Egyptological Hypotheses 2025, November, Article no. 26
https://www.egyptological-hypotheses.org
All rights reserved.

EGYPTOLOGICAL Hypotheses

Written records from the Thinite period

Interpretations and comments on selected examples

Part 1

Eva Traunmüller, Austria[1]

Contents

1 The origins of writing in ancient Egypt 1
2 Selected written records from the 0th and 1st Dynasties 3
2.1 Product labels from the tomb of King Scorpion I 3
2.2 The back of the ceremonial palette from the reign of King Narmer 9
2.3 The front of the Narmer Palette 14

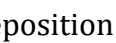
1 The origins of writing in ancient Egypt

The earliest inscribed objects from Egypt are closures and seals made of unfired clay with roll seal impressions,[2] and small plates made of ivory or bone with holes for attaching them to vessels, containers, or bags (product labels). For a consignment of goods, at least three pieces of information are useful: the type of goods, the consignor, and the consignee. However, in early ancient Egypt it was not necessary to specify a consignee because the delivery address was always the royal residence. Most of the goods were tax payments in kind.

In most cases, the type of goods could be determined from the shape of the storage vessel or packaging, or from the closure or seal. The consignor was not a person, but rather a locality in the broadest sense, i.e., a place, city, administrative district, agricultural domain, vineyard, granary, or warehouse. P. Kaplony (1963) considered the hieroglyphs  (scepter

1 Correspondence to: eva.traunmueller@gmx.net

2 For types of ancient Egyptian closures see Ref 1, vol 1, pp 49–59.

[sign list: S42], phonetic value *ḫrp*) and  (face [D2], phonetic value *ḥr*) as official titles meaning "head" or "manager."[3] I interpret as a short spelling for *ḫrp* "tax, levy" and  as the preposition *ḥr* "from," as in  "levy of Nekheb" [El-Kab] and  "from Nekhen" [Hierakonpolis], respectively.[4]

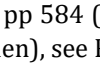
The king, princes, or very high-ranking officials appear on closures or labels as "owners" of domains.[5] The king's name in the form of an animal symbol or short word was either painted on the vessel or contained in a seal impression on the closure (king's seal) or on a label. In my opinion, none of the pre- and early dynastic kings were actually named Scorpion, Elephant, Catfish, Snake, Ka, Den, Aha, etc., but rather, each king chose an animal or catchword[6] for himself that made him clearly recognizable in inscriptions and seals.[7] As writing culture advanced, the king's name was framed by a serekh and royal titles were added. The use of logograms and simplified phonetic spellings for royal names and toponyms was a necessary concession to the largely illiterate population.

Excursus: The *serekh* (*srḫ*) 

The *serekh* is a simplified representation of the royal palace in the typical ancient Egyptian combination of elevation (niche-structured palace facade) and floor plan. The short name of the palace owner, the king, was inscribed in the inner free space.[8] A falcon is usually depicted at the top of the *serekh*.[9] It is the god Horus, a sky god dating back to prehistoric times, who became the supreme protector of the king and the kingship. The Egyptians are believed to have worshipped the king as the incarnation of Horus until the mid-Old Kingdom.[10] According to the prevailing doctrine, the Horus falcon is part of the name written in the *serekh*. For example, King Narmer would, strictly speaking, be called King "Horus-Narmer."[11] In any case, the Horus falcon and the name together form the oldest of

---

3 Ref 1, vol 1, passim.

4 Ref 2, pp 584 (21196, 21197), 666 (24283). For the spelling of the city names,  (Nekheb) and  (Nekhen), see Ref 1, vol 1, pp 105–106, 389.

5 It is improbable that they are the personal recipients of the goods (Ref 3, p 54; Ref 4, p 85).

6 *dn* (King Den „mutilator"); *ꜥḥꜥ* (King Aha „warrior"), etc.

7 The same principle was applied to cities and nomes as well.

8 The oldest examples of *serekhs* often do not enclose royal names, for instance on vessels from the predynastic tomb U-s in Umm el-Qaab (Abydos) and on the incense burner from tomb L11 in Qustul (Nubia).

9 King Peribsen (Dynasty 2) replaced the Horus falcon with the Seth animal. On the serekhs of King Kasekhemwy (Dynasty 2), both the falcon and the Seth animal are depicted. Rock carvings in el-Beda (Sinai) and Tura include *serekhs* with two falcons (Ref 5, fig 14.1-5).

10 Ref 6. From the fourth dynasty onwards, the king came to be seen as the son of the sun god Ra.

11 Cf. Ref 7, p 26.

the five royal titles: the “Horus name.”

The ancient Egyptians did not use perspective in their illustrations.[12] Elements positioned one above the other are to be thought of as being behind each other. In illustrations of a pond, the plants at the edge surround the pond's outline like a halo (“aspective” instead of perspective).[13] Therefore, in the *serekh*, the falcon does not actually sit on the palace, but (protectively?) behind it. This my interpretation aligns with royal statues, where the Horus falcon sits atop the back plate, holding the king's head (protectively?) between its wings from behind.[14]

2 Selected written records from the 0th and 1st Dynasties

Around 5,200 years ago, the ancient Egyptians began using the rebus principle in their hieroglyphic writing. This involves writing a sound or syllable with a pictogram of a living thing or object whose name sounds similar (a phonogram). For example, in English, "I believe" would be written as  (eye-bee-leave).[15] This principle was supplemented by logograms, which include ideograms and classifiers.

The vast majority of written records from the Thinite period[16] are seal impressions on vessel closures.[17] Section 2.1 presents examples of small inscribed tablets that served as labels for goods. The interpretations under the heading "Hypotheses" are my own speculative considerations.[18] (Most of what we believe we know about Egypt's early history is speculative.) All other statements are based on established Egyptological doctrine or have a cited source.

2.1 Product labels from the tomb of King Scorpion I

Nearly 200 product labels were discovered in the tomb of Predynastic King Scorpion I in

---

12 The first known use of perspective in painting occurred in ancient Greece around the middle of the fifth century BC.

13 E. g., tomb of Rekhmire (TT100), chapel, left wall (Ref 50, plt 3 a)

14 Statues of Khafre, Cairo CG 14 (JE 10062), CG 9; statue of Neferefre, Cairo JE 98171; fragment of a royal statue (Dyn. 4), MFA 27.1466; statuette of Pepi I, BM 39.120; royal statue (Dyn. 19), KHM 316756; statue of Ramesses VI, Cairo CG 42152 (JE 37175).

15 I owe this example to Ref 8, p 3. In general, ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs can represent individual consonants or groups of two to six consonants as phonograms. The vowels in between are mostly unknown and are therefore conventionally pronounced as "e." Certain voiced semi-consonants are pronounced as vowels: *ꜣ* as a short „a“, *ꜥ* as a long „a“, *j* as „i“, and *w* as „u“.

