.w n tt ḥqꜣ* (Farout 1994: 143-172). According to Berlev, these 'soldiers of the ruler's crew' must be the subordinates of the *ꜣtw.w n tt ḥqꜣ* and their involvement in warfare operations on the Nile cannot be ruled out indefinitely. Those military units were probably organised as if they are maritime units, and maritime expressions could have influenced the military terms. Berlev's theory on 'amphibious warfare' in the Middle Kingdom and the military titles concerned, was a milestone in our understanding of the title *ꜣtw n tt ḥqꜣ*. The meaning of this title is rendered as 'chief of the military sailors' (Chevereau 1992: 23), 'commander of the crew of the ruler' (Stefanović 2006: 72-94), 'commander of the ruler's crew' (Quirke 2004a: 99), '*ꜣtw*-official of the staff/table of the ruler' (Hannig 2006: 49-50) and has been accepted as a military title at present.

### *Some remarks about the writings of the title ꜣtw n tt ḥqꜣ*

The nearly two hundred records of *ꜣtw n tt ḥqꜣ* of the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period were found in different types of writing media, but mostly in the epigraphy of hieroglyph writing system. It is important, however, to remember the presence of the hieratic P. Boulaq 18, the famous 13th Dynasty administrative account of the Theban palace, which mentions four *ꜣtw.w n tt ḥqꜣ* officials (Allam 2019; Mariette 1872; Quirke 1990: 9-121; Scharf 1922). Three hieroglyphic forms of the title are known from records:

- Gardiner D56 + X1 + G43 (*ꜣtw*) + N35 (*n*) + S38 + N29 (*ḥqꜣ*) + R3 + X1 + Z1 (*tt*)
- Gardiner D56 + X1 + G43 (*ꜣtw*) + N35 (*n*) + S38 + N29 (*ḥqꜣ*) + T36A + X1 + Z1 (*tt*)
- Gardiner D56 + X1 + G43 (*ꜣtw*) + N35 (*n*) + S38 + N29 (*ḥqꜣ*) + R1 + X1 + Z1 (*tt*)

All three forms present the honorific transposition of the word *ḥqꜣ* (Ruler) before the word *tt* (crew), with almost all records written in the first type of title. There are also many variants: the complete spelling of *tt* and *ḥqꜣ* with phonetic complements on the stela CG 20709 (Lange and Schäfer 1908: 335), the word *tt* with the determinative Gardiner A1 and the plural strokes in the stela CG 20294 (Lange and Schäfer 1902: 307-308), and the writing of *ꜣtw* with the combined sign Gardiner V15, the hobble and walking legs sign, on the offering table MFA 01.7303 (Randall-McIver and Mace 1902: pl. XXXIV.4), just to name the more notable. The absence of phonetic complements in the words *ꜣtw* and *tt* is also common.

### *An overview of the records of the ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’*

Table 1. Records of the ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’ in the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period. Sources: Chevereau 1992; Franke 1984; Grajetzki and Stefanović 2012; Ilin-Tomich 2021; Stefanović 2006.

Period	Stela – Offering Table	Seal	Tomb Inscription	Other (statue, funerary equipment etc.)	Total
Middle Kingdom	37	27	X	17	81
Second Intermediate Period	37	X	15	7	59

