

# Six Museum Objects that mark Major Events in Egyptian History

Khaled El Shalakany

Posted November 26, 2015

## 1. The Narmer Palette (Cairo Musuem) Pre-Dynastic



<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/egypt-art/predynastic-old-kingdom/a/palette-of-king-narmer>

*Wikipedia:*

*“The Narmer Palette, also known as the Great Hierakonpolis Palette or the Palette of Narmer, is a significant Egyptian archeological find, dating from about the 31st century BC, containing some of the earliest hieroglyphic inscriptions ever found. It is thought by some to depict the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt under the king Narmer. On one side, the king is depicted with the bulbed White Crown of Upper (southern) Egypt, and the other side depicts the king wearing the level Red Crown of Lower (northern) Egypt. Along with the Scorpion Macehead and the Narmer Maceheads, also found together in the Main Deposit at Nekhen, the Narmer Palette provides one of the earliest known depictions of an Egyptian king. The Palette shows many of the classic conventions of Ancient Egyptian art, which must already have been formalized by the time of the Palette's creation. The Egyptologist Bob Brier has referred to the Narmer Palette as "the first historical document in the world".*

Palettes were used for grinding cosmetics. This important historical object made from siltstone represents a major event in Egyptian history, i.e. the unification of upper and lower Egypt under the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty King Narmer (Cat Fish the Scorpion King?). It probably dates back to about 3100 BC. This object also straddles the time between pre-Historic Egypt, Dynastic Egypt (starting with the 1<sup>st</sup> Dynasty or even Dynasty 0) and the Beginning of the Old Kingdom (3rd Dynasty). For more information about Narmer you can watch this video on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kh9ByB2jVU4>

## 2. An Egyptian Scribe (Louvre) Old Kingdom

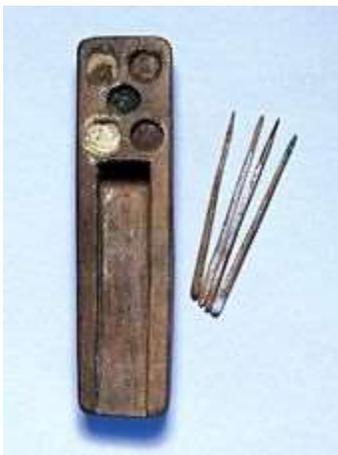


<http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/seated-scribe>

The development of the Hieroglyphic script for writing and the grammar for the Egyptian language during the Old Kingdom period played a critical role in the creation of the Egyptian State allowing for the undertaking of mega projects such as for example the great pyramids of Giza (4th Dynasty).

### Wikipedia

*Much of what is known about ancient Egypt is due to the activities of its scribes and the officials. Monumental buildings were erected under their supervision,<sup>[4]</sup> administrative and economic activities were documented by them, and tales from the mouths of Egypt's lower classes or from foreign lands survive thanks to scribes putting them in writing.<sup>[5]</sup>*



**Ancient Egyptian Scribe's palette with five depressions for pigments and four styli.**

*Scribes were also considered part of the royal court, were not conscripted and did not have to pay taxes. The scribal profession had companion professions, the painters and artisans*

who decorated [reliefs](#) and other relics with scenes, personages, or hieroglyphic text. A scribe was exempt from the heavy manual labor required of the lower classes, or [corvee](#) labor.

The hieroglyph used to [signify the scribe](#), to write, and "writings", etc., is [Gardiner sign Y3](#),



*from the category of: 'writings, & music'. The hieroglyph contains the scribe's ink-mixing palette, a vertical case to hold writing-reeds, and a leather pouch to hold the black and red ink blocks.*

For more about the creation of the Egyptian State see the 1979 book written by Humphrey Evans 'The Mystery of the Pyramids'.

### 3. The Priestess Imertnebes (Leiden Museum of Antiquities) Middle Kingdom 12th Dynasty



<http://www.rmo.nl/collectie/zoeken?object=AH+113>

This is a wooden grave statue from the 12th dynasty of a priestess of Amun. Notice the exquisite work in wood, with a skin tight dress. I selected this object because it is a good example of the developments in art following the first intermediate period. Women are shown stepping forward, i.e. in action. They also depicted in all their beauty.

