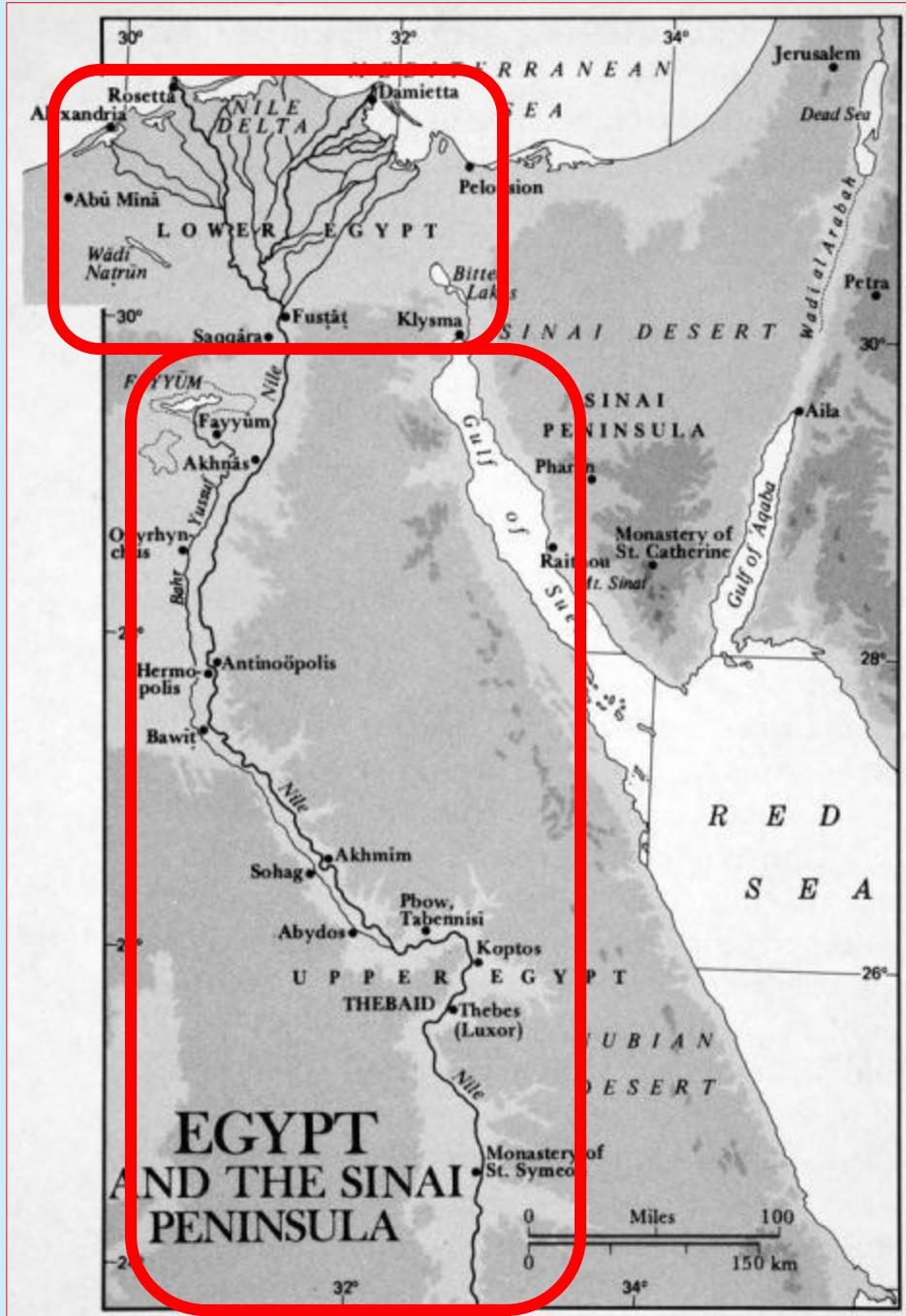


# **A SHORT BUT INTENSE HISTORY OF ANCIENT EGYPT**

**AND SOME LATER INFLUENCES**

**IN FOUR 90-MINUTE MEETINGS**  
**(+ maybe a visit to the Peabody)**



## Lower Egypt

*“Black land” = Nile Valley  
“Red land” = desert*

## Upper Egypt

<b>Period (dynasties sometimes mushy)</b>	<b>Noteworthy events</b>
Pre-dynastic (roughly 5000-3000 BCE, with rise and fall of several Nile cultures; includes “dynasty 0”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Population shift from desert to Nile</li> <li>Evolution of agriculture, pottery, agriculture, herding, boats, trade, well-digging, social hierarchy, control of territory up and down the Nile</li> <li>Origin of hieroglyphs</li> </ul>
Early Dynastic (3200/2950-2575; dynasties 1-2)	Main cemetery established at Saqqara (dynasty 2)
Old Kingdom (ca, 2575-2125; dynasties 3-6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dynasty 3: 1<sup>st</sup> (Step) pyramid at Saqqara (Djoser)</li> <li>Dynasty 4: Meidum, Bent, Red pyramids (Sneferu); Giza pyramids (Khufu, Khafra, Menkaura)</li> </ul>
1 <sup>st</sup> intermediate period (c. 2125-2010; dynasties 7-10)	Egypt divided; dynasties 9-11
Middle Kingdom (2010-1630; dynasties 11-13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Egypt reunited; Thebes becomes capital</li> <li>Flourishing of literature</li> <li>Hatshepsut (female ruler; creator of label “pharaoh”)</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> intermediate period (ca. 1630-1539; dynasties 14-17)	Hyksos (“rulers from foreign lands,” based in Delta)
New Kingdom (ca. 1539-1069; dynasties 18-20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Egypt reunited</li> <li>Akhenaten (r. 1353-1336) attempts to change Egyptian religion</li> <li>Tutankhamen (son of Akhenaten)</li> <li>Book of the Dead</li> <li>Ramesses II (r. 1279-1212)</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> intermediate period (ca, 1069-664; dynasties 21-25)	Egypt fragmented, ruled by many different groups, including Nubian period of about a century
Late period (ca. 664-332; dynasties 26-31)	Egypt sort of reunited; variety of rulers, including Persian kings as pharaohs from afar (dynasty 27)
Ptolemaic (Macedonian-Greek) period (332-30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alexander the Great conquers Egypt</li> <li>His lead general (Ptolemy) begins final ruling family</li> <li>Manetho creates dynasty approach</li> <li>Cleopatra VII (59-30): last pharaoh</li> </ul>

# I. Foreigners in Egypt

# Rampant chauvinism

- The Nile Valley had always been a melting pot of Mediterranean and African peoples and cultures.
- Even at the height of the Pyramid Age, with extreme Egyptian chauvinism and self-confidence, a native of Memphis might have encountered foreign shipwrights or mercenaries.
- At the same time, Nubians, for example, were portrayed in official art and literature as barbaric, worthless representatives of chaos.

# Middle Kingdom

- One Middle Kingdom pharaoh called foreigners “god’s abomination.”
- Another described himself as “the throat-slitter of Asia.”
- In one 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty reign, acts of desecration, probably stoked or supported by native folk, were blamed on Asiatics and Nubians, with dire consequences.

# Still...

- In many Egyptian towns, foreigners (including Nubians and Asiatics) lived comfortably alongside native Egyptians.
- In the Middle Kingdom, immigrants from the Near East even began to rise in status in Egyptian society.
- What started as a small community of foreign workers soon produced waves of immigration—people fleeing harsher climatic and economic conditions opportunities for betterment with their relatives and compatriots in Egypt.

- Semitic-speaking Asiatics from the Sinai, experienced in desert travel, were recruited into Egypt's paramilitary police force patrolling the Western Desert.
- Ironically, the large Middle Kingdom intake of Asiatics (apparently to subsidize extensive building work) may have encouraged settlement in the Delta by Hyksos—the group that took charge of the 2<sup>nd</sup> intermediate period.

# New Kingdom

- After a military campaign, the pharaoh Thutmose III (1504-1450) brought home captives and concubines who changed national demographics by integrating with numerous host communities.
- Among his booty, Thutmose III brought back from the Near East three Syrian women, whom he married.
- Barely a century after the expulsion of the hated Hyksos, the Egyptian king had Asiatic wives in his harem.

# Back-story to ancient Egypt

# Pre-dynastic Nile Valley

- We have no information on human population for 7000–5400 BCE (which does not mean it was absent).
- Ca. 5450 BCE, agriculture (barley, emmer wheat, flax), was probably introduced from the Levant and became the basis of subsistence.
- After 4900 BCE and especially from 4400 BCE, the desert became increasingly arid, and populations shifted to the Nile Valley.
- There was an enormous quantity of domesticated animals (pigs, oxen, goats, sheep).
- The donkey presumably served as transport.

# Ecology of ancient Egypt

- The natural rhythms of nature — the cycle of the sun, rise and fall of the Nile, seasonal agricultural cycles — became a primary theme in theology.
- Local fauna and flora were used as hieroglyphic signs.
- A number of architectural features reflected the surrounding environment.

# The desert giveth and the desert taketh away...

- A brief pluvial period around 8000 BCE brought savanna-like conditions throughout many parts of the Western Desert.
- Summer rains reliably provided cattle herders with seasonal pasture away from the Nile.
- In what is now desert, rock art shows giraffes and ostriches as well as animals, such as the lion, the vulture, the jackal, and the gazelle, that became associated with Egyptian deities
- About 5000, however, the northeast Africa climate starting shifting as the rain belt moved progressively southward.
- Egypt became progressively more arid until establishment of the modern period of hyperaridity sometime in the Early Dynastic Period (*ca.* 3100-2700 BC).