### **The ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’ in the Late Middle Kingdom**

While references to a *tt hq3* are related to nautical activities in the Early Middle Kingdom, it is in the Late Middle Kingdom that the title acquires new and paramount importance. It is now commonly agreed by scholars that the reign of Senwosret III (c. 1878-1839 BC) was distinguished, beyond intense military activity, by administrative reforms changing the existence and the relevance of some titles and causing the disappearance of others (Grajetzki 2009: 51-58; 2020: 147-149; Quirke 2004a: 7-9). The archaeological documentation of this period makes the existence and spread of the holders of the title *3tw n tt hq3* tangible. One of the earlier and most famous examples is the commander Khusobek, who was known from his funerary stela Manchester Museum 3306 for his brilliant military career and was recorded in a rock inscription near the Nubian fortress of Semna. He was probably at the highest point of his *cursus honorum*, as ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’ (Baines 1987; Hintze and Reineke 1989: 155-156 [520]). He was promoted to this task after having served as *šmsw n hq3* ‘follower of the ruler’, *shd šmsw.w* ‘controller of guards’ and *3tw 3 n njwt* ‘commander of citizen troops’: this should indicate a rank of the ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’ higher than the previous titles. This theory seems confirmed by the pieces of evidence in the following 13th dynasty. The Egyptian army seems to have been an organisation divided in militia forces, led by the aforementioned ‘commander of citizen troops’ and with the *nhw.w n njwt* as citizen soldiers or perhaps low-ranking officers and the chosen troops of *šmsw.w*, i.e., retainers. In this outline, as Quirke correctly remarks, the ‘commanders of the ruler’s crew’ could have been the leaders of the armed Egyptian forces, rather than marine troops. They were the upper echelons of military administration, inferior only to the *mr mšc wr* ‘the chief overseer of the army’ (Quirke 1990: 82-83). Their subordinates were clearly the *nhw.w n tt hq3*, soldiers or officers of the ruler’s crew. The abundance of sources for the Late Middle Kingdom administration allows us to imagine the key role and status of the ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’. Four *3tw.w n tt hq3* are listed in P. Boulaq 18, between the administrative and military officers of ‘the Outer Palace’ who take advantage of the Court provisions (Quirke 1990: 73-75). They possibly had family ties with the royal dynasty and given the troubled political history of the period they might have aimed to take the crown. In the stela Cairo CG 20394 the ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’ Nedjesankh-Jw is shown with his wife, the ‘king’s daughter’ Hatshepsut, daughter of queen Nofret and perhaps Pharaoh Amenemhat I (Joseph 2019; Lange and Schäfer 1902: 390-391; Ryholt 1997: 246). It is tempting, although not at all confirmed, to recognise the recorded ‘commander of the ruler’s crew’ Sobekhotep as the 13th dynasty King

Sobekhotep III. He is known from twenty-one seals in which he appears with his name and title, together with his father Mentuhotep, who is also a 'commander of the ruler's crew' too (Franke 1984a: 345 [577]; Martin 1971: pl. XXIII; Ryholt 1997: 222).

### The Second Intermediate Period in Egypt: an outline of military situation

The end of the Late Middle Kingdom and the beginning of the Second Intermediate Period are nowadays generally considered to be marked out by three major events: the end of the sovereignty based in Itj-Tawy, the capital of the 12th and 13th dynasty Egyptian rulers, the establishment of a lineage of foreign rulers known as Hyksos governing the Delta from Avaris and the constitution of a regional type of 'indigenous' state in the southern part of Egypt (Polz 2018). The progressive loss of control of northern Nubia by the Egyptian rulers allowed the expansion of the Nubian kingdom of Kerma, at least as far as the town of Elephantine. This is a general historical outline of the period, which involves many doubts and problems (Grajetzki 2020: 648-651; Morenz and Popko 2010: 102-108; Ryholt 1997: 301-310). It is nevertheless important to focus on the military history of Egypt at that period. According to Ryholt's reconstruction, the new Hyksos state could have been an aggressive military power advancing southwards with a serious threat to the southern Egyptian rulers. The so-called Abydos dynasty and the 16th/17th dynasties based in Thebes would also have had to face attacks by the Kerma people from Nubia (Davies 2003; Ryholt 1997: 118-166). The available sources, however, do not allow the establishment of either the modes and times of this regional warfare, nor the presence of conflicts between local rulers in southern Egypt. It is possible to make a summary starting from an analysis of the records, which are substantial in providing data on military titles, and, consequently, on military organisation. It is noteworthy that the Hyksos kingdom seems to have partially adopted the Late Middle Kingdom titles administration, perhaps adapting them to their homeland customs; this could also have happened for the military titles. The record of a 'commander of the ruler's crew' named Achtuan, dated to the Hyksos period, could be taken as evidence (Schneider 2003: 328-333; Shirley 2013: 523-539). One *ḥnw n njwt*, one *ḥnw n tt ḥq* and one *jry pdt* 'keeper of bow' have also been identified from the owners of scarab seals related to the 14th and 15th dynasties (Quirke 2004b: 190).