16 The term "Thinites" refers to kings whose capital was *ṯnj* (Thinis), located near Abydos. Since predynastic kings had their tombs built in Abydos, I attribute them to the Thinites (cf. Ref 9, p 207).

17 See the three-volume work by P. Kaplony (Ref 1).

18 I was not aware of any previously published opinions that coincide with my hypotheses.

Abydos (Umm el-Qaab, tomb U-j, Naqada IIIA).[19] He ruled Upper Egypt around 3150 BC. Measuring approximately 1.5 x 1.5–2 centimeters, the labels were engraved with one to three hieroglyphs indicating the place of origin of the goods.[20] Sometimes, the hieroglyphs were traced with black paint. The orientation of the signs is still quite arbitrary. The labels were produced in series.[21]

2.1.1



This label is read from right to left. The signs  (stork [G29], phonetic value *bꜣ*) and  (seat [Q1],[22] phonetic value *st*) together form the name *bꜣst* of the city of Bast in the eastern delta (modern Tell Basta), which was spelled  later on.[23] The city's patron goddess, who was depicted with the head of a cat, was called Bastet, "the one from Bast." The name of her temple, "House of Bastet," was transferred to the entire city. The city gained importance in the Late Period as the residence city of Dynasty 22. The Greeks called it "Bubastis."

19 Ref 10, p 144.

20 Cf. Ref 3, pp 54, 56–59; Ref 4, pp 89–91; Ref 11, p 133; Ref 12, p 135.

21 Ref 11, p 115.

22 A seat made of wickerwork is depicted (Ref 4, p 144). On predynastic pottery, regular patterns such as crocodile skin or wickerwork were depicted with checkered patterns (Ref 56, pp 33 [cat. 20], 37 [cat. 24], 49 [cat. 44], 75).

23 Ref 2, p 1135 (41340). I use left-to-right writing for spellings attested outside the Thinite period.

2.1.2



The signs on this label can also be traced back to well-known hieroglyphs (read from right to left):

 (horned viper [I9]) for the consonant *f*, or  (cobra [I10]) for the consonant *ḏ*;
 (mountain [N26]) with the phonetic value *ḏw*;
 (sky with scepter [N2]), a classifier for terms related to night and darkness.

Hypotheses:

2.1.2–a: Assuming the inscription reads  and all three signs are logograms, they likely represent the twelfth Upper Egyptian nome (Viper Mount), whose symbol was usually . This nome was located on the right bank of the Nile opposite the thirteenth Upper Egyptian nome and was documented only until the end of the Old Kingdom. The sign  is a classifier, presumably indicating the dark color of the Eastern Desert mountains, which are dominated by granite and basalt (unlike the light-colored limestone mountains of the Western Desert).

2.1.2–b: Assuming the inscription reads  and is a sequence of two phonograms and one logogram, it could mean *ḏw grḥ* "mountain of the night" or *ḏw wḫ* "dark mountain."[24] The region might be located in the Eastern Desert or in the "Black Desert," about 350 kilometers west of Cairo (e.g., Gebel el-Marsus or Gebel el-Dist). A similar toponym known from later texts is  *ḏw.w km.wt*, meaning "mountains of the blacknesses."[25] It seems that this label was used for a product of mining.

[24] Cf. Ref 4, p 143.

[25] Ref 2, p 1209 (47042).

2.1.3



All three labels most likely refer to the same region, even though the plant is differently shaped. The left and middle labels seem to depict a shrub, while the plant on the third label resembles the aquatic plant *Potamogeton lucens*, which was part of the canonical depiction of marshland in later tomb reliefs. The image of the canid with the bushy tail could be a jackal or an Egyptian wolf. [26]

According to G. Dreyer (1998, 2011) and F. A. K. Breyer (2002), the various forms of plants reflect individual ways of drawing a tree logogram.[27] The tree represented an agricultural domain or plantation and was combined with the Horus name of a king.[28] However, the existence of a predynastic king who used the image of a canid as a his royal Horus name is controversial.[29]

Hypotheses:

2.1.3–a: Similar plant forms were used as phonograms on cylinder seals, as seen in the impressions from that time.[30] Assuming the signs on the labels are phonograms, the possible initial signs and phonetic elements of the toponym in question include  (M1, *jm, jmꜣ*),  (M15, *mḥ, ꜥḫ, wꜣḫ*),  (M16, *ḥꜣ, ḥz*), or  (M2, *ḥn,*

[26] It is usually impossible to accurately identify wild canids in ancient Egyptian depictions and images of gods. Domesticated dogs were typically depicted with curled-up tails.

[27] Two more variants, and , are known from a vessel in Scorpion I's tomb and the "City Palette," respectively.

[28] Ref 3, pp 54, 65; Ref 4, p 141; Ref 10, pp 143–144; Ref 12, p 135, fig 14.17.

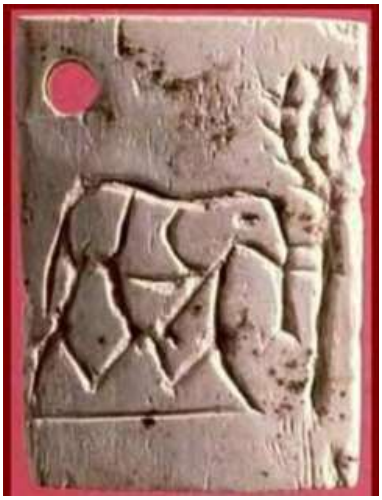
[29] Ref 4, p 178; Ref 13.

[30] Ref 1, vol 1, pp 313, 417–419.

jz). Indeed, several toponyms beginning with *jm(.w)*,[31] *mḥ(.w)*,[32] or *jz*,[33] are known from seal impressions.[34] The image of the canid might be an abbreviation for a canid-shaped deity, such as Khentiamentiu,[35] Wepwawet, or Anubis.[36]

2.1.3–b: If the tree and the canid are both logograms, they may refer to an area near a place of worship dedicated to a canid-shaped deity.[37] Possible locations include Abydos/Thinis,[38] *Z3w* (Greek: Sais, modern Sa al-Hagar),[39] *Ḥr-dj* (Greek: Kynopolis ["dog city"], modern El-Qeis,),[40] and *Z3w.tj* (Greek: Lykopolis ["wolf city"], modern Asyut). The latter is the most plausible to me because it was the main place of worship for Wepwawet.[41] It was the capital city of the thirteenth Upper Egyptian nome known as the Upper Sycamore Nome, whose symbol  contains a tree and a stand with wine jugs. The archaic nome symbols may have been pictograms before phonograms were developed.