Francesco Tiradritti in his book 'Ancient Egypt: Art, architecture and history' (British Museum Press 1999) says at page 50:

*"Throughout pharaonic history, the female figure was shown in art with eternal, immutable youth and idealized beauty. It had a sensuality which was sometimes merely hinted at, and at other times was very prominent. And it always had connotations of fertility, from the very oldest prehistoric figurines with strongly emphasized female attributes through to the fully formed statues of Ptolemaic queens.*

*Artists used the female figure to convey the ideal of eternity upon which the whole of Egyptian culture was premised, and the promise of perpetual reincarnation created by the possibility of future maternity.*

*Although every period produced female images of extraordinary beauty, those of the Middle Kingdom were without equal."*

<http://web-owls.com/2006/05/28/ancient-egypt-iii-the-hyksos-presence-its-social-and-technological-changes/>

#### 4. King Tut's Chariot (Cairo Museum) New Kingdom 18th Dynasty

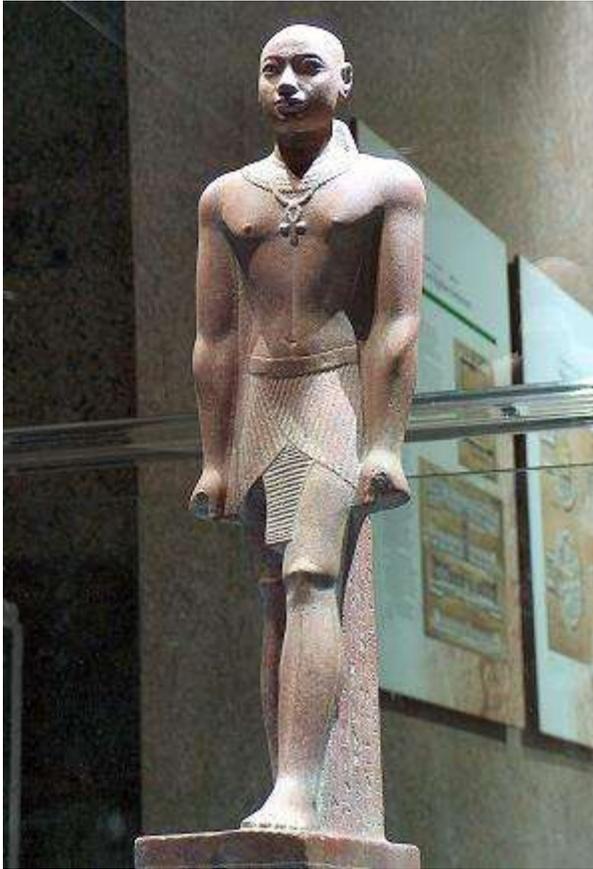


<http://www.touregypt.net/museum/tut172.htm>

Chariots were introduced into Egypt by the Hyksos (tribes probably from Canaan - modern day Palestine) who occupied lower Egypt (their capital was in the Delta) for about 300 years until they were expelled by a ruler from Upper Egypt Ahmose who reunited both the lands again and became the Lord of the two lands (nbtawi - nswit bity)), marking the beginning of the New Kingdom. This period from Dynasty 18 to 20 was marked with military expansion and is sometimes referred to as the Empire Age. War chariots played an important role and featured on temple and tomb inscription.

I selected a chariot (one of the very few found intact) because it reflects the military expansionist tone of the New Kingdom far beyond Egypt well into the Levant, Nubia and beyond.

## 5. Kushite Priest of Amon (Aswan Nubia Museum) 25th Dynasty



<http://looklex.com/egypt/aswan12.htm>

The invasion of Egypt by the Kush (Nubia and modern day Northern Sudan) rulers circa 760 BCE

*Wikipedia*

*"The Twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt, known as the [Nubian](#) Dynasty or the [Kushite Empire](#), was the last dynasty of the [Third Intermediate Period](#) of [Ancient Egypt](#).*