# Migration

- For herders, it was starve or migrate to the only permanent water source in the region, the Nile Valley.
- Here, the earliest settled communities, along the edge of the floodplain, had been established in the early fifth millennium BCE.
- People already in the valley were successful agriculturalists.

# **Resource competition ↔ group competition**

- Significant increase in population may have produced competition for scarce resources, prompting the need for defense via walled towns.
- More mouths to feed would also have stimulated more productive agriculture.
- Urbanization and the intensification of farming would have been responses to social change but also would have stimulated further change.

# **Annual Nile floods**

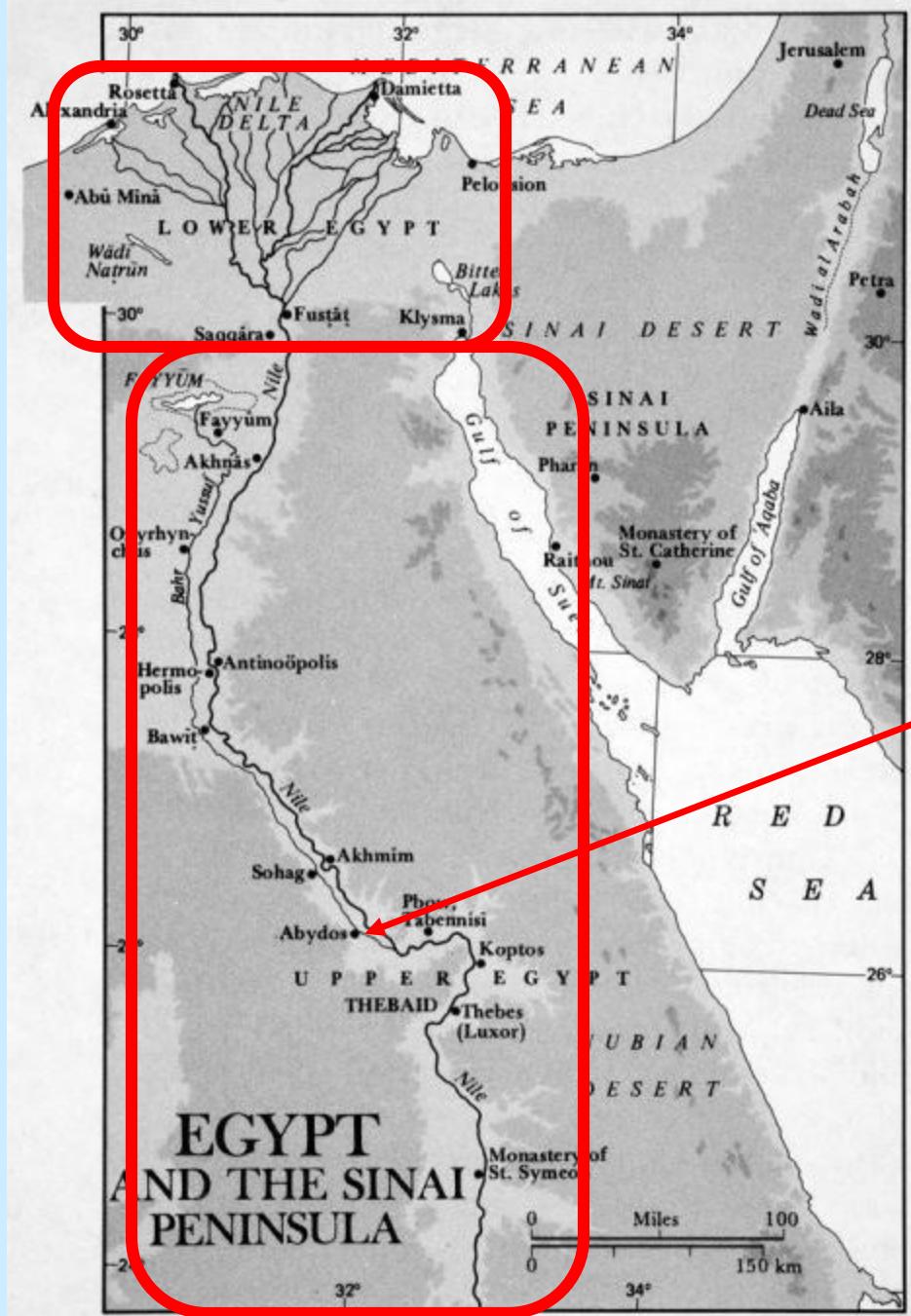
- A flood too high (above 9m.) or too low (below 6m.) threatened to drown or parch crops.
- Annual flood waters added nutrients to the land and helped to curtail build-up of salts.
- During the flooding, barges could transport heavy cargo (e.g., building stones, monumental sculptures) directly from quarries bordering the flooded valley.
- Even after the introduction of wheeled vehicles during the Second Intermediate Period, boats (often shown in art of the time) remained the dominant means of transportation for people and goods.

## **Naqada II/Gerzean: 3650/3500 to 3300/3200 BCE**

- Population diffused north to the Delta and south to Nubia.
- The trend increased to bury a few individuals in relatively elaborate tombs with wood coffins.
- We see the first indications of wrapping the body in strips of linen.
- Maceheads became symbolic of power.

## **Naqada III/proto-dynastic/Dynasty 0: 3300/3200-3100/3000 BCE**

- A 12-room Naqada III tomb at Abydos c. 3150 BCE included 150 small labels inscribed with what appear to be the earliest known hieroglyphs.
- By late pre-dynastic times, writing conveyed rank, title, and ownership.



# Lower Egypt

Abydos

Upper Egypt

## Social differentiation

There is some evidence that the early Egyptian predynastic period was relatively egalitarian and agricultural but over time before Dynasty 1 evolved to a class-stratified society centered around a living god personified by the king.

# Palettes



Four Dogs Palette



Hunters Palette



Battlefield Palette

# Scorpion palettes

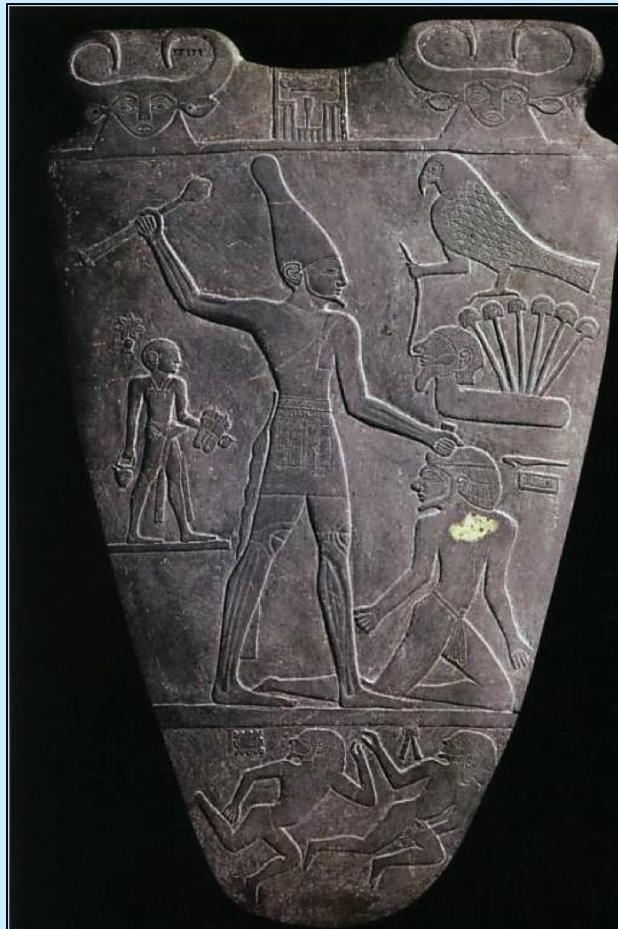


# Narmer

Traditionally viewed as having led the south to conquer the north

**NARMER PALETTE**

Front



Back



*Excavated at Hierakonopolis*



A limestone macehead of “Scorpion”



A limestone macehead of Narmer's

## What actually changed in Egypt ~5000 years ago?

- The name Narmer represents a combination of catfish (“nar” in Egyptian) and a chisel (“mer”).
- Scholars disagree about who Narmer was.
- One theory: Narmer is a ritual name for King Horus/Aha/Menes.
- We have no clear evidence that Egypt was composed of two large kingdoms that were forcefully united.
- Rather, Upper Egypt appears to have been fragmented, composed of several city-states.
- Certain ivory labels of the time seem to name kings of a united Egypt who *predate* Menes/Narmer.