2.1.4



This label shows the sign  (elephant [E26], phonetic value *3bw*) above the sign  (mountain range [N25]), which is a classifier for foreign countries and deserts. According

---

31 *jmw* "tent, hut, camp" (Ref 2, p 80 [2553–2556]).

32 *mḥ.w* "section of land" or *mḥ.t* "marshland in the delta" (Ref 2, p 376 [13609, 13612]).

33 *jz* "tomb, chamber, administrative unit" (Ref 2, p 113 [3785, 3791, 3798])

34 Ref 1, vol 1, pp 11, 417–419, 507; Ref 1, vol 2, pp 1219–1220, 1223.

35 Khentiamentiu was the archaic god of the necropolis of Abydos, who merged with Anubis in the Old Kingdom.

36 There is no known phonogram in the form of a canid. However, it must be borne in mind that hieroglyphic writing was still in its infancy in the pre- and early dynastic periods. Several signs had archaic phonetic values at that time, which later fell out of use (Ref 1, vol 1, pp 381–395).

37 Canids on labels sometimes carry flails like deities (Ref 10, p 144).

38 Cf. Ref 11, p 126.

39 Capital city of the fifth Lower Egyptian nome in the western Nile Delta.

40 Capital city of the seventeenth Upper Egyptian nome in Middle Egypt.

41 Capital city of the thirteenth Upper Egyptian nome known as the Upper Sycamore Nome.

to an older hypothesis by G. Dreyer (1998), the sign on which the elephant stands should be 𓊪 (mountain [N26], phonetic value *ḏw*) rather than 𓎟.[42] 𓃰𓊪 *ꜣb(w)-ḏw* may be interpreted as the phonetic spelling of the toponym *ꜣbḏw* (Greek: Abydos). It was later spelled 𓇋𓊪𓃀𓏏.[43] With the addition of the tree, the inscription reads from right to left: "Domain *ꜣbḏw*." The royal necropolis of Thinis (Umm el-Qaab), where Scorpion I was buried, was located in the Western Desert adjacent to Abydos. More recent opinions suggest that the group 𓃰𓎟 is correct and stands for the toponym *ꜣbw*, meaning "Elephantine," a river island near the northern end of the first cataract of the Nile, where goods from Nubia (including ivory) had to pass. It was later spelled 𓇋𓃰𓅱𓏏.[44] Accordingly, the label reads "Plantation Elephantine."[45]

Objection/hypotheses:

2.1.4–a: The island of Elephantine emerged in the late fourth millennium BC when the climate in northeastern Africa became drier, causing the Nile's water levels to drop.[46] The Egyptians considered it a special place because it was there that the approach of the annual Nile flood became first noticeable each summer. However, there was never a plantation on this granite island. Since predynastic times, it has been the place of a sanctuary dedicated to the goddess Satet.[47] Therefore, the combination 𓃰𓉐 of an elephant [E26] and an Upper Egyptian shrine [O326], which can be seen on label no. 61 from tomb U-j,[48] is a more plausible spelling for “Elephantine.”[49]

2.1.4–b: In the fourth millennium BC, elephants were widespread throughout the Fertile Crescent of the Near East.[50] The two sings, 𓃰𓎟, could have referred to neither Abydos nor Elephantine, but rather to a trading center for the highly prized elephant ivory in the Sinai Peninsula, or southern Syria-Palestine. Toponyms in

---

42 These two signs were interchangeable, as shown by the labels nos. 135, 142, and 143 according to G. Dreyer (Ref 4, p 143; Ref 11, p 127).

43 Ref 11, p 123, citing G. Dreyer; Ref 2, p 1101 (40602).

44 The foreign country/desert classifier (𓎟) for Elephantine is curious. Although the island was located on the border with Nubia, it always belonged to Egypt. Perhaps the classifier was used because it was a rocky island with sparse vegetation.

45 Ref 11, pp 122–123.

46 Ref 14, pp. 81–82.

47 Ref 15, pp 164–166; Ref 16, p 12–14; Ref 17, p 9.

48 Label no. 61, possibly also labels no. 62–69 in Ref 4, p 122, plt 30; Ref 11, p 123.

49 The sign 𓉐 representing the *pr-wr* shrine ("Great House") generally served as a logogram for an Upper Egyptian sanctuary (Ref 18, p 190).

50 Ref 19, pp 169–170, 173 (tab 1), 176, fig 5.

these regions were typically suffixed with the foreign country classifier, 𓈙. Even during the Predynastic period, under kings such as Scorpion I, Egyptian trade networks extended beyond the borders of the Nile Delta.[51] The place in question may have had an elephant in its symbol or name, perhaps in the local language.

2.2 The back of the ceremonial palette from the reign of King Narmer

Originally, a cosmetic palette was a utility item used to mix eye makeup from mineral powders and liquids. During the late Predynastic period, these palettes became richly decorated status symbols with ceremonial functions similar to those of ceremonial maces.[52] The palette of King Narmer (Dynasty 1) is decorated and inscribed using a delicate low-relief technique.



Ceremonial palette from the reign of King Narmer, back, Dyn. 1, c. 3200–3000 BC, greywacke, height 63 cm, width 42 cm, from Hierakonpolis, Cairo CG 14716/JE 32169.

2.2.1 Scenes

The back of the so-called Namer Palette is divided into three registers. The cow heads with open mouths at the top are emblems of the goddess Bat, who was primarily worshiped in

[51] Ref 20, passim. Chambers 7 and 10 of Skorpion I's tomb contained several hundred imported wine jars from Palestine (Ref 4, pp 16, 92–107, plts 7, 8).

[52] Ref 56, pp 137–155.

the seventh Upper Egyptian nome.[53] Narmer's *serekh* is inserted between these cow heads like a heading. In the next register, on the left, a male figure wearing a jug, a kind of sash, and a pair of sandals is depicted. He is a sandal bearer, a position of trust comparable to that of a personal valet. The king is unmistakably identified by the White Crown of Upper Egypt (still without the uraeus), the royal apron with a belt adorned with cow heads, and the insignia, which are animal tail, flail and war mace. In keeping with his supreme rank, he is the largest figure. The defeated man whom King Narmer threatens with his mace,[54] resembles the conventional depictions of West Asian foreigners in Egyptian two-dimensional art for the next three millennia.[55] To the right of the scene is an elongated piece of land with six papyrus stalks, from which the head of another captive protrudes. The Horus falcon above the papyrus stalks holds a rope attached to the captive's nose.

2.2.2 Hieroglyphic inscriptions

2.2.2.1



The king's name in the *serekh* at the top consists of the signs  (catfish *Clarias gariepinus* [K13]) and  (chisel [U23A]). The name can be pronounced *nʿr mr* (*Nar-mer*).[56] The falcon Horus is absent above the *serekh* but incorporated into the war scene below. Attempts to assign a meaning to *nʿr mr* result in nonsense, such as "painful catfish" or "beloved of the catfish god."[57] The hieroglyph  had a second phonetic value, *ꜣb*, so the king's name could also have been *Nar-ab*.

---

53 By the beginning of the New Kingdom, the goddess Bat had merged with Hathor, another goddess depicted as a cow.

54 The motif is known as the “smiting the enemy.” It was frequently used throughout the following millennia of ancient Egyptian culture.

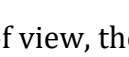
55 Cf. Ref 21, pp 499–513.

56 Wilkinson (1995) has suggested that both the signs  and  were phonograms with the archaic phonetic value *mr* and that the king’s name was "Mer" (Ref 9, p 210, note 38). Alternatively, the catfish may have symbolized the king's power over the forces of nature (Ref 7, pp 24–26).

57 Cf. Ref 22, p 69.

2.2.2.2



The combination of signs next to the sandal bearer's head consists of a seven-petaled flower  [M86A], which symbolizes power or kingship,[58] and a second sign, which E. Winter (1994) and T. Wilkinson (1999) interpreted as a shortened variant of the sign  (launderer's club [U36], phonetic value *ḥm*)[59]. Morenz (2003) regarded the sign under the flower as a mistakenly inverted  (beer jug [W22]) for *wdpw* “cupbearer”.[60] However, it is unlikely that the same mistake occurred on both sides of the palette. From a semantic point of view, the sign group  [M86A, U36] [61] with the translation *ḥm nzw* "servant of the king" is currently the most appropriate explanation for the inscription.

2.2.2.3



The piece of land with papyrus stalks is a hieroglyph in itself. It is  (M8) with the phonetic value *šꜣ*, representing a river island or a piece of land jutting out from floodwaters and covered in budding papyrus plants. This sign was used to write the word *šꜣ*, meaning "land," "marshland," or "floodplain."[62] It could be a reference to the Nile Delta, which was almost entirely covered by swamps and papyrus thickets during the flood season.[63] Some authors have placed the entire scene in the city of Buto in the

---

58 Ref 6, p 56; Ref 7, p 29; Ref 36, p 191; Ref 49. The use of the flower sign as a hieroglyph ended with King Narmer.

59 Ref 36, p 191; Ref 55, pp 279–290. This calls into question the traditional identification of the sign  as a launderer's club.

60 Ref 53, p 190.

61 As a royal symbol, the flower is placed at the front (honorific transposition).

62 Ref 2, p 866 (32033, 32036, 32038).

63 Ref 28, p 66.

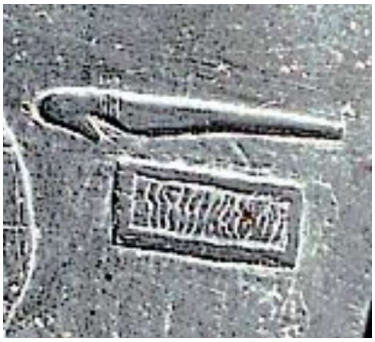
northwestern delta.[64] According to W. M. F. Petrie (1953), the six papyrus stems were used here as numerals to report 6,000 captives.[65]

Hypothesis:

The sign  [M8] must be distinguished from the sign  (chump of papyrus [M16]), which served as a symbol of Lower Egypt in the Thinite period. The sign  is a phonogram with the phonetic value *šȝ*, which also appears in the name of an ethnic group spelled  *šȝs.w* (Shasu). The Shasu lived on the eastern edge of the Nile Delta and in the Sinai Peninsula.[66] The enemy ruler might be a Shasu.

The fact that the Shasu are not attested in texts before the New Kingdom does not mean that this ethnic group did not exist in the Thinite period. It could be that the Shasu were not considered a threat during the unified and stable Old and Middle Kingdoms and were therefore not worth mentioning. After the crisis-ridden Second Intermediate Period, during which the delta had become a multi-ethnic region, the Egyptians harbored resentment toward the Shasu and other Near Eastern peoples. The rope attached to the captive's nose undoubtedly comes from the field of animal husbandry and is intended to express maximum humiliation.

2.2.2.4



The inscription next to the head of the defeated enemy consists of the precursor to the sign (harpoon [T21])[67] with the phonetic value *wᶜ*, and the sign (pond [N39]) for the consonant *š*. The sign combination's phonetic meaning is therefore *wᶜš* or *wᶜšj*, which could be an opposing Lower Egyptian ruler's personal, tribal, or territorial name.[68]

---

64 Ref 20, p 97; Ref 32, pp 64, 107; Ref 48, pp 23, 101.

65 Ref 23, pp 16–17. Later, the sign  (lotus stem with a leaf [M12]) came to represent the number 1,000.

66 Ref 2, p 870 (32198). The Shasu were probably nomadic or semi-nomadic people. The region where they roamed was called *tȝ šȝs.w* "Land of the Shasu" (Ref 24, pp 104–105, 185, 207). In New Kingdom texts, the Shasu are mostly referred to as captives, suggesting that they had resumed their conflict-ridden relationship with the Egyptians (Ref 24, pp 69–70, 105).

67 Until the late Old Kingdom, the cord coil in sign T21 is sparse (Ref 25, sign T21).

68 Ref 27, p 7; Ref 28, p 66; Ref 29, p 98; Ref 30, p 80; Ref 31, pp 17–22. These two signs can also be seen on an ivory fragment found in Narmer's tomb (Ref 32, p 74, fig 25 b).

Scholars have suggested that the signs refer to a Libyan tribe who invaded the Fayum or the northwestern Delta,[69] or that it is the name of a body of water spelled with logograms ("Lake of the Harpooner").[70]

Hypothesis:

The inscription might refer to a region on the eastern edge of the Nile Delta, along the Wadi Tumilat, which still carries water today. This region later became the eighth Lower Egyptian nome, known as the "Eastern Harpoon Nome." This area was strategically important for its access to the quarries and mines of southern Sinai, where rock inscriptions bearing the *serekhs* of pre- and early dynastic kings, including Narmer, were discovered.[71] Over a long period of time, the Shasu repeatedly claimed the Eastern Harpoon Nome as territory.[72]

2.2.2.5



The two signs next to the naked men's heads in the bottom register are likely city or tribal symbols. The sign on the left represents a fortified perimeter.[73] Fairservis Jr. (1991) interpreted the two men as fleeing or swimming chiefs.[74]

Hypothesis:

The two naked foreigners in the lowest register are slain enemies and can themselves be viewed as hieroglyphs. Compare the posture in the hieroglyphs  [A14H] and  [A14], which represent dead humans and were used as classifiers for death.

69 Ref 33; Ref 28, pp 66–68.

70 "Horus the Harpooner," was one of several aspects of the god Horus (Ref 34, p 78).

71 Ref 32, pp 83–84; Ref 24, p 57, fig 7.

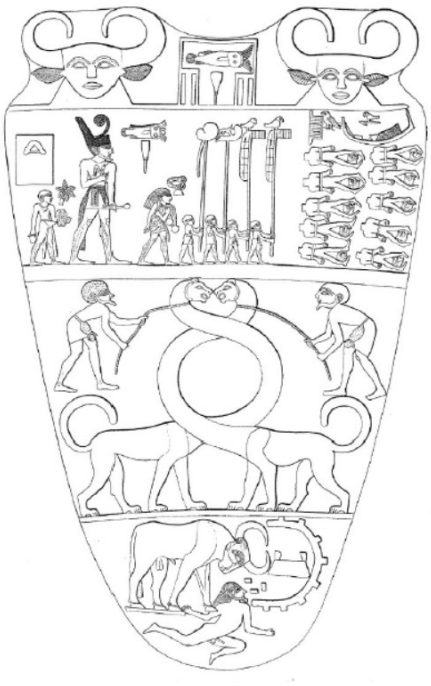
72 Ref 24, pp 104–105; Ref 51(overview); Ref 52.

73 Ref 35. As far as can be seen in the photos, the enclosed area is empty. In seal impressions from the Thinite period, rectangular or oval fortification walls mostly enclose the name or symbol of a place (Ref 1, vol 3, plts 30 [84, 89A], 31 [91A, 91B, 93], 32 [99A, 99B]).

74 Ref 26, p 11 (§ 29).

2.3 The front of the Narmer Palette





Ceremonial palette from the reign of King Narmer, front, Dyn. 1, c. 3200–3000 BC, greywacke, height 63 cm, width 42 cm, from Hierakonpolis, Cairo CG 14716/JE 32169.

2.3.1 Scenes

The front of the Narmer Palette is divided into four registers. Similar to the back, the top register features two heads of the cow-shaped goddess Bat (here with her mouth closed) and the *serekh* of King Narmer.

In the third register from the bottom, seven people can be seen marching in a single file. From left to right are the sandal bearer, the king wearing the Red Crown,[75] a figure wearing a fur robe made of cheetah or leopard skin, and four standard bearers. This is likely a victory procession. The figure in the fur robe has two hemispherical objects hanging from his left shoulder. The four standard bearers at the front of the procession may be members of subjugated peoples due to their differences in height, hairstyle, and clothing. They carry standards of the *šms.w-Ḥr.w* "Followers of Horus" (*horusgeleit*), deities who escorted the "Horus of the living" (king) in processions of all kinds.[76]

Ten decapitated and emasculated warriors can be seen on the right side of the scene. All

[75] Traditionally, the red crown is considered to be a crown of Lower Egypt. However, the oldest evidence of it comes from red black-topped pottery from Naqada (Naqada I) (Ref 32, p 47, fig 8).

[76] During the Early Dynastic Period, the “Followers of Horus” were Horus himself (the falcon god), Thoth (the ibis god), Wepwawet (the canid god), and Mafdet, a goddess wearing a panther skin. Two falcon standards are visible on the Narmer Palette, or the ibis is indistinguishable from the falcon (cf. Ref 36, p 199).

but one have their severed genitals draped over their heads between their legs.[77] The number ten was probably chosen deliberately (ten tribes or localities?). Above them is a vertical, striped object (stripes often signify wood) and a bird. The boat next to it resembles an Egyptian papyrus boat, but lacks oars.[78]

In the second register, two men stand facing each other, each holding a panther with a serpentine neck (serpopard) on a rope. The men have curly hair and wear phallic pouches instead of loincloths. This ethnic group is not depicted on the back of the palette. Serpopards are mythological creatures that were also a recurring feature in the art of the Sumerian Empire, Elam, and Mesopotamia.[79] Their intertwined necks are interpreted as symbols of opposing forces of nature[80] or the union of countries[81]. In any case, they form the border of the trough for eye makeup.

In the bottom register, a bull tramples an enemy with its left front hoof and uses its horns to destroy a fortified city wall surrounding a city symbol. The city also appears on the “City Palette” from Abydos and is probably a Lower Egyptian city.[82] The bull is traditionally regarded as the embodiment of the Egyptian king.[83] However, I believe it is the sacred bull Bakha (Greek: Buchis), which was the bull shape of the god Montu, an ancient Upper Egyptian god of victorious warfare.[84] This identification is supported by the board on which the bull stands, probably the base of a standard. Thus, the message of the entire scene is the conquest of an enemy city. The defeated enemy is naked, as are those in the lowest register on the back of the palette. Apparently, at that time, nakedness combined with a somewhat contorted posture was associated with death.

---

77 Ref 37.

78 Ref 56, pp 63–66.

79 I believe that people around the world tried to interpret the skeletal remains of dinosaurs as such creatures and dragons, as they were certainly often unearthed during the digging of canals and wells.

80 Ref 7, p 28.

81 Ref 20, pp 97–98.

82 Cairo JE 27434 (CG 14238); Ref 4, plt 43a. The palette is also called the "Libya Tribute Palette" because it bears the hieroglyphic spelling for Tjehenu (Libya) on the other side, next to rows of cattle, donkeys, sheep, and olive trees.

83 E.g., Ref 7, pp 27–28; Ref 26, pp 16–17 [§ 58]; Ref 32, p 61; Ref 36, pp 190–191; Ref 38, pp 37, 38.

84 Confusingly, Montu has a falcon head in semi-anthropomorphic depictions. His main cult sites were Medamud, Armant, El-Tod, and Karnak.

2.3.2 Hieroglyphic inscriptions

2.3.2.1



The *serekh* of King *nʿr-mr* (Nar-mer) is graphically designed differently on the front than on the back. It appears that more than one craftsman was involved in producing the palette. The mouths of the cow heads and the hieroglyphic inscription beneath the sandal bearer also differ between the front and back.

2.3.2.2



The sign inside the rectangle on the left edge of the palette is  (reed float for fishing nets [T25], phonetic value *ḏbꜣ*). The vertical rectangle may be interpreted as a body of water, but ponds and canals are usually depicted as long rectangles. Therefore, this rectangle was interpreted as a building: *ḥwt-ḏbꜣ*, meaning "house of the jeweler" or "jewelry house," based on the sign  (plan of a building [O6]).[85] W. A. Fairservis Jr. (1991) speculated that the rectangle is a stele and that the sign represented the toponym *ḏbꜣ*, which was later spelled , for a settlement on the site of modern Edfu.[86]

Hypothesis:

The rectangle could be a stylized victory stele or slab (coronation document) with an abbreviated spelling of the word  *ḏbꜣ* for "to retaliate, to take revenge,"  *ḏbꜣ* for

[85] Ref 1, vol 2, p 740.

[86] Ref 26, p 12 (§§ 32, 33); Ref 2, p 1209 (43007).

"scepter [of Horus]," or  *ḏbꜣ.w* for "coronation with the Red Crown."[87]

2.3.2.3



The flower on the front of the Narmer Palette has only six petals. This is likely a mistake. There is a broad consensus that the two signs are an early spelling of *ḥm-nzw* "servant of the king" (see the comment for image 2.2.2.2).

2.3.2.4



Next to the king's head is his name once more: Nar-mer.

2.3.2.5





The figure in the fur robe is widely believed to be a priest, royal scribe, or prince.[88] The hemispherical objects hanging from his left shoulder have been identified as writing implements[89] or papyrus umbels[90]. The inscription next to his head consists of

87 Ref 2, pp 1077 (39851), 1078 (39896, 39905). *ḏbꜣ.w* für „coronation“ has already been suggested by G. Toth (Ref 39, p 5, note 10)

88 Ref 7, p 30; Ref 39, p 3; Ref 40, p 598.

89 Ref 53, p 187.

90 Ref 26, p 14 (§ 41).

(hobble [V13]) and 𓊃 (loaf of bread [X1]). These uniliteral signs represent the consonants *ṯ* and *t*, respectively. Previous interpretations of the inscription vary, and mostly assume unwritten weak consonants. Examples include *ṯt*, which is thought to be an official title;[91] *ꜣṯt* "educator;"[92] *ṯꜣtj* "vizier;"[93] and *wtṯ.w* "offspring" (the eldest prince with a ritual function that passed to the Sem priest in the Old Kingdom)[94]. W. A. Fairservis Jr. (1991) interpreted the inscription as the female name *ṯwtw*.[95]

Hypotheses:

I agree with W. A. Fairservis, Jr. (1991) that the figure dressed in fur is a woman.[96] This is evident from her female breast and hairstyle with twisted ends. This hairstyle was common among elite women during the Early Dynastic Period.[97] She may be a magician and healer in the king's entourage. The gesture of placing one hand on the opposite armpit or shoulder is also seen on Narmer's ceremonial mace head and in Old Kingdom reliefs as a gesture of subservience to superiors.[98]

2.3.2.5–a: If the inscription 𓋴𓊃 includes unwritten consonants, as suggested above, then *(s)ṯj.t* or *(s)ṯṯj.t* "the one [fem.] who belongs to the fragrance/incense" (nisba) is another possible translation.[99] In that case, the hemispherical objects hanging from her left shoulder would be vessels containing fragrant oil or incense for ritual or medicinal purposes.

2.3.2.5–b: Perhaps the archaic phonetic value of the sign 𓋴 was the voiced s (z), for which the sign 𓊪 (doorbolt [O34]) was later used. In that case, the inscription simply reads *z.t* "woman."[100]

---

91 Ref 41, pp 65–66.

92 Ref 54, pp 58–62.

93 Ref 39, p 4.

94 Ref 7, p 30; Ref 42, pp 110–113; Ref 43, pp 16–17.

95 Cf. Ref 26, p 14 (§ 40). Fairservis Jr. has advocated that all hieroglyphs on the Narmer Palette should be regarded as phonograms. (Ref 26).

96 Cf. Ref 26, p 14 (§ 40).

97 This can be seen in tomb slabs from Helwan from the Second Dynasty (Ref 58, pp135 [fig 134], 152 [fig 155]). The hairstyle became popular again in the late Middle and New Kingdoms, as evidenced by the wall decorations in the Theban tombs TT52, TT90, and TT96, as well as various seated statues from the Nineteenth Dynasty. Men never wore wigs like this.

98 Ref 44; Ref 45, plt V (A, B).

99 *sṯj* „fragrance, pleasant smell“, *sṯ.t* „incense“ (Ref 2, p 849 [31369, 31387]; Ref 1, vol 1, p 311).

100 Ref 2, p 700 (25461).

2.3.2.6





The vertically positioned, striped object could be a capsizing wooden raft, a sled [U126], or the phonogram 𓉔 (door leaf [O31], phonetic value *ꜥ3*). G. Dreyer (2005) and others have identified the bird as the phonogram 𓅱 (swallow [G36], phonetic value *wr*). They assumed that the two signs, 𓉔𓅱 *ꜥ3 wr,* meaning "great door," refer to a port in the northwest delta with the hypothetical name "Great Door of Horus of the Harpoon Nome."[101] D. O'Connor (2011) has interpreted the entire scene as depicting solar mythology. In his interpretation, the swallow belongs to the papyrus boat, which is the morning barque of the sun god Re. The barque is about to pass through an opening gate, marking the moment of sunrise.[102]

Hypothesis:

If the striped object is the phonogram 𓉔 with the phonetic value *ꜥ3,* it may be read as the word *ꜥ3* "big" or "the big one."[103] It may refer to the destination that the Egyptian boat is symbolically heading for: the seat of the enemy chieftain. The bird lacks the forked tail feathers of a swallow, a feature that was always emphasized in delicate relief work and handwritten hieroglyphic scripts.[104] Thus, the bird is more properly identified as the sign 𓅓 (sparrow [G37]), which served as an ideogram or classifier for wickedness and evil in later texts. It seems that 𓉔𓅓 means something along the lines of *ꜥ3 ḏw.t* "great in evil". Indeed, there is an oil label from the time of King Den depicting the king going to war and an open city wall with the inscription 𓉔𓊹 *ꜥ3 ḏw*.[105] It could also be a derogatory name of this city.

---

101 Ref 20, p 97; Ref 28, p 67; Ref 46, p 254. The seventh Lower Egyptian nome is known as the „Western Harpoon Nome.“

102 O'Connor took this a step further, interpreting the entire pictorial content of the Narmer Palette as a mythological narrative (Ref 47, pp 151–152).

103 The signs 𓉔 and 𓎛 [O29], which share the phonetic value *ꜥ3,* were both used in honorary titles (Ref 2, pp 139–140 [4748, 4749], 137–138).

104 Ref 25, sign G36.

105 Ref 57, p 101, fig 11.1.

2.3.2.7





Above the papyrus boat is the sign (harpoon" [T21]), on which the Horus falcon stands (he does not hold the harpoon in his claws because he can only do that while flying). When read as phonograms, the two signs mean *Ḥr.w wᶜ* which means "the only Horus." Therefore, Wilkinson (2000) has assumed that the falcon represents the king.[106] P. Kaplony (1958) has interpreted the falcon on the harpoon as "Horus the Harpooner," a deity mentioned in Thinite texts. This aspect of the multifaceted god Horus was worshiped in the Western Delta and was associated with the city of Buto.[107] Some researchers have suspected a connection between the harpoon and the Western Harpoon Nome, the seventh Lower Egyptian nome.[108]

Objection/hypothesis:

Assuming the falcon on the harpoon symbolizes the land of "Horus the Harpooner" (Western Delta), the foreign-looking enemies would likely be Libyan intruders. Indeed, as indicated by an ivory cylinder, King Narmer engaged in combat with Libyans, who were already called  *ṯḥnw(y).w* back then.[109] However, the word does not appear anywhere on the Narmer Palette. The harpoon could just as well symbolize the Eastern Harpoon Nome, the eighth Lower Egyptian nome located on the eastern edge of the delta, where the Shasu people roamed (see the hypotheses for images 2.2.2.3 and 2.2.2.4). The presence of the Horus falcon on the harpoon indicates that King Narmer's troops held or conquered this territory. The harpoon's position directly above an Egyptian boat foreshadows the nome symbol .

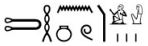
Although the ceremonial palettes and mace heads of the Thinites are decorated with

---

106 Ref 7, p 28.

107 The palace in Buto was called the “House of the Seat of Horus the Harpooner.” Buto appears to have been an independent small kingdom at that time (Ref 34, p 77–78).

108 Ref 29, p 98; Ref 34, p 77.

109 Ref 28, pp 67–68; Ref 32, p 73, fig 24. The later full spelling of *ṯḥnwy.w* was  (Ref 2, p 1034 [38242]).

ideologically motivated and mythological scenes, it is nevertheless obvious that the Narmer Palette was made to commemorate a victorious military campaign.[110] Whether this campaign resulted in the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, as some believe,[111] remains undecided. In any case, an Egyptian king was expected to secure or expand the borders of his empire. Later, kings decorated not only ceremonial objects, but also entire temple walls in a similar manner with their actual or claimed military successes.[112]

Abbreviations

AegFo: Ägyptologische Forschungen; Archéo-Nil: Archéo-Nil: Revue de la société pour l'étude des cultures prépharaoniques de la vallée du Nil; ASAE: Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte; AVDAIK: Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, Deutschen Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo; BC: Before Christian era; BES: Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar; cat.: Catalog number; CdE: Chronique d'Égypte: Bulletin périodique de la Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, Bruxelles; Cf.: Compare; CG: Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire; Dyn.: Dynasty; ed/eds: Editor(s); fem.: Feminine word; fig: Figure; JARCE: Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt; JE: Journal d'Entrée (du Musée du Caire); JEA: The Journal of Egyptian Archeology; JNES: Journal of Near Eastern Studies; KAW: Kulturgeschichte der Antiken Welt; KHM: Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien; LAAA: Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology; MAeS: Münchner Ägyptologische Studien; MDAIK: Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo; MFA: Museum of Fine Arts (Boston); Nexus Netw. J.: Nexus Network Journal: Architecture and Mathematics; OIMP: Oriental Institute Publications; p/pp: Page(s); plt/plts: Plate(s); Ref/Refs: Reference(s); SAK: Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur; Stud. Naut. Arch.: Studies in Nautical Archeology; tab: Table; TT: Theban tomb; UGAAe: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Aegyptens; Vol/Vols: Volume(s); ZAeS: Zeitschrift für ägyptische Schrift und Altertumskunde.

References

1. P. Kaplony (1963), Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit, Vols. 1–3 (Wiesbaden).
2. R. Hannig (2006), Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch–Deutsch (2800–950 v. Chr.), Marburger Edition (KAW 64; Mainz).
3. F. A. K. Breyer (2002), Die Schriftzeugnisses des prädynastischen Königsgrabes U-j in Umm el-Qaab: Versuch einer Neuinterpretation, in JEA 88, pp. 53–65.
4. G. Dreyer et al. (1998), Umm el-Qaab I: Das prädynastische Königsgrab U-j und seine frühen Schriftzeugnisse (AVDAIK 86; Mainz).
5. W. Kaiser, G. Dreyer (1982), Umm el-Qaab: Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof. 2. Vorbericht, in MDAIK 38, pp. 211-269.
6. W. Barta (1969), Falke des Palastes' als ältester Königstitel, in MDAIK 24, pp. 51–57.
7. T. A. H. Wilkinson (2000), What a king is this: Narmer and the concept of the ruler, in JEA 86, pp. 23–

110 Cf. Ref 20, pp 99–100; Scott 2014, p 69.

111 See A. Scott's review article on this topic (Ref 32).

112 Karnak, Medinet Habu, Edfu, and others.

32.

8. J. P. Allen (2010), Middle Egyptian: An introduction to the language and culture of hieroglyphs (2nd revised edition; Cambridge).
9. T. A. H. Wilkinson (1995), A new king in the Western Desert, in JEA 81, pp. 205–210.
10. B. Williams (2003), [Review to] ‚Umm el-Qaab I: Das prädynastische Königsgrab U-j und seine frühen Schriftzeugnisse' by Günter Dreyer, in JNES 62 (2), pp. 142–147.
11. J. Kahl (2003), Die frühen Schriftzeugnisse aus dem Grab U-j in Umm el-Qaab, in CdE 78, pp. 112–135.
12. G. Dreyer (2011), Tomb U-j: A royal burial of Dynasty 0 at Abydos, in E. Teeter (ed), Before the Pyramids: The origins of Egyptian civilization (Chicago), pp. 127–136.
13. Wikipedia, Liste der Pharaonen, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_Pharaonen (accessed October 23, 2025).
14. S. Seidlmayer (2001), Historische und moderne Nilstände (Berlin).
15. R. H. Wilkinson (2003), The complete gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt (London).
16. P. Kopp (2006), Elephantine XXXII: Die Siedlung der Naqadazeit (Kairo).
17. W. Kaiser (1998), Elephantine: Die antike Stadt (Kairo).
18. Di. Arnold (2000), Lexikon der ägyptischen Baukunst (Düsseldorf).
19. C. Becker (1994), Elfenbein aus den syrischen Steppen? Gedanken zum Vorkommen von Elefanten in Nordostsyrien im Spätholozän, in M. Kokabi, J. Wahl (eds), Beiträge zur Archäozoologie und Prähistorischen Anthropologie: 8. Arbeitstreffen der Osteologen, Konstanz 1993, in Andenken an Joachim Boessneck (Stuttgart).
20. S. Mark (1998), From Egypt to Mesopotamia: A Study of Predynastic Trade Routes, in Stud. Naut. Arch. 4, pp. 1–181.
21. C. E. Köhler (2002), History or Ideology? New reflections on the Narmer Palette and the nature of ‚foreign' relations in predynastic Egypt, in E. C. M. van den Brink, T. E. Levy (eds), Egypt and the Levant: interrelations from the 4th through the early 3rd millennium (London, New York), pp. 499–513.
22. G. Sperveslage (2003), A tail's tale: Narmer, the catfish, and bovine symbolism, in JEA 109 (1–2), pp. 65–75.
23. W. M. F. Petrie (1953), Ceremonial slate palettes (London).
24. J. Cooper (2015), Toponymy on the periphery: Placenames of the Eastern Desert, Red Sea, and South Sinai in Egyptian documents from the Early Dynastic until the end of the New Kingdom (thesis; Sydney).
25. D. Nunn, Université Libre de Bruxelles – Faculté de Philosophie et Sciences Sociales, The Polychrome Hieroglyph Research Project, https://www.phrp.be/ListAllSigns.php (accessed October 23, 2025).
26. W. A. Fairservis Jr. (1991), A Revised view of the Narmer Palette, in JARCE 28, pp. 1–20.
27. A. Gardiner (1950), Egyptian Grammar: Being an introduction to the study of hieroglyphs (revised 2nd edition; London).
28. T. C. Heagy (2014), Who was Menes? in Archéo-Nil 24, pp. 59–92.
29. W. Helck (1987), Untersuchungen zur Thinitenzeit, (Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 45; Wiesbaden).
30. A. R. Schulman (1991/1992), Narmer and the unification: A revisionist view, in BES 11, pp. 79-105.
31. P. E. Newberry (1908), The petty-kingdom of the harpoon and Egypt's earliest Mediterranean port, in