Archaeological evidence for the Nubian Kingdom reveals that the Egyptian communities in and near the Middle Kingdom fortresses, descendants of the military garrisons, had served the 'rulers of Kush'. The funerary stela Philadelphia I0984 of Sepedher shows that his officer was a *tsw n bhn*, 'a commander of Buhen' serving the ruler of Kerma (Kubisch 2010: 323-325; Säve-Söderbergh 1949: 54-56). Grave 1 of the cemetery H in Buhen contains another stela of a military officer dated from the Second Intermediate Period, the 'commander of the ruler's crew' Idu-Aam (Smith 1976: 42-43). Little can be said about the Abydos dynasty officers, even if such an independent lineage of rulers, perhaps a local military family, could have reigned for some time (Wegner and Cahail 2021: 6).

Meanwhile, the Theban Kingdom seems to have known a peculiar evolution in its administrative and military system. Some of the Late Middle Kingdom titles seem to have disappeared, including the middle-lower ranking titles, and there is a notable increase in policing and military titles. This change could have arisen from a regional organisation of the Theban élites becoming a state, before the end of 13th dynasty, rather than an adaptation of the Egyptian establishment, fleeing from the north occupied by the Hyksos (Ilin-Tomich 2014). The rise of military titles recorded for the 16th and 17th dynasties suggests a need to strengthen the army organisation, which was more likely to have faced military threats from the northern and the southern border, as well as probable internal upheavals. This explanation seems confirmed by the allusions to conflicts on royal stelae and the rising cult of *nḥtt wʿst*,

the ‘powerful Thebes’ (Ilin-Tomich 2014: 162-166; Vernus 1989). The data from this period suggests the importance of towns like Abydos, Koptos, Edfu and Nekheb as local strongholds for the defence of the Theban kingdom, with garrisons and military commanders cooperating with local governors. At Abydos a local governor and overseer of a temple called Kumes, living under the king Rahotep, is recorded in the stela Louvre C287 as *ṯsw jw<sup>c</sup>jj n ʒbdw* ‘commander of the garrison of Abydos’ (Franke 1985). Also, from Abydos comes the stela OIM E7176 with a depiction of the *sʿ nswt* Nakht, and a military title never attested before, *hry pdt* ‘troop commander’ (Polz 2007: 225). The *ṯsw n gbtjw*, ‘commander of Koptos’, Qinen is recorded by stela Cairo JE 30770 bis from the time of king Nubkheperra Antef (Polz 2007: 331-333). The military function of these three officers could be explained by their sharing the high title *sʿ nswt* ‘king’s son’, which will be mentioned shortly. The considerable number of recorded titles, like *ḥn n njwt*, *jrj pdt* and clearly *ʒtw n tt hqʿ* seems to confirm a ‘militarisation’ of the Theban Kingdom (Ilin-Tomich 2014: 173-181). Unfortunately for the historical reconstruction, this increase in military titles is not enough to prove the situation of continuous warfare, which was hypothesised for the Second Intermediate Period.

### The role of *ʒtw n tt hqʿ* in the Theban Kingdom in the Second Intermediate Period

The transformation of the political and military organisation of the Theban Kingdom in the Second Intermediate Period is clearly demonstrated by the spread of the title *sʿ nswt* ‘king’s son’, the use of which can be traced back to the late 13th dynasty but is recorded mainly in this period. The title, despite its appearance, does not seem to name royal-born high officers, charged with high administrative and military tasks by the Theban rulers in crucial places of their kingdom (Miniaci 2010; Schmitz 1976). At least four ‘commanders of the ruler’s crew’ were also appointed as ‘king’s son’, highlighting its basic military role. Only one of those commanders seems to have been a true royal-born prince: Imeny, who is known from the two fragments of his stela Moscow Pushkin Museum I.1.6.32+ London UC 14326, found in Koptos. He was born to the ‘king’s wife’ Haankhes. According to the current hypotheses, Imeny could have been the son of King Rahotep or King Sobekemsaf I (Polz 2007: 52-55; Schmitz 1976: 226-227). The involvement of an heir to the throne in military tasks could indicate the beginning of a well-known custom in the following New Kingdom when royal princes were allowed to serve in the higher ranks of the army.