# The structure of Egyptian government

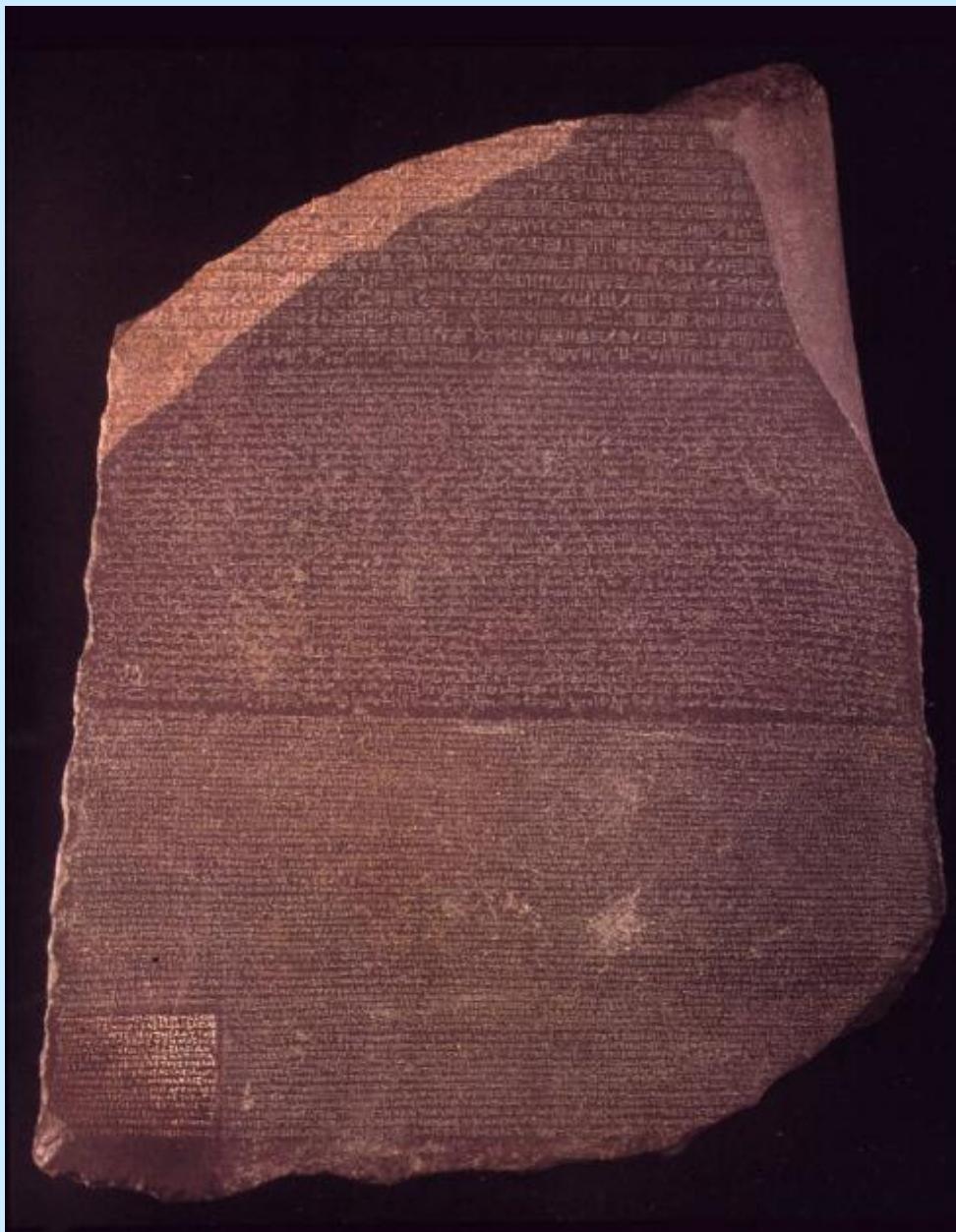
By the end of Dynasty 2 (ca. 2700 BCE), basic Egyptian culture was established for the next 3,000 years.

- Strongly centralized state ruled from the capital at Memphis (today's Cairo)
- Bureaucracy run by northern and southern viziers
- 42 nomes (districts), each overseen by a nomarch (governor) responsible to a vizier
- Many administrative positions filled by Royal family

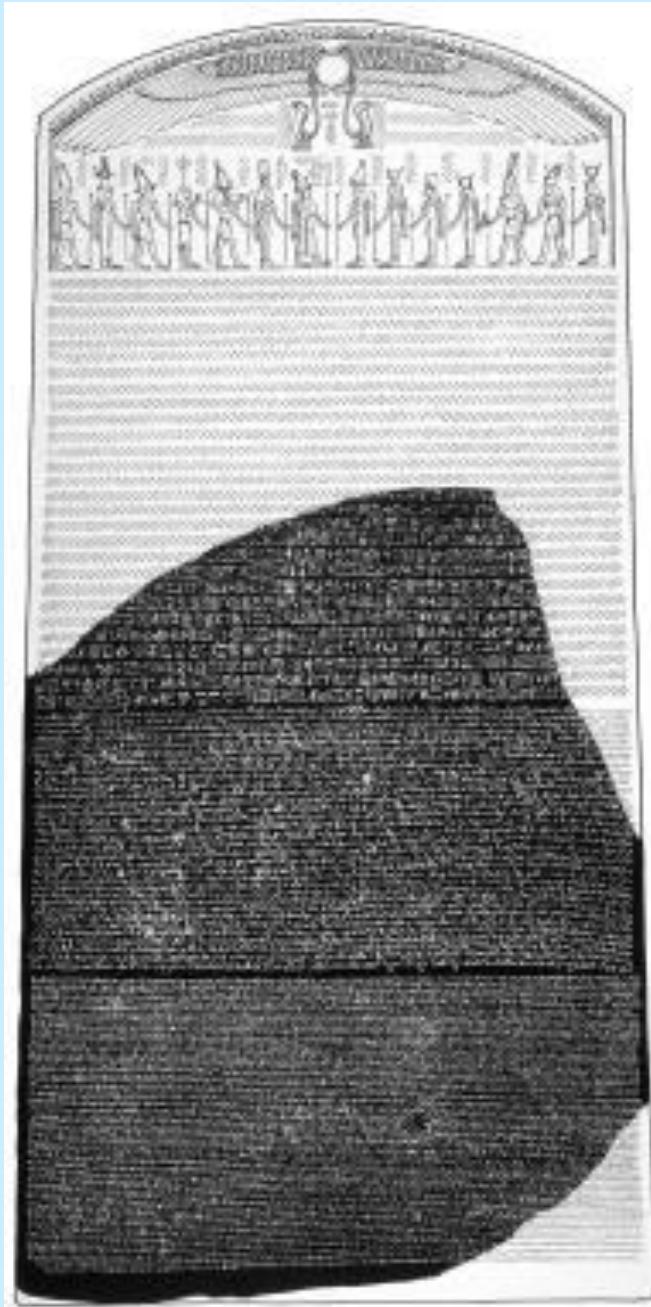
### III. Start of modern Egyptology

# The French connection

- In his 1798 invasion of Egypt, Napoleon included ~150 scholars of geography, geology, history, botany, zoology, medicine, and linguistics.
- After Napolean withdrew, many of the scholars stayed on and made notes and drawings about numerous aspects of ancient Egypt.
- *Description de l'Égypte*: 1<sup>st</sup> publication 1809
- Jean-Francois Champollion: first decipherment of hieroglyphs (via Rosetta Stone): 1822



Rosetta Stone  
196 BCE



Memphis decree of “month 2 of the Peret-season, day 18,” during the ninth regnal year of Ptolemy V, corresponding to 27 March 196 BCE, recorded in Hieroglyphic Egyptian (upper), Demotic Egyptian (middle), and Greek (lower).

# IV. Sources for knowledge about ancient Egypt

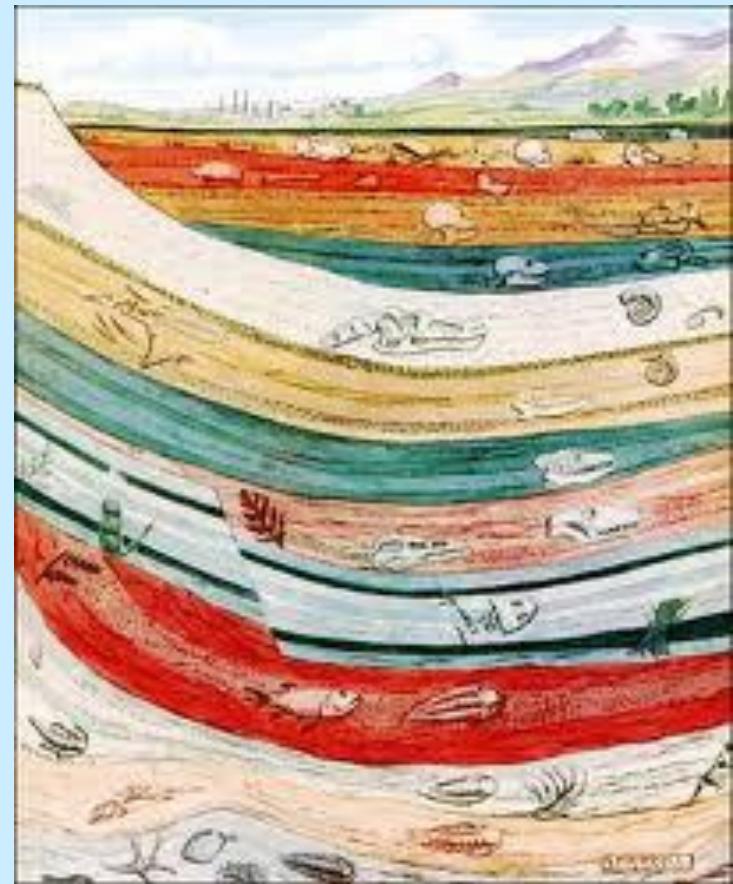
## A few scientific dating techniques

These methods can apply (within a margin of error) to objects from ancient Egypt (and several millennia earlier).

- C<sup>14</sup>:C<sup>12</sup> ratios can be measured in organic remains.
- Some minerals, if once subjected to heat, can be dated via thermoluminescence, which measures altered crystalline structure against unheated samples.
- Dendrochronology can compare trees (or pieces of wood) for year-to-year growth variations that reflect rainfall intensity.
- Ancient texts may make calendric or astronomical references (e.g., volcanic eruptions or eclipses).