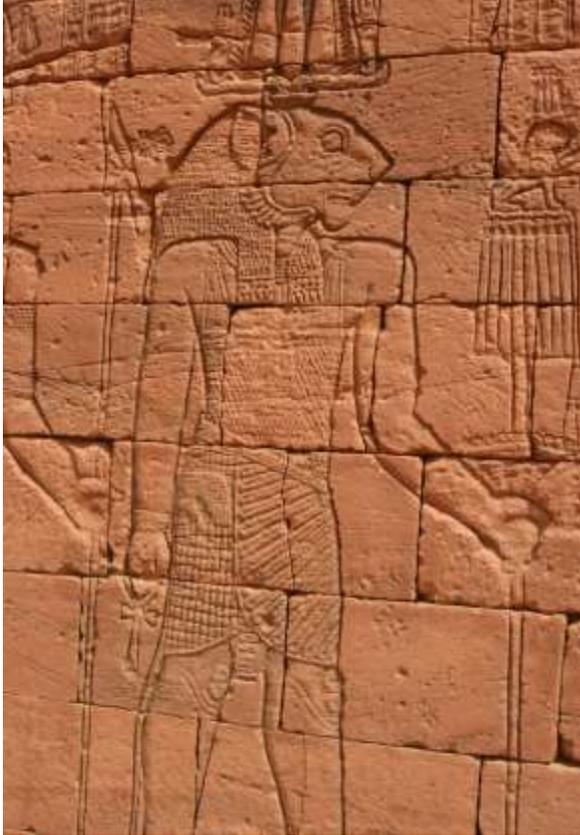
*The 25th dynasty was a line of rulers originating in the Nubian [Kingdom of Kush](#) and most saw [Napata](#) as their spiritual homeland. They reigned in part or all of Ancient Egypt from 760 BC to 656 BC. The dynasty began with [Kashta](#)'s invasion of Upper Egypt and culminated in several years of both successful and unsuccessful war with the [Mesopotamian](#) based [Assyrian Empire](#). The 25th's reunification of Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt, and also Kush ([Nubia](#)) created the largest Egyptian empire since the New Kingdom. They ushered in an age of renaissance by reaffirming Ancient Egyptian religious traditions, temples, and artistic forms, while introducing some unique aspects of Kushite culture.<sup>[2]</sup> It was during the 25th dynasty that the Nile valley saw the first widespread construction of pyramids (many in modern Sudan) since the Middle Kingdom. After the*

*Assyrian kings Sargon II and Sennacherib defeated attempts by the Nubian kings to gain a foothold in the Near East, their successors Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal invaded Egypt and defeated and drove out the Nubians. War with Assyria resulted in the end of Kushite power in Northern Egypt and the conquest of Egypt by Assyria. They were succeeded by the Twenty-sixth dynasty of Egypt, initially a puppet dynasty installed by and vassals of the Assyrians, the last native dynasty to rule Egypt before the Persian conquest."*

I visited North Sudan and saw the pyramids of the Kush Kings (see picture below)



This civilization was heavily influenced by the Egyptian civilization, apart from the pyramids see for example the God below with a LION HEAD. The adjacent picture is of the very friendly and nice man who is the Temple Keeper....



## 6. Statue of Cleopatra VII (British Museum) Ptolemaic Period



<http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/leadersaf/ss/CleopatraPix.htm>

The last ruler of Egypt in the Ptolemaic period. With her death after the battle of Actium Egypt ceased to be independent. She tried to keep the Romans at bay... Her relationships with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony (and her children by both men, perhaps were the attempt of a great queen to forestall the inevitable... Egypt and Alexandria continued however, as was the case over the 300 years of Ptolemaic rule to be the hub of intellectual endeavor in the ancient world with the famous library of Alexandria at the core of this magnificent period



Above is an artist's rendition of Hypatia the 5th Century CE philosopher and mathematician who was murdered by Christian Zealots in the streets of Alexandria

***Wikipedia***

***Her death is symbolic for some historians. For example, Kathleen Wider proposes that the murder of Hypatia marked the end of [Classical antiquity](#) and [Stephen Greenblatt](#) observes that her murder "effectively marked the downfall of Alexandrian intellectual life". On the other hand, Christian Wildberg notes that [Hellenistic philosophy](#) continued to flourish in the 5th and 6th centuries, and perhaps until the age of [Justinian](#).***

---