LAAA 1, pp. 17-22.

32. A. Scott (2014), One palette, two lands: The myth of the unification of Egypt by the Narmer Palette (Sydney), https://www.academia.edu/10220097/One_Palette_Two_Lands_The_Myth_of_the_Unification_of_Egypt_by_the_Narmer_Palette (accessed October 25, 2025).
33. The Narmer Palette, http://www.narmer.pl/listy/palnar_en.htm (accessed October 25, 2025).
34. P. Kaplony (1958), Zu den beiden Harpunenzeichen der Narmerpalette, in ZAeS 83, pp. 76–78.
35. A. Rossi (2017), The origin of technical drawing in the Narmer Palette, in Nexus Netw. J. 19, pp. 27–43.
36. T. A. H. Wilkinson, (1999), Early Dynastic Egypt: Strategy, society and security (London).
37. V. Davies, R. Friedman (2002), The Narmer palette: An overlooked detail, in M. Eldamaty, M. Trad (eds), Egyptian Museum Collections around the World, Vol. 1 (Cairo), pp. 243–246.
38. N. C. Grimal (1996), A history of ancient Egypt (London).
39. G. Toth (2013), The Narmer Palette, http://egypt-grammar.rutgers.edu/Artifacts/Narmer%20Palette.pdf (accessed October 02, 2025).
40. J. Vandier (1952), Manuel d'archéologie égyptienne, Vol. 1: Les époques de formation: Les trois premières dynasties (Paris).
41. E. Staehlin (1966), Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Tracht im Alten Reich (MAeS 8; Hessling, Berlin).
42. U. Rummel (2008), Das Pantherfell als Kleidungsstück im Kult: Bedeutung, Symbolgehalt und theologische Verortung einer magischen Insignie, https://www.academia.edu/4462408/Das_Pantherfell_als_Kleidungsst%C3%BCck_im_Kult_Bedeutung_Symbolgehalt_und_theologische_Verortung_einer_magischen_Insignie (accessed October 02, 2025).
43. W. Helck (1954), Untersuchungen zu den Beamtentiteln des ägyptischen Alten Reiches (AegFo 18; Glückstadt, Hamburg, New York).
44. Narmer macehead drawing, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/dd/Narmer_Macehead_drawing.jpg (accessed October 25, 2025).
45. R. Macramallah (1935), La mastaba d'Idout (Fouilles à Saqqarah; Cairo).
46. G. Dreyer (2005), Narmerpalette und Städtepalette – die Unterwerfung des Deltas, in: ASAE 34 Suppl., pp. 253–261.
47. D. O'Connor (2011), The Narmer Palette: A new interpretation, in E. Teeter (ed), Before the pyramids: The origins of Egyptian civilization (OIMP 33; Chicago), pp. 145–152.
48. S. Schott (1951), Hieroglyphen: Untersuchungen zum Ursprung der Schrift (2nd edition; Mainz).
49. Schneider (1997), Das Schriftzeichen 'Rosette' und die Göttin Seschat, in SAK 24, pp. 241–267.
50. W. Wreszinski (1923), Atlas zur Altaegyptischen Kulturgeschichte, Vol. 1 (Leipzig).
51. R. Giveon (1971), Les bédouins Shosou des documents égyptiens (Leiden).
52. R. Giveon (1969–1970), The Shosu of the Late XXth Dynasty, in JARCE 8, pp. 51-53.
53. L. D. Morenz (2003), Frühe Schrift und 'hohe Kultur' im Alten Ägypten: Aspekte von Ideologie auf Beischriften der Nar-mer-Palette, in Orientalia 72, pp. 183–193.
54. H. Kees (1957), Archaisches  =  'Erzieher'? in ZAeS 82, pp. 58–62.

55. E. Winter (1994), Wer steht hinter Narmer, in M Bietak et al. (eds), Zwischen den beiden Ewigkeiten: Festschrift Gertrud Thausing (Wien), pp. 279–290.

56. D. Craig Patch (2011), Dawn of Egyptian art (New York).

57. D. Wengrow (2011), The invention of writing in Egypt, in E. Teeter (ed), Before the pyramids: The origins of Egyptian civilization (OIMP 33; Chicago).

58. E. C. Köhler (2018), Vor den Pyramiden: Die ägyptische Vor- und Frühzeit (Darmstadt).

Photo credits

Images in Chapter 2.1: Labels from tomb U-j at Abydos. Original source: Ref 4. https://www.reddit.com/r/Alphanumerics/comments/1fyggf4/comment/lqw2ahc/?context=3 (accessed October 12, 2025).

S. Kalyanaraman, https://www.academia.edu/figures/8700212/figure-2-early-writing-from-abydos-was-used-to-label (accessed October 2, 2025).

D. Leeman (2018), https://www.academia.edu/40714174/ABYDOS_TOMB_U_j_OF_PREDYNASTIC_EGYPT_Abydos_Tomb_U_j (accessed October 2, 2025).

Images in Chapter 2.2: Narmer Palette, back. Photo: Anonymus, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narmer-Palette#/media/Datei:Narmer_Palette.jpg (accessed October 12, 2025; CC 0).

Images in Chapter 2.3: Narmer Palette, front. Photo: Anonymus, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narmer-Palette#/media/Datei:Narmer_Palette.jpg (accessed October 12, 2025; CC 0).