## Relative dating: sequencing

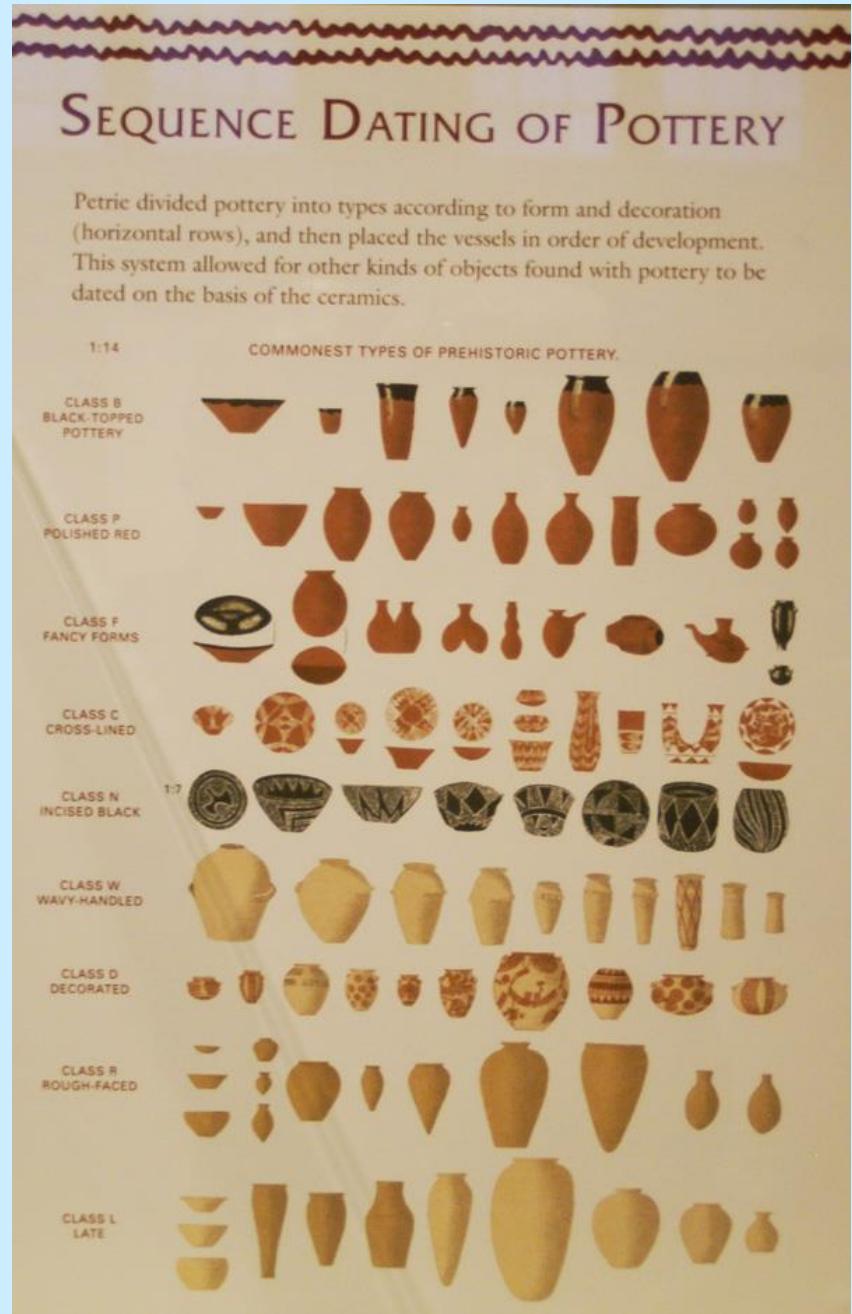
As geologists can establish relative dates by aligning common strata from different parts of the world...



...so archaeologists can study changes in manufacture of a kind of artifact over time.



William Flinders Petrie (1853-1942)



## “Texts”

- Written evidence
- Images
- Tomb models of everyday activities
- Material remains (e.g., homes, furnishings, tools, jewelry, grave goods)
- Historical sources outside Egypt

Anything else?



## Earliest writing

- Hieroglyphic and Mesopotamian writing were probably independent inventions.
- By Dynasty 0 (late pre-dynastic), scribes and artisans were using writing for record-keeping (e.g., in commerce) and royal art (e.g., Narmer palette).
- Early Dynastic carved stone vessels sometimes had inscriptions.
- Throughout over three millennia of use, hieroglyphs retained a dual meaning as a practical writing system and the “words of the gods.”

# The power of writing

- Believed to have been given to humans by the god Thoth
- Could make permanent a desired state of affairs
- Could bring into existence things written about (for example, a prayer written on a tomb wall designating foodstuffs to be provided for the deceased made those foodstuffs eternally available)



The Scribe of Saqqara  
Dynasty 4 or 5  
(ca.2600 - 2348 BCE)

Boys were trained to read and write hieroglyphs in schools attached to palaces, royal burial grounds, and state-run temples.

“I shall cause you to love writing more than your mother. I shall cause its perfection to enter before you. Indeed it is the greatest of all professions.”

To be a scribe—to be able to read and write—was to have access to the levers of power.

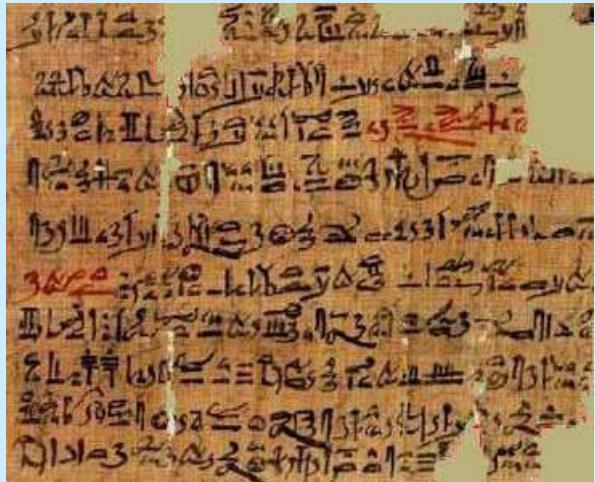
## But a scribe's training wasn't idyllic...

- New Kingdom proverb: “A boy’s ear is on his back: he hears when he is beaten.”
- School discipline was meant to prepare pupils for the rigors of government service.
- Ambition, determination, resilience, and manly vigor were prized by the government, and the nursery sought to drum them into its pupils

Hieroglyphic (adj.)  
(n.: hieroglyph)



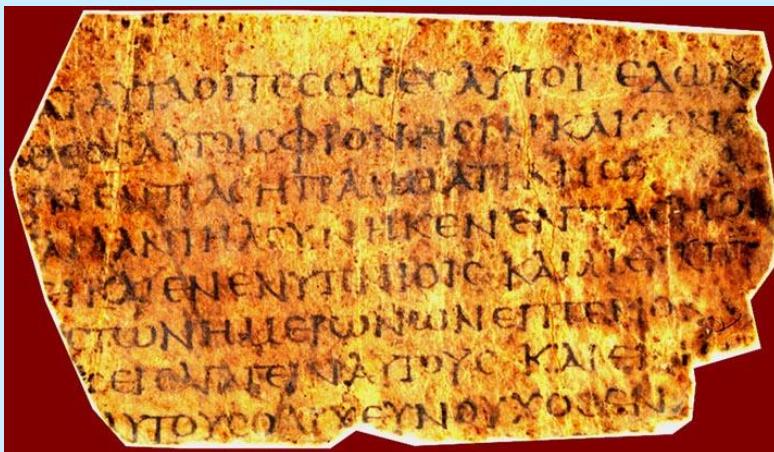
Hieratic



Demotic



Coptic



# Where do you start reading?

Hieroglyphs could be written left-to-right, right-to-left, or in columns that could be arranged left-to-right or right-to left.

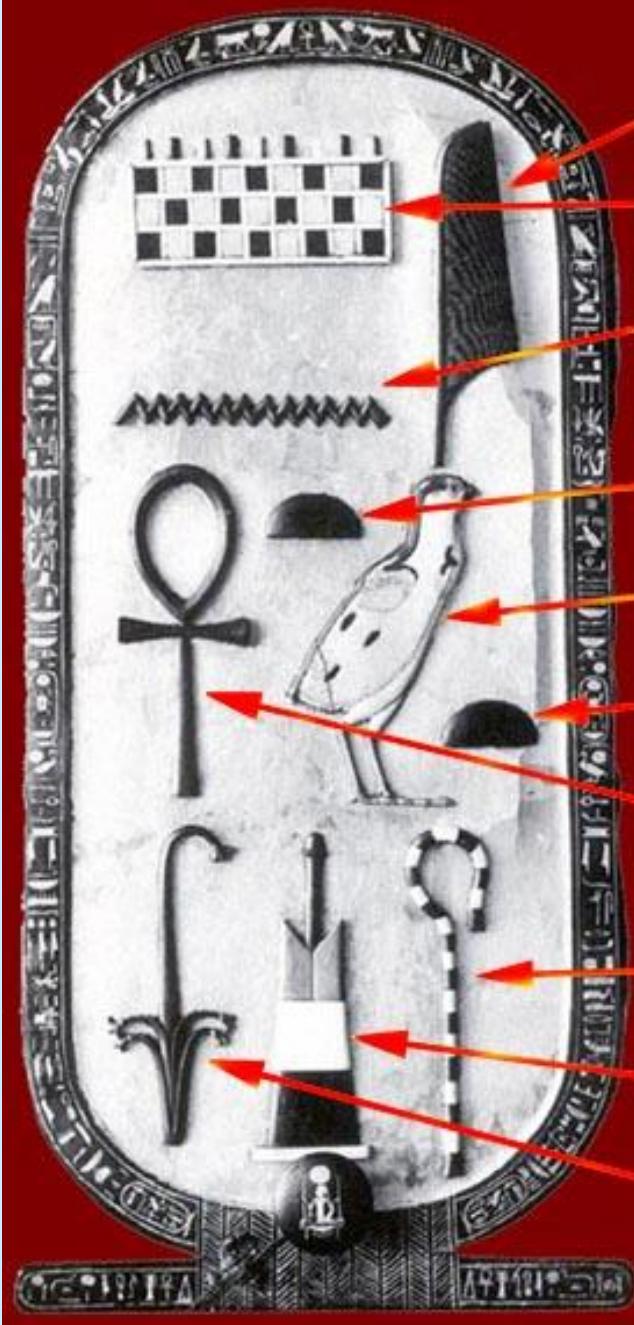
- To read in the correct direction, look where most of the people and animals are facing.
- Normally (though not always) they are facing the beginning of the line.



