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In this fresh, authoritative and compelling survey of the archaeology of early Egypt, David Wengrow offers a new interpretation of the emergence of farming economies and the dynastic state, c.10,000 to 2650 BC. Exploring key themes such as the nature of state power, kingship and the inception of writing, Wengrow illuminates prehistoric social development along the Nile through comparison with neighbouring regions. Detailed analysis of the archaeological record reveals the interplay between large-scale processes of economic and political change and intimate material practices through which social identities were transformed, focusing upon ritual treatments of the dead. Employing rich empirical data and engaging critically with anthropological theory and the history of archaeological thought, Wengrow's work challenges the current theoretical isolation of Egyptian prehistory and breaches the methodological boundaries that separate prehistory from Egyptology. It is essential reading for anybody with an interest in ancient Egyptian civilisation or early state formation.

DAVID WENGROW is a Lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, where he has established a new programme of study comparing ancient societies of the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
Published in the United States of America by
Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521543743

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First published 2006

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from
the British Library*

ISBN-13 978-0-521-835862 - hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-835860 - hardback
ISBN-13 978-0-521-543743 - paperback
ISBN-10 0-521-543746 - paperback

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Abbreviations used in image credits, copyright and museum numbers which accompany the illustrations.

BM	Brooklyn Museum, Museum Collection Fund, New York
DAI	Deutsches Archäologisches Institut
EES	The Egypt Exploration Society, London
HE	The Hierakonpolis Expedition
IAA	The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority
ML	Musée du Louvre, Département des antiquités égyptiennes
MMA	The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Penn.	Pennsylvania-Yale-Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, Expedition to Abydos
Petrie	The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the time of this book's conception I had been planning a quite different kind of study, more historiography than archaeology. When Norman Yoffee suggested writing something on Egypt for this series, I saw an opportunity to combine these two interests. The result is more archaeology than history of ideas, and I am grateful to him, and to the reviewers of my original proposal, for keeping my pretensions in check. I would also like to thank Norman and Simon Whitmore of CUP for their enthusiasm and guidance throughout the book's preparation.

The text was written during my time as a Junior Research Fellow at Christ Church, Oxford University, which provided an ideal working environment, stimulating company and freedom to pursue my research. I am also grateful to the Warburg Institute for my brief but rewarding stay there as Frankfort Fellow, which left a lasting impression. Completion of the manuscript took place at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, whose staff and students I thank for making me welcome. I am indebted to the Institute for helping with the cost of illustrations, to Stuart Laidlaw for his patient assistance in preparing them for publication, and to all the excavators, museum staff and archivists who provided material. Full credits are given in the list of figure captions, and I would like to further acknowledge the generosity of Günter Dreyer, Renée Friedman, Stan Hendrickx, Donatella Usai, Baruch Brandl, Chris Naunton, Stephen Quirke, Christina Riggs and especially Helen Whitehouse. David O'Connor kindly made available as yet unpublished images and information relating to his work at Abydos.

Many of the ideas presented here took form during the completion of my doctoral thesis under the supervision of Roger Moorey. His unexpected death, and that of Jeremy Black in the same year, brings home to me how fortunate I was in my academic surroundings at Oxford University. Their presence, and that of Andrew and Sue Sherratt, provided as rich a set of influences and diverse a range of criticism as any student could have hoped for. My particular thanks are due to John Baines for his painstaking and invaluable comments on the manuscript of this book, which improved it enormously, and for his unflinching inspiration over the last few years.

I am grateful to the examiners of my doctoral thesis, Chris Gosden and Ian Hodder, for suggesting improvements and clarifications; Chris also provided

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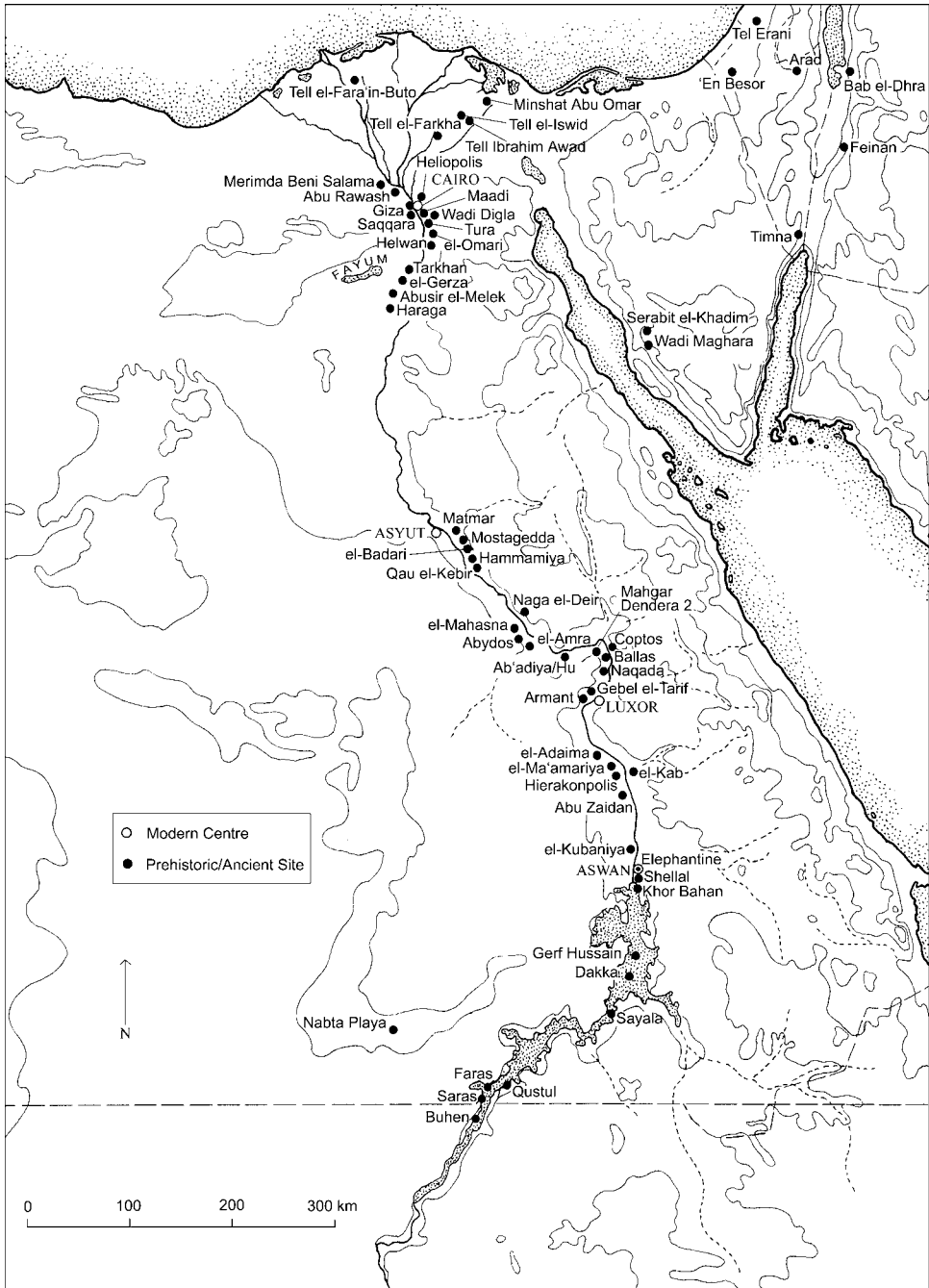
xx Acknowledgements

numerous opportunities to present my work to a wider audience, from which I benefited greatly. The North-East Africa seminar in Oxford, run by Wendy James and Douglas Johnson, was another valued source of feedback and ideas. Individual discussions with Paul Treherne, Jeremy Coote, Lynn Meskell, Mukulika Banerjee, Maurice Bloch and Mike Rowlands sharpened my understanding of many issues. I have Dorian Fuller to thank for the opportunity to conduct fieldwork at the Fourth Cataract of the Nile, which informed several aspects of this study. No less essential were the resources of the Sackler, Balfour and Tylor libraries in Oxford, and the library of the Institute of Archaeology in London: my special gratitude to Diane Bergman, Mark Dickerson, Mike Morris and Robert Kirby for their expert assistance.

In writing this book I appreciated again Holly Pittman's kindness in inviting me, as a graduate student, to a conference on the origins of writing at the University of Pennsylvania. Peter Ucko, as well as being a constant source of motivation, gave me the opportunity to participate in the 'Encounters with Ancient Egypt' conference at UCL, which opened up new perspectives. Several of the following chapters draw upon my earlier research articles, including contributions to that conference, and chapter 5 is reworked from a paper co-written with John Baines (Wengrow and Baines 2004).

My final thanks go to my ever-growing family for their love and support.

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Map of Egypt, showing prehistoric and early dynastic sites