A later source suggests that the ‘commanders of the ruler’s crew’ held a crucial position for the management of the Theban army. ‘The Duties of the Vizier’ from the tomb of Rekhmira, vizier under Tuthmosis III, lists the essential tasks of the most important functionary of the Egyptian administration, praising his position. Although an early 18th dynasty date has long been proposed (Boorn 1988), the records of some Middle Kingdom titles that later disappeared suggest a *terminus ante quem* in the Second Intermediate Period, thus an earlier date can be stated (Quirke 2004a: 18). A passage of the text, concerning the role of the vizier in the organisation of military expeditions, clearly mentions the ‘commanders of the ruler’s crew’ (Boorn 1988: 218):

R23) *ntf jrr dmd n mš<sup>c</sup> mnmn hr šms nb m [hd] m hnt ntf jrr hr<sup>c</sup> wnn m njwt rst m hnw hft ddt m pr nswt jnn.t(w) n=f ʒtw {h<sup>2</sup>p?} n hqʿ [r] h<sup>2</sup>f hn<sup>c</sup>, R24) *dʒdʒt nt mš<sup>c</sup> r rdjt n=sn tp rd n mš<sup>c</sup>**

R23) ‘It is he who assembles the army contingent that escorts the Lord when [sailing downstream] and upstream. It is he who organises the remainder (of the army) that stays behind in the Southern City and in the Residence according to what has been said in the palace. It is to him, [to] his office, that the

commander of the Ruler's crew and R 24) the army staff must be brought, in order to be given the instructions of the army'.

If the interpretation of the text is correct, the *ꜥꜥꜥꜥ n ꜥꜥ ꜥꜥꜥ* were not only summoned alongside with the *dꜥꜥꜥꜥ nꜥ mꜥꜥꜥ*, a sort of general staff of the army, but were also called by the chief of state administration to receive the most important military orders. Even if the 'Duties of the Vizier' must not be considered an essay about the Egyptian administration, this quote appears meaningful in connection with the subject considered.

### Archaeological evidence of the 'commanders of the ruler's crew'

A brief account of the related archaeological records contemporary with the Theban dynasties of the Second Intermediate Period could help us understand the role of the 'commanders of the ruler's crew' in the Theban Kingdom. The distribution of evidence seems to correspond to the geographic borders of the Theban kingdom, from Abydos in the north to Edfu in the South.

- *Abydos*. The importance of Abydos as a place for funerary monuments belonging to military officers continued in the Second Intermediate Period. The funerary shaft D78 was found with the funerary stela of the 'commander of the ruler's crew' Sobekhotep, and an *apotropaion* (an ivory or wood stick graved with magical figures) bearing the name of King Senebkay, an alleged king of the Abydos dynasty, in the northern part of the Abydos cemetery, called Cemetery D in the A. Mace's excavation. Cemetery D was a funerary site also related to the 13th dynasty, but given the objects found and the evidence of King Senebkay's activities in this area, a connection between this ruler and the officer Sobekhotep seems credible (Cahail 2015: 118-120; Randall-MacIver and Mace 1902: pl.43; Wegner and Cahail 2021: 346-351). The niche fragments Bruxelles E.5263 + Liverpool GM E.40-42, related to the 'commander of the ruler's crew' and 'king's son' Hor-Irief and dated to the late 17th dynasty, also come from Abydos (Marée 2010: 246; Miniaci 2010:117).
- *Thebes*. In western Thebes, the site of Dra Abu el-Naga was broadly used as the burial place of high-ranking men since the late 13th dynasty. The kings of 17th dynasty who ruled in Thebes were also buried here. From Dra Abu el-Naga comes the *rishi* coffin Cairo TN 19.11.27.5 of the 'commander of the ruler's crew' Teti. Stylistic features place this coffin in the late 17th dynasty, perhaps near the reign of Nubkheperre Antef (Miniaci 2011: 230-231).
- *Mo'alla*. A stela belonging to the 'commander of the ruler's crew' Khuenes comes from this site. Here, it is not this officer, but his son Iuenef who has the position of 'king's son' (Ball 1899: 76-77).
- *El-Kab*. The rock tombs of El-Kab, near the ancient city of Nekheb, have provided essential information about the history of southern Egypt in the Second Intermediate Period. A family of governors who held important religious, administrative and military offices between the late 13th dynasty and the 17th dynasty, with ties to the royal families of the Late Middle Kingdom, are recorded here (Davies 2010a; 2010b; Kubisch 2008: 274-293; Tylor 1896). It is known from the stela Cairo JE 52453, the so-called 'Juridical Stela', that the *ꜥꜥꜥꜥ n ꜥꜥ ꜥꜥꜥ* Kebsi, also mayor of Nekheb, sold his office of governor to Sobeknakht, probably the owner of the Rock Tomb no. 73 (Ganley 2004). It was his son, the second governor of El-Kab named Sobeknakht, who faced what was probably a massive raid by the Nubian forces of Kerma from

the south. The biographical inscription of Sobeknakht in the Rock Tomb no. 66 reveals that the governor was able to repel the invasion (Davies 2003). The importance of the region of Nekheb as a boundary zone, and the crucial military role of officials located here, could be confirmed by the depiction of no less than twelve *ꜥꜥw n ꜥꜥ ḥqꜥ* on the walls of Sobeknakht II's tomb (Tylor 1896: pls 3-9). Near the tomb of Sobeknakht, the Rock Tomb no. 56 and no. 64 have been identified as the burial places of the 'commander of the ruler's crew' Bebi and Renseneb, probably related to the same family of governors and dated to the Second Intermediate Period (Davies 2010b: 227; Lepsius 1849-1859: 52-54).

- *Edfu*. Archaeological excavations in the last century brought to light several funerary stelae and offering tables from the ancient *tell* of Edfu, the burial site of the Late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period, especially near and inside the mastaba of the Old Kingdom governor Isi, later venerated as a local saint (Alliot 1935). The 'commander of the ruler's crew' Ibiau and Senebu are two examples of local officers known from funerary stelae (Engelbach 1922: 119-122). A family of officers in Edfu from the same period seem to have shared the important task of *ꜥꜥw n ꜥꜥ ḥqꜥ* and *sꜥ nswt*: the 'king's son' Hor-her-khwtef with his son Ramesu, also titled 'commander of the ruler's crew', and the nephew Herj was finally also an *ꜥꜥw n ꜥꜥ ḥqꜥ*. They are recorded thanks to the stela Cairo JE 48229 and another stela of unknown location (Marée 2009: 59-62; Miniaci 2010:122). The existence of several military titles in the same family or household is a well-known feature of the Second Intermediate Period.

### The disappearance of the military title *ꜥꜥw n ꜥꜥ ḥqꜥ*

The disappearance of the title 'commander of the ruler's crew' from the archaeological records is neither clear nor easily explicable. It is undeniable that many Middle Kingdom titles disappeared at the end of the 17th dynasty. This phenomenon could be explained by a deep reform of the administration, and, consequently, of the military system used by the last kings of the Second Intermediate Period. This reform was probably the prelude to the wars led against the Hyksos by the Theban kings, and the Pharaoh Seqenenra Tao and his sons Ahmose and Kamose (Ryholt 1997: 171-183; Vandersleyen 1971), although the warfare accounts are silent about the presence of 'commanders of the ruler's crew' in Theban armies. They are not mentioned in the second stela of Kamose (Habachi 1972). The main source of Ahmose's wars is the biographic inscription in the rock tomb of the officer Ahmose, son of Ebana, in Elkab. Ahmose served as marine soldier and as *ḥrj ḥnjt* 'commander of ship's contingent', a title that would be widespread in the New Kingdom in connection with the Egyptian navy (Sethe 1906: 1). A change in military titles might have taken place at the end of the 17th dynasty. The last known record of a 'commander of the ruler's crew' comes from the stela Ashmolean Museum AN1971.5, belonging to an officer called Tjaw who probably lived under Kamose. The geographical references in the stela could be linked with the campaigns of the pharaoh in northern Egypt and in Nubia:

(X+4) *jrr mḥtj=f r ḥwt-wꜥrt rsj=f r Kšj m ḥswt ḥr bhdtj* (X+5) *ꜥꜥw n ꜥꜥ ḥqꜥ tꜥw whm ꜥnh jrj.n wꜥb ḥr-ꜥw-jb*

'One who made his north in Avaris and his south in Kush, in the favor of Horus of Edfu, the commander of the ruler's crew Tjaw, begotten by the wab-priest Her-aw-jb' (Gardiner 1916: 100; Kubisch 2008: 232-234).

At the beginning of the New Kingdom, a new type of warfare, which was based on chariots and not on the older 'amphibious warfare', caused the rise of a new military organisation (Berlev 1967: 20; Spalinger 2005: 1-24; 2013). The office of 'commander of the ruler's crew' was then no longer needed.

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