*Tutankhamun's cartouche and the kind of 19th century 58 cal. rifle cartridge after which it was named.*

*The powder charge is at the top and the bullet is at the bottom.*





A-  
MUN-

N

T-

U-

T-

ANKH

HAQ-

AWNW-

USU

>

*Amun,  
the Sun  
God*

>

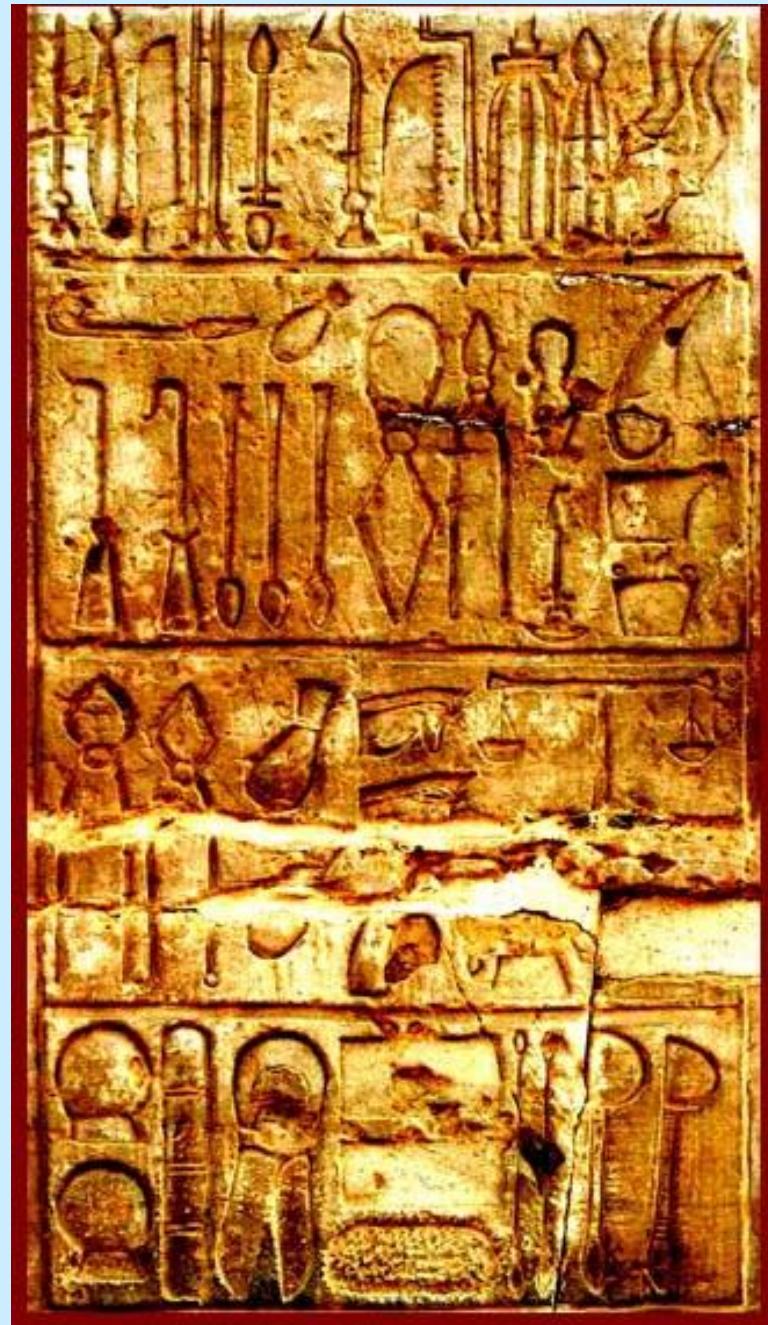
*Tut*

-

*protects  
(gives life to)*

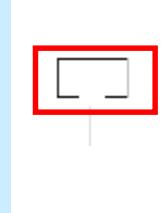
>

*Ruler of  
Lower and  
Upper Egypt*

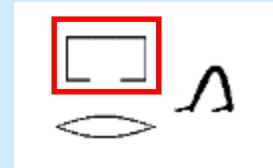


# Three Uses of Hieroglyphs

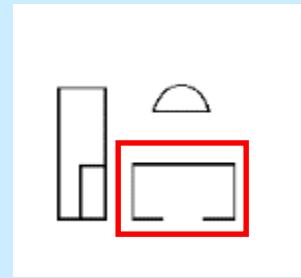
Ideogram *pr*

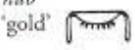
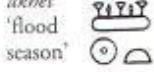


Phonogram *pri*



Determinative *Hwt*



Hieroglyphic Form			
Cursive hieroglyphs			
Old Kingdom to early Middle Kingdom c.3000–1900 BC. Hieratic			
Late Middle Kingdom c.1900–1700 BC. Literary			
Administrative hieratic			
Second Intermediate Period c. 1700–1550 BC. Hieratic			
Early New Kingdom c. 1550–1300 BC. Hieratic			
Late New Kingdom c.1330–1100 BC. Literary hieratic			
Administrative hieratic			
Third Intermediate Period c.1100–700 BC. Formal hieratic			
'Abnormal hieratic' (Administrative hieratic)			
Late Period to Ptolemaic Period c. 700–30 BC. Late hieratic			
Demotic			

Hieroglyphs for “go north” and “go south” were boats with sail unfurled (go upstream, i.e., south) and boats with no sail (go downstream, i.e., north).



Last datable  
hieroglyphic  
inscription

394 CE

# Written historical sources

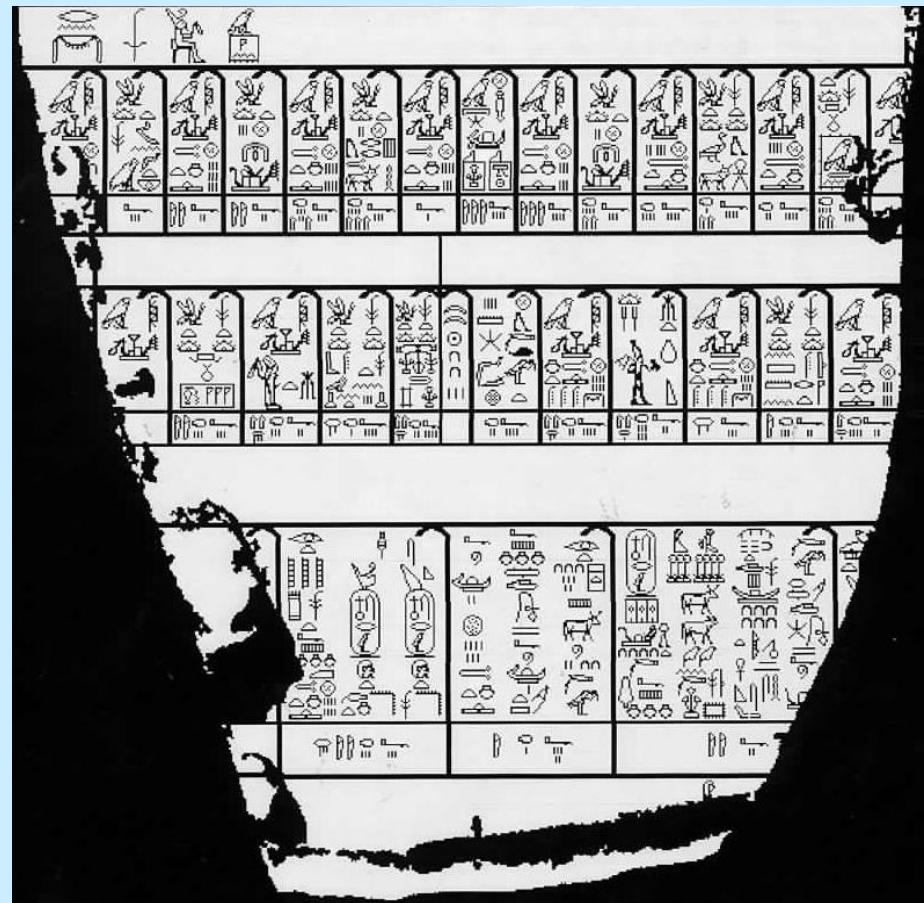
- We will start with writing and with what it tells us about Egyptian kings.
- We need to be careful about trusting what is written. Why?

## King lists

- Kings were sometimes catalogued on papyri or walls.
- These lists were not concerned so much with history as with ancestor worship.
- Only a few lists indicate days, months, and years of events.
- Some dynasties were concurrent (e.g., during intermediate periods), and starting in the Middle Kingdom, co-rulers may have existed.

