Unification of Egypt

The End of the Predynastic
Later Egyptian tradition contains references to the existence of separate kingdoms to the north and south.

There is insufficient archaeological evidence to show what form of political control was present in the two power centers.
The general consensus is that the Upper Egyptian kingdom (Hierakonpolis) and the Lower Egyptian kingdom (Buto) were probably unified somewhere around BC 3050.
What is known, however, is that there were probably two distinct phases to the process of unification:

- The spread of a unique material culture (originating in Upper Egypt) throughout the entire Nile Valley
- The formation of a unified political control.
Lower Egyptian Evidence
Upper Egyptian material culture moving into Lower Egypt during the Naqada II/Naqada III periods is one of the most visible characteristics of the process of unification.

- Minshat Abu Omar - Naqada III cemetery with Upper Egyptian funerary goods.
- Minshat Abu Omar - names of Scorpion and Narmer appear on ceramic vessels.
- Tell Ibrahim Awad - the names of Ka and Narmer on ceramic trade vessels.
The best evidence as to the spread of Upper Egyptian material culture into Lower Egypt comes from Buto:

- The earliest layers (bottom) contain ceramics typical of those found at Ma’adi.

- The layer above (later) is transitional. Also features ceramics that were made in Lower Egypt, but in the Upper Egyptian style.

- The later Predynastic layers show a dramatic shift in the makeup of the ceramic assemblage. Upper Egyptian ceramics make up about 99%.
Evidence for Political Control
Narmer Palette
• Much of the discussion of political unification has been influenced by the **Narmer Palette**

• Discovered by J.E. Quibell and F.W. Green during their excavations at Hierakonpolis during 1897 and 1899

• Discovered among a cache of religious objects in the temple precinct of Nekhen (Hierakonpolis)
Narmer, with the white crown of Upper Egypt, stands with an upraised mace preparing to smite a kneeling captive.
Narmer, wearing the Red Crown of Lower Egypt, inspects two rows of bound and decapitated captives.

Four standard bearers precede the party. The standards later came to be called the "followers of Horus," or "the Gods who Follow Horus."

A bull is shown attacking a walled and fortified town - some scholars believe it is Buto.
Scorpion Mace
Head
The Scorpion Mace head was discovered at Hierakonpolis by Quibell and Green in the same cache that the Narmer Palette was discovered.

Scorpion, who might have been the predecessor of Narmer, is shown participating in an agricultural ceremony (most likely associated with annual irrigation).
Several standards from different districts in Upper Egypt have dead birds hanging from them.

The birds are traditionally referred to as *rekhyt*.

In Dynastic times, *rekhyt* birds are symbolically associated with a specific population in Lower Egypt.
The Towns Palette
- Dates to Naqada III

- Unprovenienced, but believed to have been excavated from the Dynasty 0/Protodynastic tomb in Abydos.

- Referred to by many names: The Libyan Palette, the Siege Palette, the Tjehenu Palette, the Trees and Towns Palette
Lower Egyptian walled cities under attack

The attacking forces are represented by animal symbols that are probably symbolic of specific Upper Egyptian kin/tribal groups or city-states.
We can form a general picture that incorporates both political expansion (Upper Egypt)/interaction and political centralization that happened over a period of time.

Unification itself didn’t happen in one grand military event - probably happened over a protracted period over the lives of several political leaders (proto-pharaohs).

It would be fruitless even to attempt to pinpoint a single individual responsible for political unification (even if one existed).
The End