# Palermo Stone (ca 2400)

Fragment of royal annals compiled in the Fifth Dynasty, stretching back to the beginning of recorded history; includes reports on Nile flooding



# Karnak king lists (New Kingdom, ca. 1425)



- Now in the Louvre
- List 61 kings (39 legible)

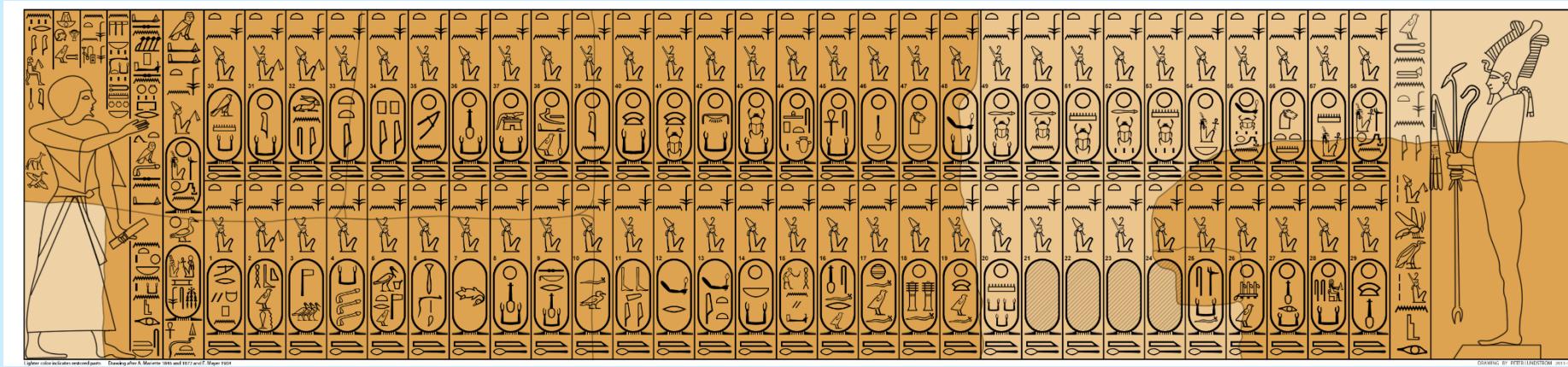
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:P1060219\\_Louvre\\_Thoutmosis\\_III\\_chapelle\\_des\\_Anc%C3%AAtres\\_volet\\_3\\_rwk.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:P1060219_Louvre_Thoutmosis_III_chapelle_des_Anc%C3%AAtres_volet_3_rwk.JPG)  
<http://xorpid.com/karnak-king-list>

# Turin king list/royal canon (13<sup>th</sup> century)

- This papyrus is especially accurate from the 2<sup>nd</sup> intermediate period (1650-1550) back to the reign of Menes.
- It includes a mythical prehistoric time before Menes when the gods ruled over Egypt.



# Saqqara tablet (ca. 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE)



- Lists 58 Egyptian kings from dynasty 1-dynasty 19, newest to oldest
- Omits Hyksos rulers (2<sup>nd</sup> intermediate period) and those associated with Akhenaten.
- Has many errors

# Abydos king list (ca. 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE)



Upper row lists pharaohs from the 7th and 8th dynasties, middle row 12th, 18th and 19th dynasties (omitting Hatshepsut and the rulers that were part of the Amarna heresy), bottom row names and titles of Ramesses II.

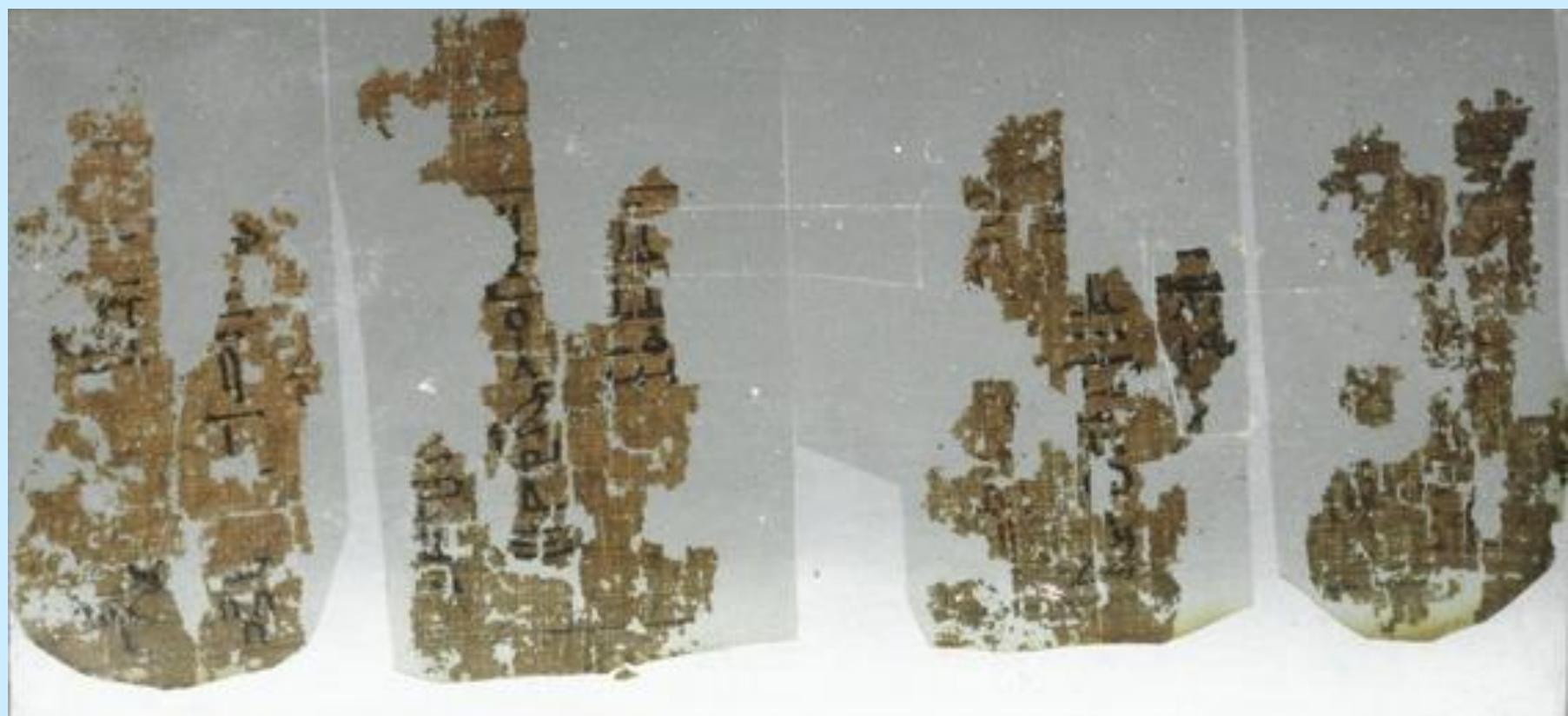


Ramesses I

Seti I

## Semna dispatches (1854-1808, dynasty 12)

- Rulers of dynasty 12 occupied and established forts in much of Nubia—down to the 2<sup>nd</sup> cataract—to protect and supervise trade on the Nile, to be a visible reminder of Egyptian presence in the region, and to monitor potential threats.
- The Semna fort dispatches provide detailed administrative records and monitor movements of Nubians and other desert parties.



# The Abbott Papyrus

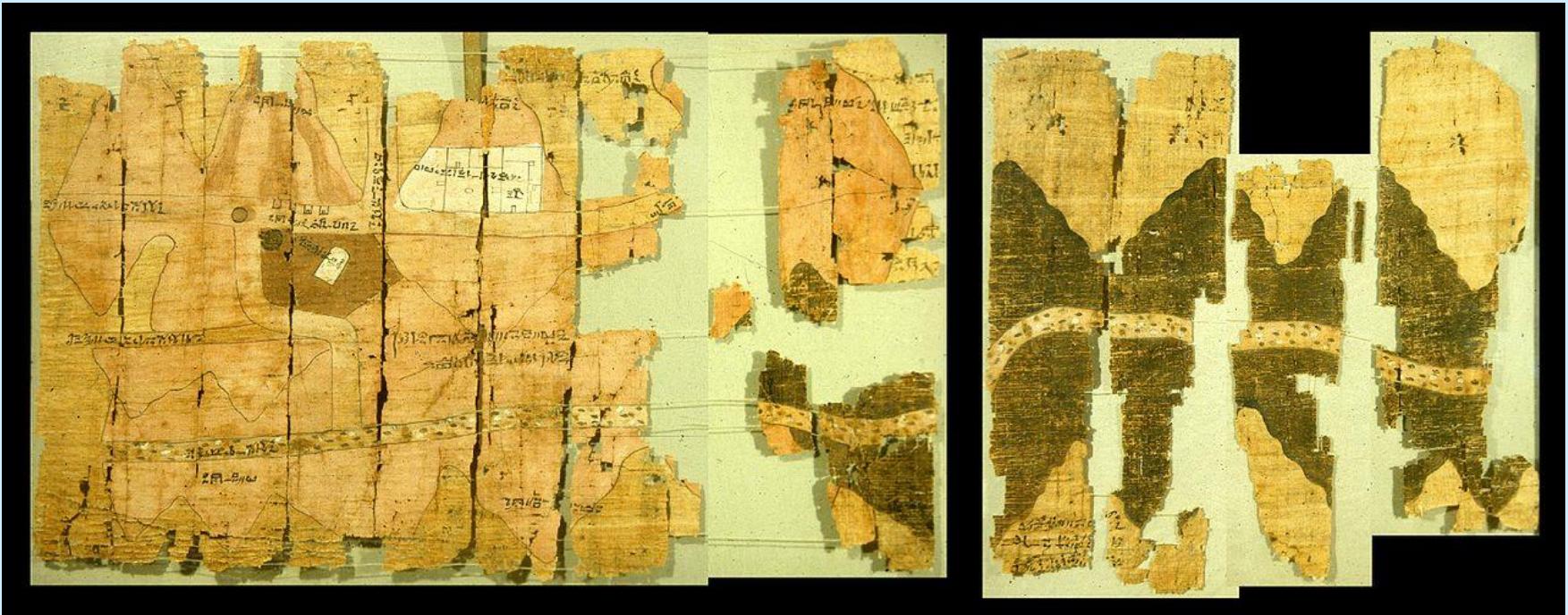
- During the reign of Ramesses IX (1126-1108 BC), a local battle broke out between the “mayors” of east and west Thebes in response to indictments of alleged tomb robbers (both royal and non-royal tombs).
- The Abbott papyrus is an account of this controversy, in which the West Thebes mayor may have been complicit in the robberies.

# Rhind Mathematical Papyrus (ca. 1550)

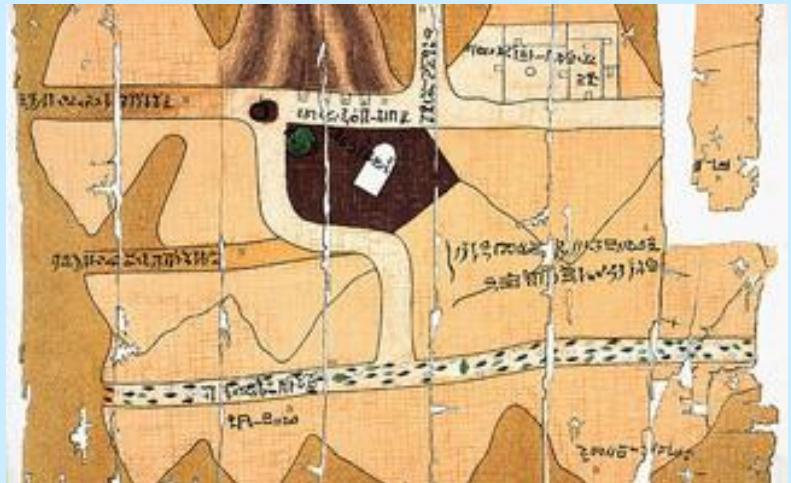
- This papyrus lists 84 practical problems encountered in administrative and building works.
- Solutions include numerical operations, practical problem-solving, and geometric shapes.



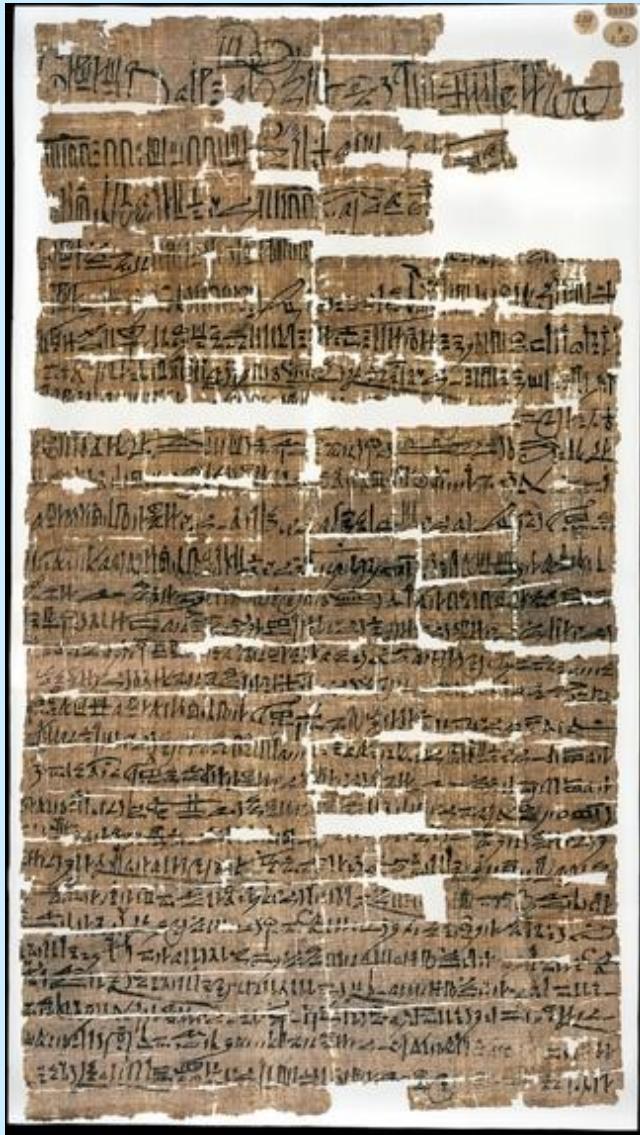
# Turin papyrus map (ca. 1150? 250?)



Since it details where gold deposits can be found in the hills and notes differences in soil and rock types, what may be the world's oldest topographical map has been thought to have been used for mining.



- Among a large, late New Kingdom letter collection, a scribe's son, Butehamun, is replying to a letter of instructions from General Paiankh, the most powerful man in Thebes, who was fighting what was probably a losing campaign in Nubia.
- Following letter-writing guidelines, Butehamun opens with a long passage of formal greetings, then turns to business.
- The message includes: “Uncover a tomb among the ancient tombs and preserve its seal until I return.”
- What does this mean?



# Medical matters (ca. 1325)

Ancient Egyptian medical documents are a mixture of the practical and the magical.

- A few specify a highly analytical (~modern) approach.
- Most, however, are a combination of recipes and magical spells to recite for various ailments—in this case, skin and eye complaints, bleeding (mostly incantations against miscarriage), and burns.



# Papyrus Jumilac (ca 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE)



*This part of the Papyrus Jumilhac tells the tale of the Transformations & Revenge of Isis.*

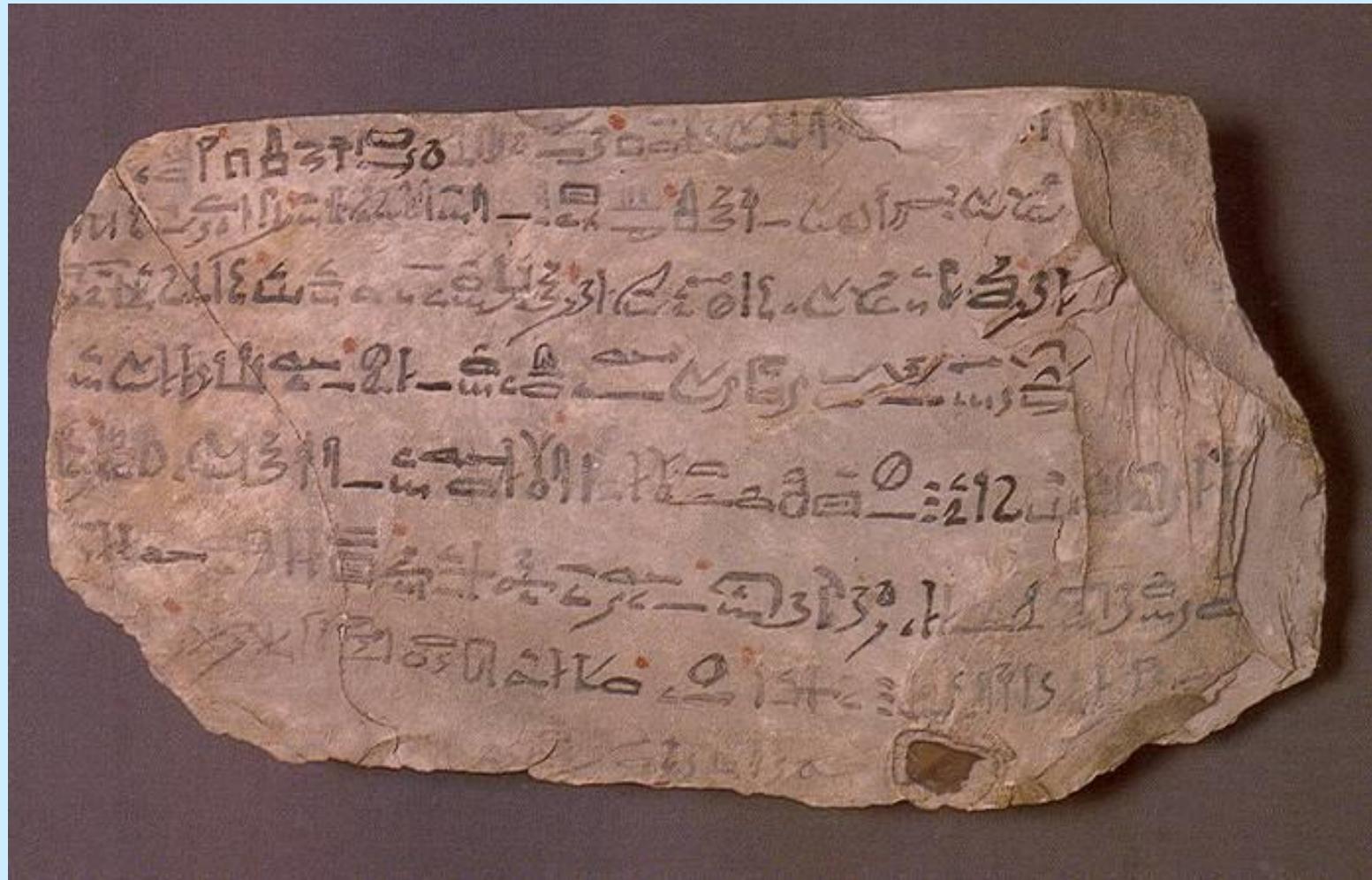
- About 23 “pages” long and telling stories connected with local landmarks, this Ptolemaic text (approximately 2nd century BCE) records some Egyptian myths.
- It may have been a sort of training manual for the priesthood of the 17th and 18th nomes.

- One section narrates a night assault by Anubis against Followers of Seth, whose heads he collectively severed with one blow.
- This local myth adds a local episode to the “national” conflict between Horus and Seth.

# Ostraca (sing. Ostracon)

These limestone pieces or pottery sherds of different sizes and shapes were used, especially in the New Kingdom and especially at work sites, to record numerous data, including:

- Administrative accounts
- Correspondence with the Vizier and other high officials
- Reports of official inspections
- Attendance of workmen and reasons for absences
- Wages (typically a quantity of grain) paid or not paid
- Work progress
- Court proceedings and decisions, including oaths, depositions, witness lists, oracle petitions
- Thefts
- Resident disputes
- Financial and property transactions, including records of donkey hire
- Family problems (e.g., adultery)
- Support staff deliveries (kind, quantity, on time or late)
- Inventories (e.g., tools, lamp wicks)
- Local events

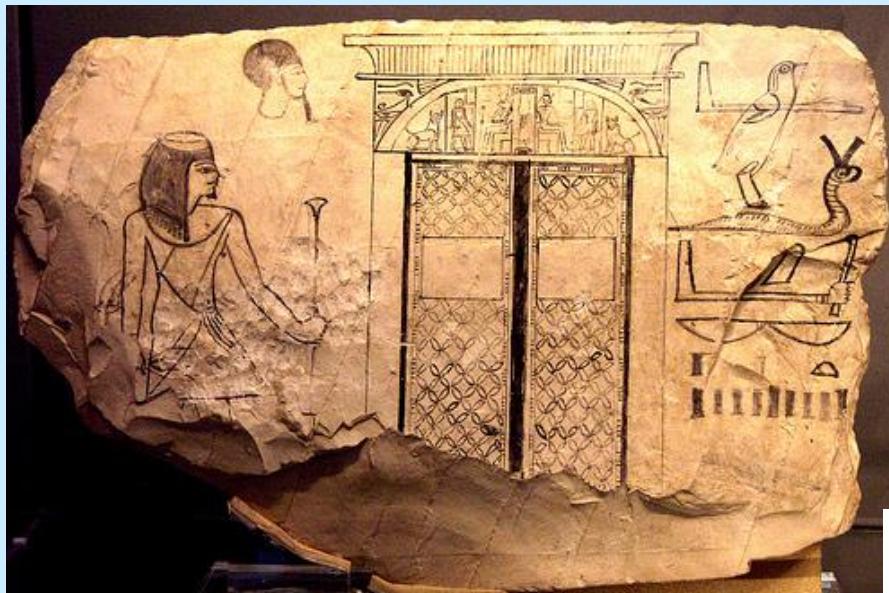


Hieratic ostracon with literary text  
*c. 1200 BCE*

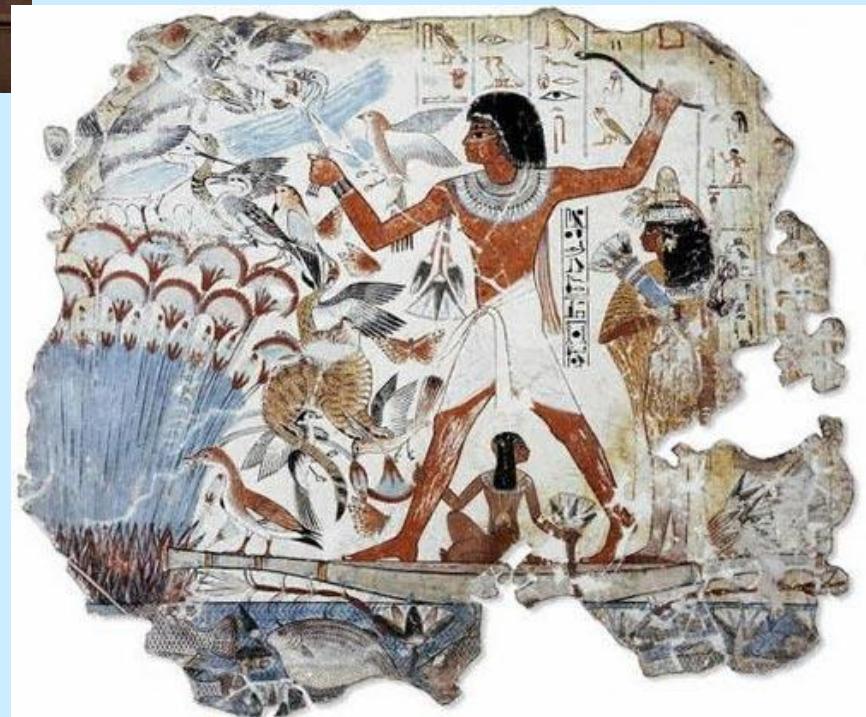
## Ramesses III (IV?) smiting enemies



# Elaborate ostracon drawings



[http://bp3.blogspot.com/\\_uYAsZYK\\_YUk/RxYJTd6SuhI/AAAAAAA  
AAAtM/TPskcZpY\\_YU/s1600-h/deir+el+medina+ostraca+13.jpg](http://bp3.blogspot.com/_uYAsZYK_YUk/RxYJTd6SuhI/AAAAAAA<br/>AAAtM/TPskcZpY_YU/s1600-h/deir+el+medina+ostraca+13.jpg)



[http://www.egiptologia.com/arte/107-monograficos-tematicos/2626-  
los-ninos-en-el-arte-egipcio.html](http://www.egiptologia.com/arte/107-monograficos-tematicos/2626-<br/>los-ninos-en-el-arte-egipcio.html)

# Hunting scene



<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/26.7.1453>

# Cartoons...

<http://www.joanannlansberry.com/fotoart/brklyn/ostracon-.jpg>



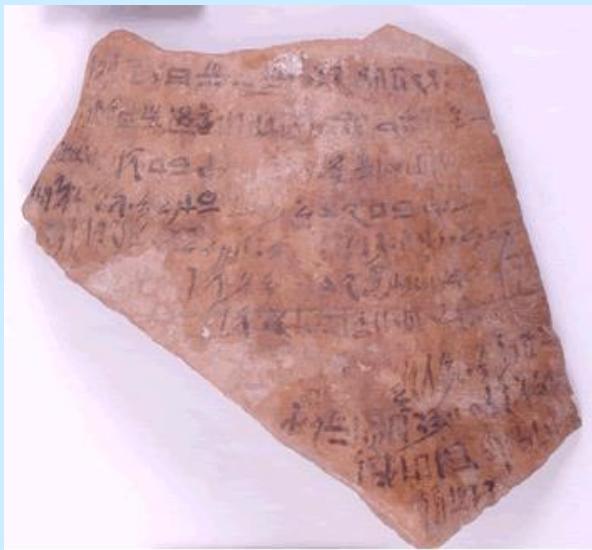
*limestone ostracon Nineteenth-Twentieth Dynasty  
(1307-1070BC)  
A cat herding geese*



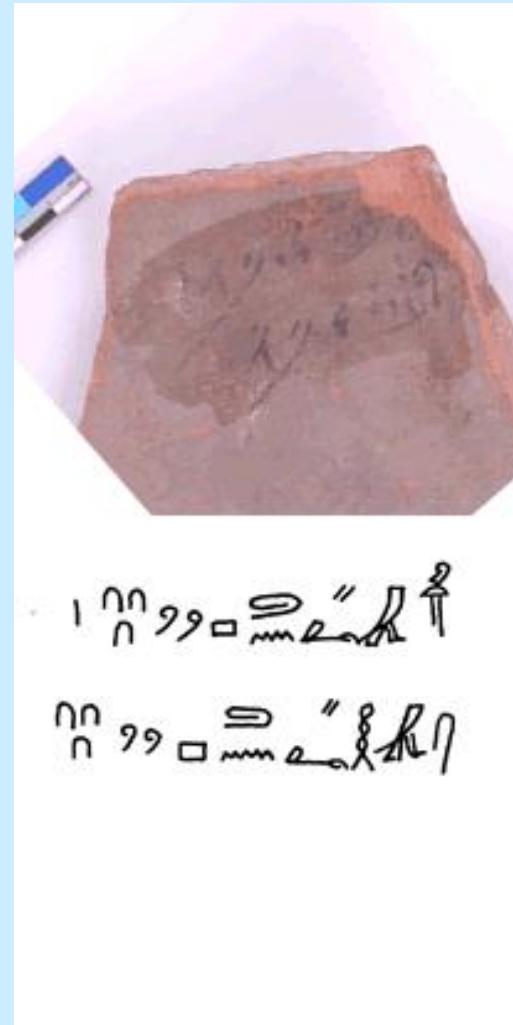
[near-east-images.blogspot.com](http://near-east-images.blogspot.com)

[egiptomaniacos.top-forum.net](http://egiptomaniacos.top-forum.net)

# Ordering lamp wicks for tomb builders



Front



Back

# Erotic



<http://www.sepulcro-egipcio-de-tarragona.org/tag/ostracon/>

## Classical sources for knowledge of ancient Egypt

Several classical Greek and Roman sources had relatively direct information, through personal experience or available texts (now lost). Most notable of these writers were:

- Herodotus (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE)
- Manetho (late 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE)