

A2: Week 1, Thur Pre-Dynastic Art / Early Dynastic Art **Origins**

HPAH5086/6086 - Art and Ancient Egypt 4000BC to the
2020ies: Exhibiting artistic representations

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Additional Reading

- ❑ Patch, Diana Craig (2012). *Dawn of Egyptian Art*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art. → [Dawn of Egyptian Art - MetPublications - The Metropolitan Museum of Art \(metmuseum.org\)](http://www.metmuseum.org/publications/dawn-of-egyptian-art)
- ❑ Teeter, E. (ed.) (2011). *Before the Pyramids: the Origins of Egyptian Civilization*. Chicago: Oriental Institute. → [OIMP 33. Before the Pyramids: The Origins of Egyptian Civilization | Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures \(uchicago.edu\)](http://www.uchicago.edu/oimp/33-before-the-pyramids-the-origins-of-egyptian-civilization) (free download)
- ❑ Wengrow, D. (2009). Predynastic Art. In Willeke Wendrich (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles.
<http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz001ndn3p>
- ❑ Whitney, D. (1992). *Masking the Blow: The Scene of Representation in Late Prehistoric Egyptian Art*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- ❑ Whitney, D. (1976). The Origins of Register Composition in Predynastic Egyptian Art, In: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96(1976), 404-18.
- ❑ Whitney, D. (1993). "Narrativity and the Narmer Palette," In: P.J. Holliday. *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 14-54.

Our object of the day

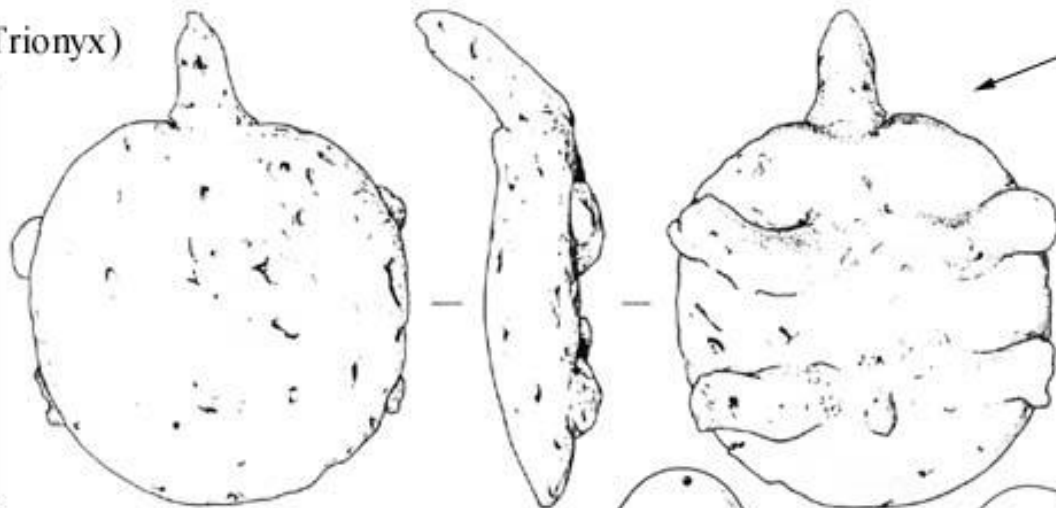
MMA 10.176.78



Predynastic Egypt turtles (Trionyx)



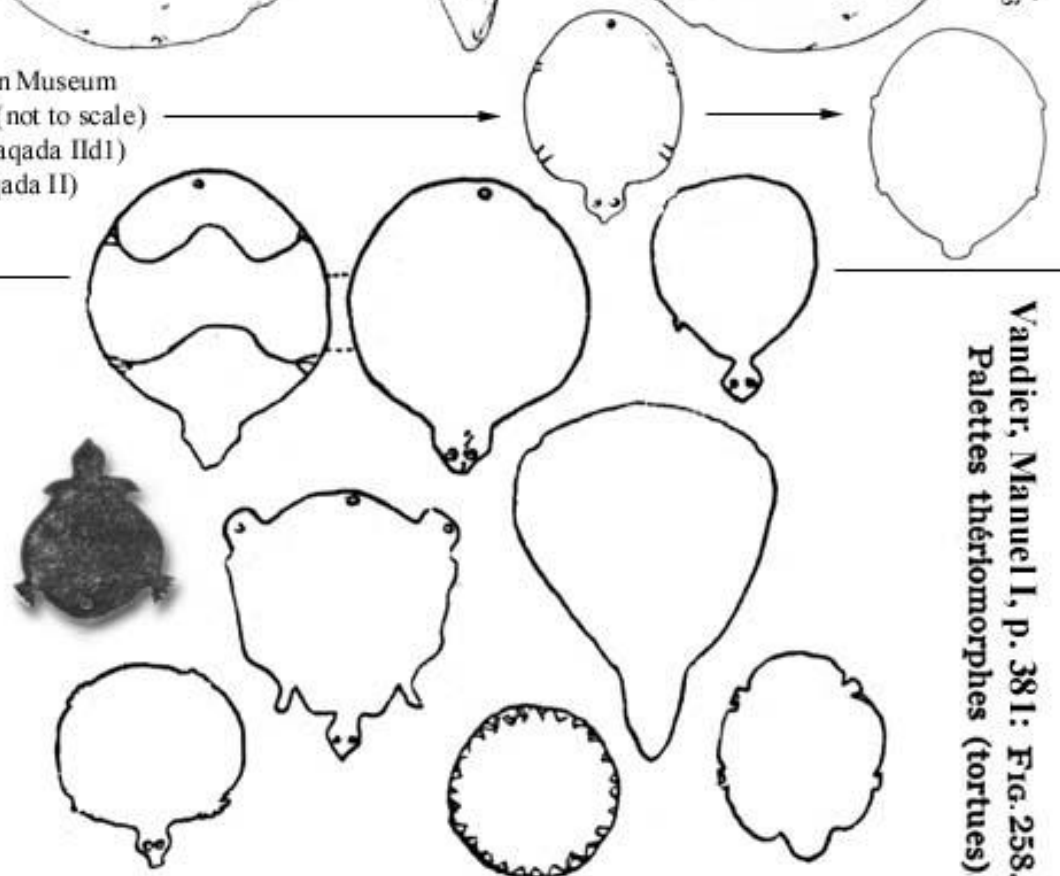
19738 (slate vessel, Naqada II)
 Ägyptische Museum Berlin
 10595 (schist palette, Naqada II)



Abadiya tomb B83 (Naqada II b) clay;
 Ashmolean Mus. Oxford E 1068 + 1063



Oxford, Ashmolean Museum
 palettes 1814, 1818 (not to scale)
 El-Amra t. b62 (Naqada II d1)
 Gebelein (Naqada II)



Vandier, Manuel I, p. 381: Fig. 258.
 Palettes théromorphes (tortues)

Turtle Palettes

MFA Boston 13.3492

Naqada II 3650–3300 B.C, Egypt,
Naga el-Hai (Qena), Tomb K 362



MFA Boston 03.1483

Naqada I–III, 3850–2960 B.C.



MMA 10.176.78



- ❑ **Palette Depicting a Pair of Mud Turtles**
- ❑ **Period:** Predynastic, early Naqada II
- ❑ **Date:** ca. 3650–3500 B.C.
- ❑ **Medium:** Greywacke
- ❑ **Dimensions:** h. 15.3 x w. 16 x th. 0.6 cm (6 x 6 5/16 x 1/4 in.)
- ❑ **(Credit Line:** Rogers Fund, 1910)
- ❑ **Accession Number:** 10.176.78

MMA 10.176.78



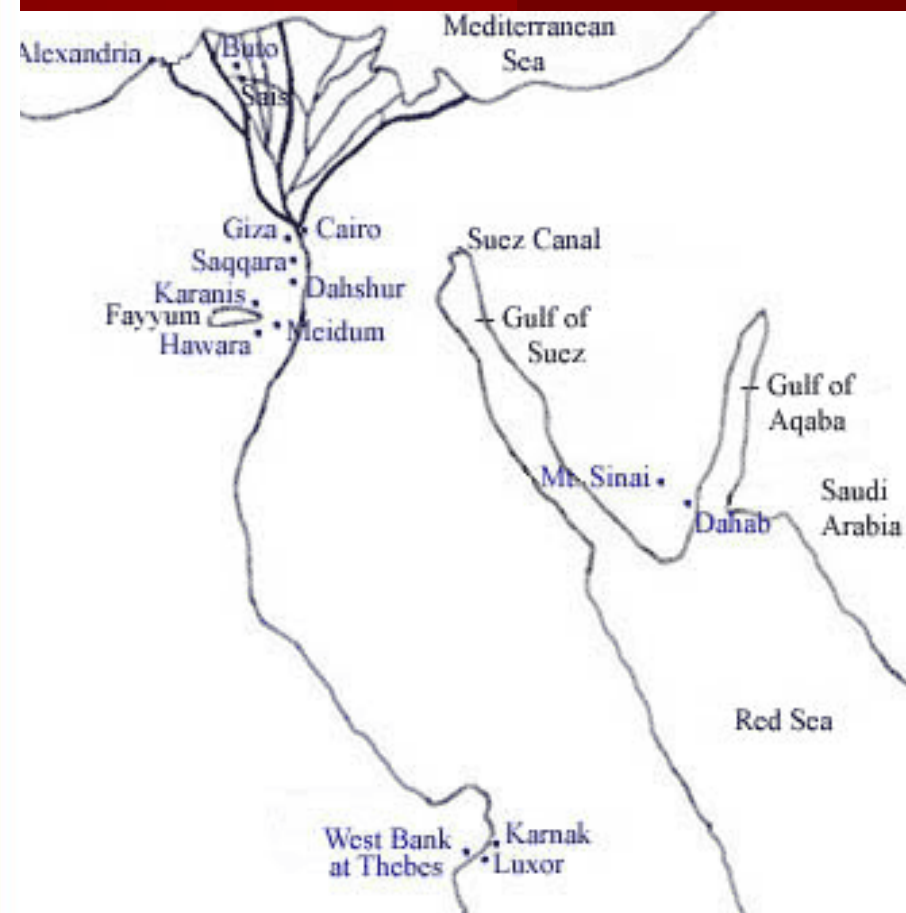
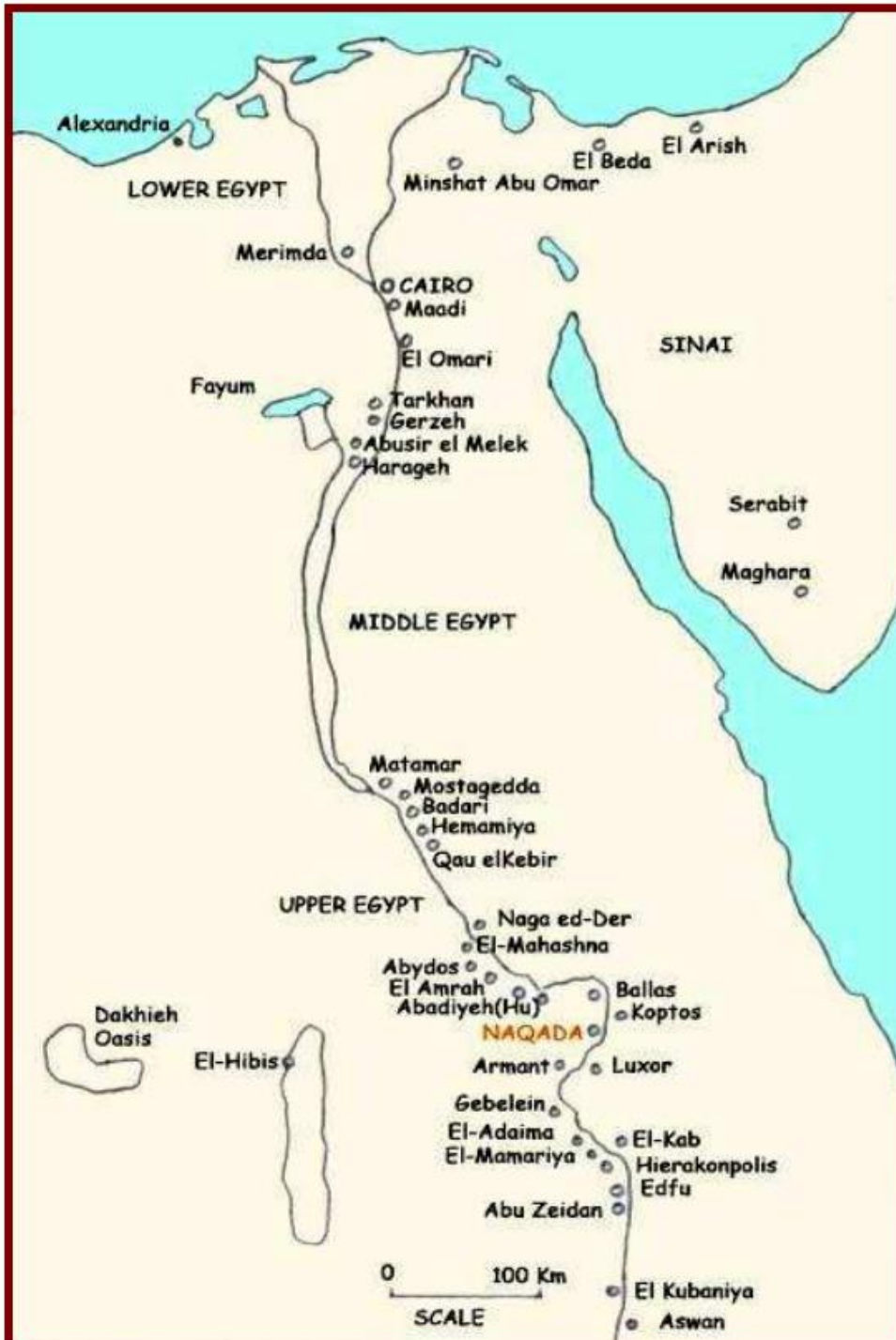
- The large mud turtle, which inhabited the Nile River and its canals, is the subject of many palettes and this one is quite unusual in depicting a pair. The duo may represent a mating pair linking the palette's imagery to the concept of fertility and therefore regeneration. In the Pharaonic Period, the turtle had a dual reputation, on one hand the animal was connected to chaos and disorder, and on the other, it could be a potent amulet when the turtle's negative character was used as a protective force. Given the turtle is the subject of an implement for manufacturing pigment for eye paint, a protective interpretation seems fitting.

Pre- and Early Dynastic Art



Chronological Table

APPROXIMATE DATES B.C.	PERIOD			RULERS	SUGGESTED SEQUENCE OF MAJOR OBJECTS
4000–3600	Nagada I (Amratian)				
3600–3300	Nagada IIa/b (Gerzean)				Brooklyn and Carnarvon knife handles
					Ostrich Palette
	Nagada IIc/d		Decorated Tomb, Hierakonpolis?		
					Oxford Palette
	Nagada IIIa		Hunter's Palette		
	Nagada IIIb	}	Horizon A	unnamed	Battlefield Palette
			Horizon B	Scorpion	Scorpion mace head
				Narmer	Narmer Palette, Narmer mace head
3000	First Dynasty			Djer	
				Den	
2800	Second Dynasty			Khasekhemuwy	statues of Khasekhemuwy



MMA 20.5

Hafted fishtail blade / knife with sheath

Period: Predynastic, Naqada I

Date: ca. 3900–3650 B.C.

Geography: From Egypt

Medium: Flint, plant material,
wood

Dimensions: L: 12 cm (4 3/4
in); W: 5 cm (1 15/16 in)

Credit Line: Anonymous Gift,
1920





10.130.2583



23.2.20



23.2.19

MMA 23.2.19

Female figurine (wearing a necklace)

Period: Predynastic, Naqada II

Date: ca. 3500–3300 B.C.

Geography: From Egypt

Medium: Bone

Dimensions: H. 3.9 x W. 1.6 x D. 0.8 cm
(1 9/16 x 5/8 x 5/16 in.)

Credit Line: Rogers Fund, 1923



MMA

10.130.2583

Female figurine (on a reed)

Period: Predynastic, Naqada II

Date: ca. 3650–3300 B.C.

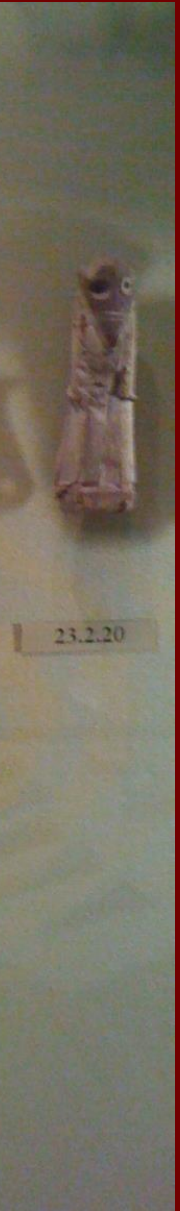
Geography: From Egypt

Medium: Wood, sandy mud/clay (?),
organic material, paint, linen, reed

Dimensions: H. 18.7 x W. 2.9 x D. 2.4 cm
(7 3/8 x 1 1/8 x 15/16 in.)

Credit Line: Gift of Helen Miller Gould,
1910





Pottery



Egypt Centre W1297

Pottery vessel black net
decoration.



Egypt Centre

AB89

Cylindrical wavy handled
pottery vessel, buff fabric

Original from Palestine,
late predynastic

Gift from University of
Wales Aberystwyth





Bowl with Human Feet (MMA 10.176.113)

Predynastic, Late Naqada I–Naqada II
ca. 3700–3450 B.C.





Egypt Centre AB24

Scutiform palette (shield shaped), cosmetic, siltstone, drilled hole in the centre of the top edge (presumably for suspension, either in the dwelling, on one's person, or possibly as part of ritualistic use) 11cm long and 7.8cm wide

grave 993 at Tarkhan (exc. 1912-13) – female tomb owner, palette above head

fine-grained greywacke sandstone (Wadi Hammamat, Eastern Desert)

scutiform palettes seen between Naqada II and Naqada III

Predynastic palettes often associated with pigment processing (malachite, ochre) → Matt Szafran (2020): only 4.7% feature pigment staining

utilitarian use: application around eyes as defence against sun, medicinal benefit, ward off flies OR ritualistic uses: tegumentary (covering), form of mask

Elite objects! → more ritualistic?



MMA: Pre-dynastic slate palettes

Mud turtles (Naq II)



Fish shaped (Naq II)



Manchester Ostrich palette (5476)



Ashmolean Museum



Development of palettes

- earliest examples: (raw, poorly shaped ones have been found already in Palaeolithic contexts), from Badarian and Amratian periods (Naq I) - rectangular /rhombic + undecorated (occasionally incised motives)
 - Stone palettes at Merimde Beni Salame, in Lower Egypt and in Sudanese Neolithic (and later) cultures
 - Badarian palettes = generally rectangular (latest examples dated to the Early Dynastic period)
 - Amratian are rhomboidal + also zoomorphic and scutiform (shield-like) types already

Development of palettes

- Gerzean types (Naq II) = more beautiful aesthetically, some examples of fine sculpture (animal shapes: birds, fishes, turtles, mammals – giving silhouette, plain face, indication of eye), but also shield-like
- late Gerzean and protodynastic (Naqada IIc, but esp. Naqada IIIa,b) = more complex, wider range of subjects and styles → 'Commemorative' or 'Ceremonial' palettes: style, animals, gods, themes, metaphors (most must have been disused at beginning of dynastic period)

Narmer Palette (31st century BC): new composit figures typical for Eg. art



PUAM

Slate palette
(fish) and
mace-heads



Egypt Centre AB72

Disc shaped granite macehead, broken. 86mm in diameter.

The disc shaped macehead seems to have been generally earlier than the pear-shaped macehead.

Both date from the Predynastic to the Early Dynastic (4000-3000 B.C.) and are found in graves.

Gift from University of Wales Aberystwyth.





Black-topped pottery
from HK6 cemetery



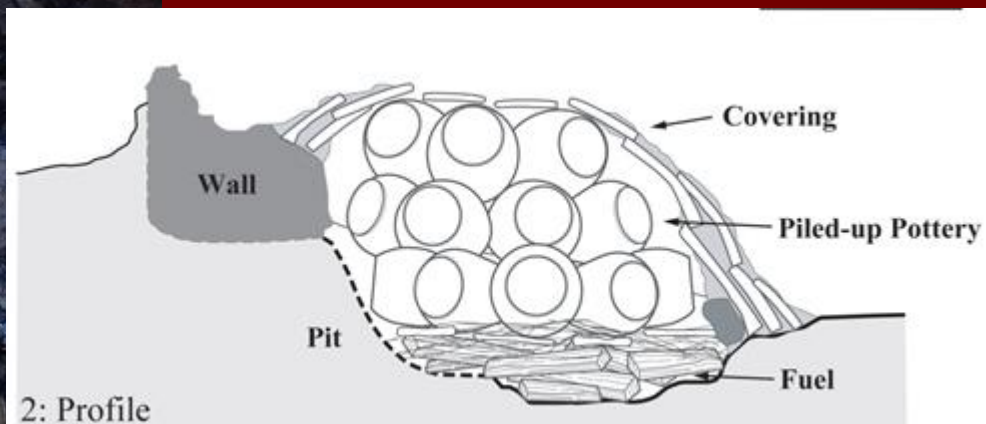
Hierakonpolis
Experimental pottery firing in
mud covered kiln



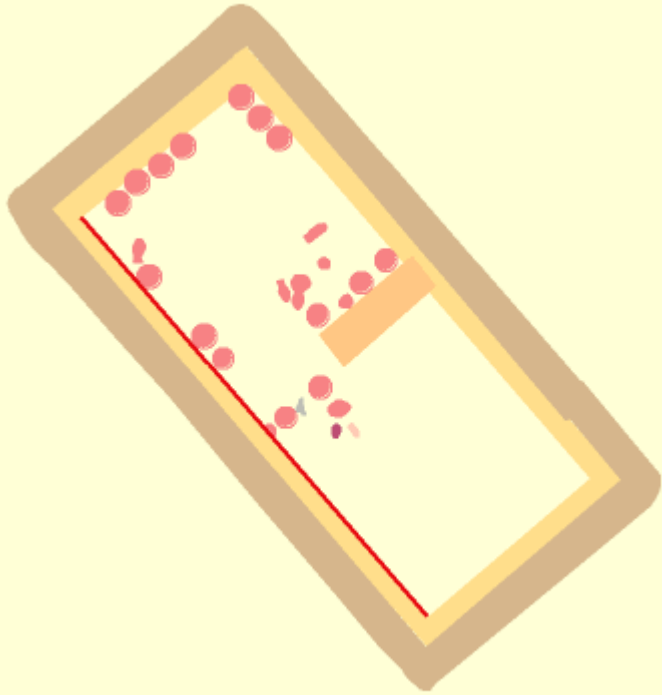
Hierakonpolis
Experimental firing success



■ Experimental archaeology



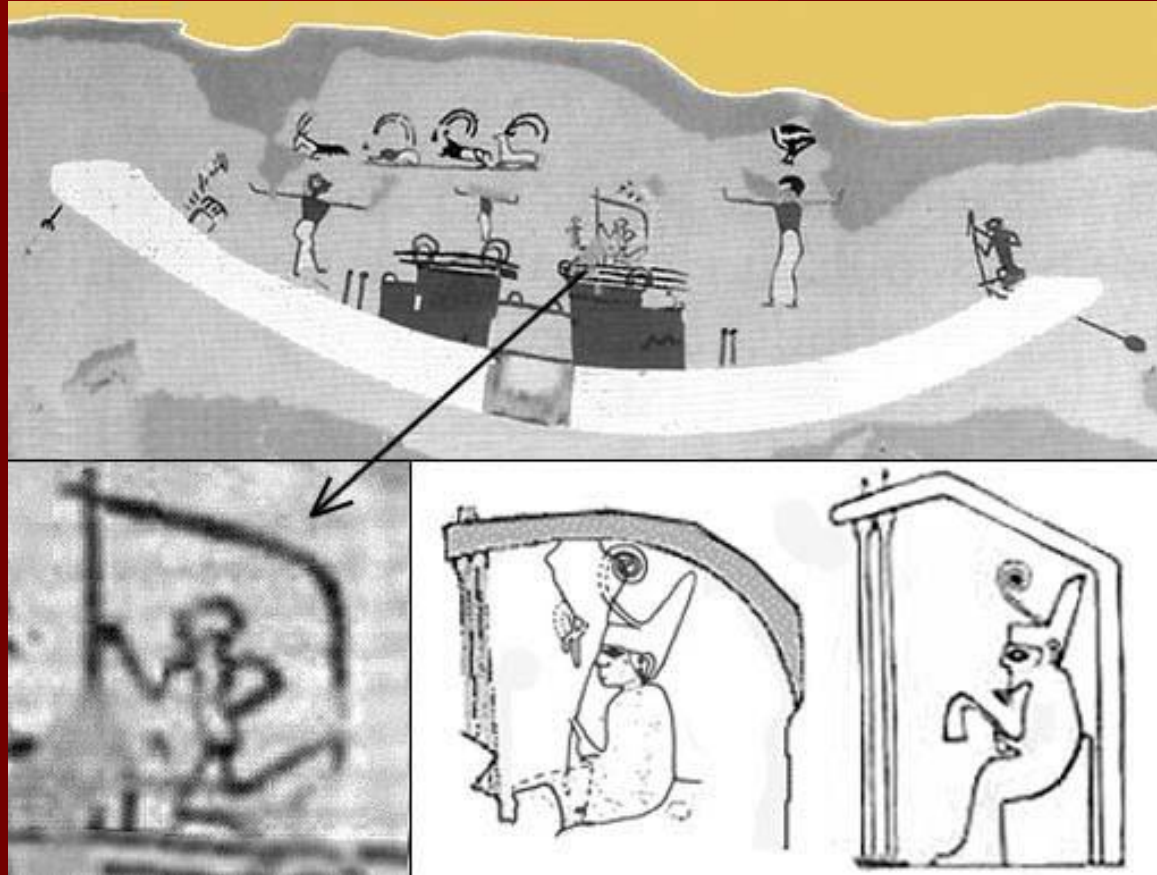
Hierakonpolis (Nekhen) Tomb 100





Development: Hierakonpolis 100 – maceheads

- **figure within the canopy king?**
- **Sedfest depictions?**
- **later depiction:
pharaoh sitting
(maceheads
Scorpion and
Narmer)**
- **king here stands up
(no crown , no
regalia)**





- “main deposit,” temple area Nekhen (Hierakonpolis)
- depicts a ceremony: captives + plunder presented to King Narmer (enthroned beneath canopy on stepped platform), wears Red Crown of Lower Egypt, holds a flail, wrapped in a long cloak
- record of animal / human plunder: 400,000 cattle, 1,422,000 goats, 120,000 captives
- royal festivals: renew the vitality of the king (heb sed?)

■ Ceremonial Narmer Macehead



Hierakonpolis, the 'Main Deposit'

some major finds in the Petrie Museum

decorated mace head UC 14898a/ UC 14898



Quibell 1900: pl. XXVI A; Adams 1974: 3, no. 1, pl. 1+2



BM EA 37996 (2nd Dyn)



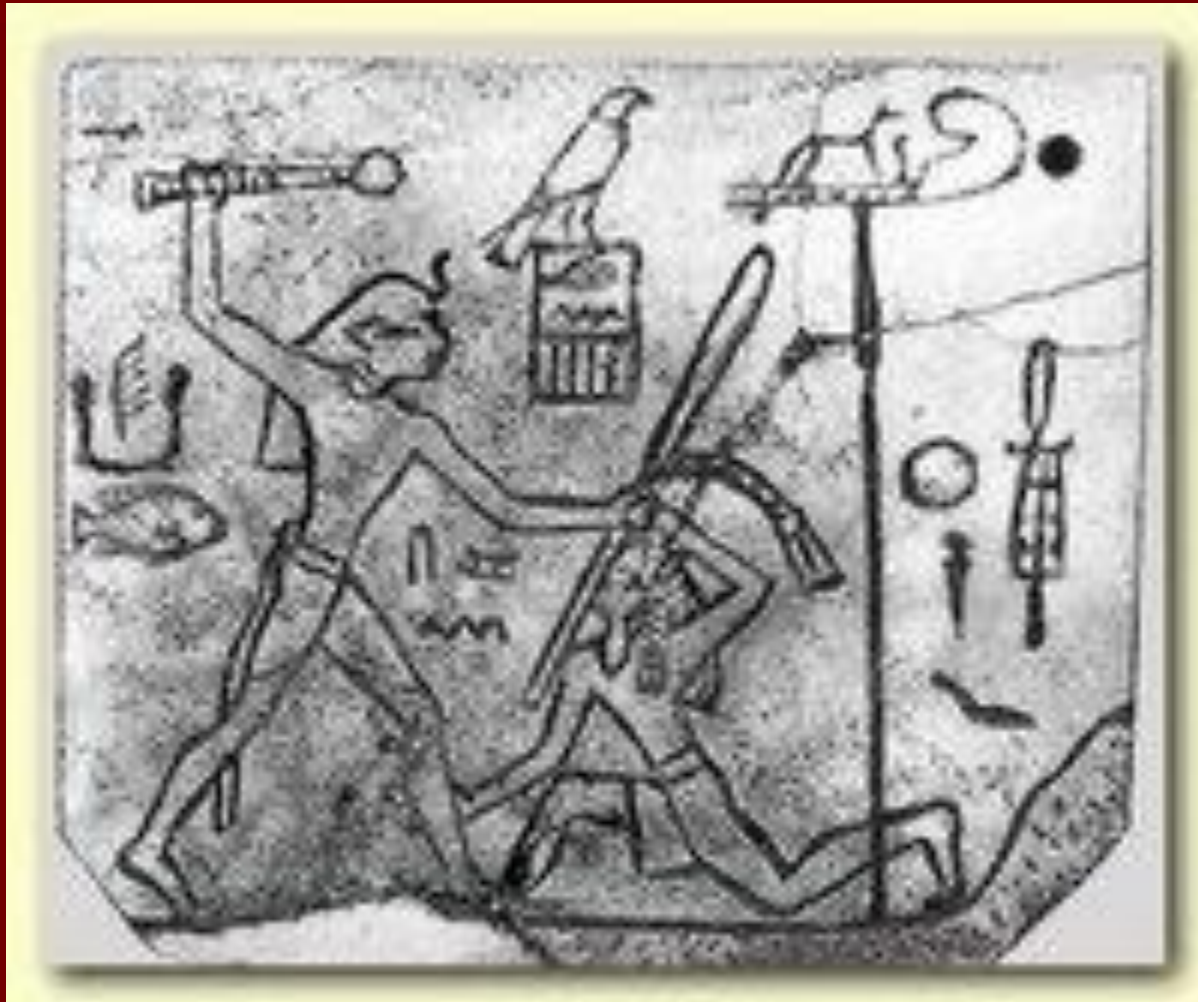
BM EA 37996: Ivory statuette of a king in jubilee robe

- ❑ From the Temple of Osiris, Abydos, Egypt
Early Dynastic period, perhaps mid-1st Dynasty
- ❑ This figurine is one of the earliest surviving portraits of an Egyptian king. (Which one?)
- ❑ The robe, decorated with a fine pattern of diamond shapes enclosed by double lines, is of the distinctive type worn by kings when celebrating the *sed* or jubilee festival. The figurine may be evidence that this festival was celebrated right at the beginning of the historical period in Egypt.

Narmer Palette (31st century BC): new composit figures typical for Eg. art



Ivory Label King De(we)n



MMA

19.2.16

Ritual vessel
(libation?)

Dyn 1



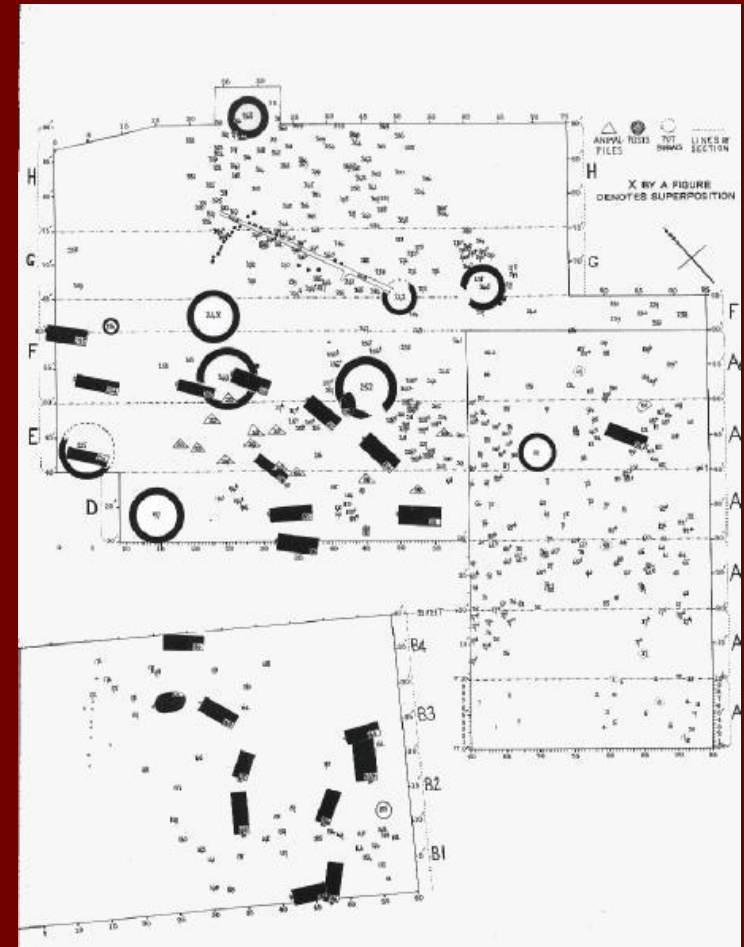
PUAM



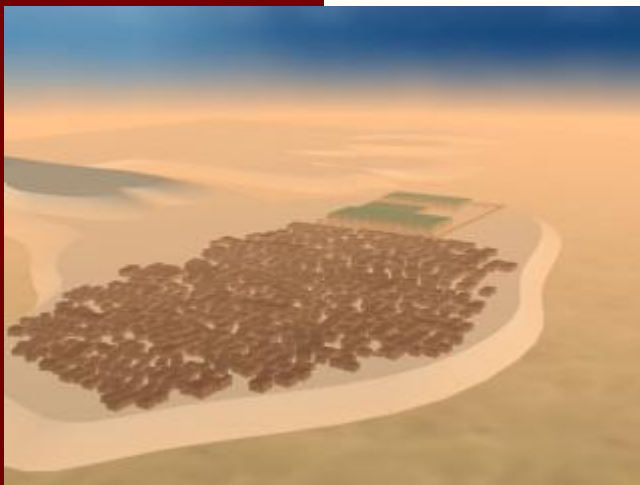
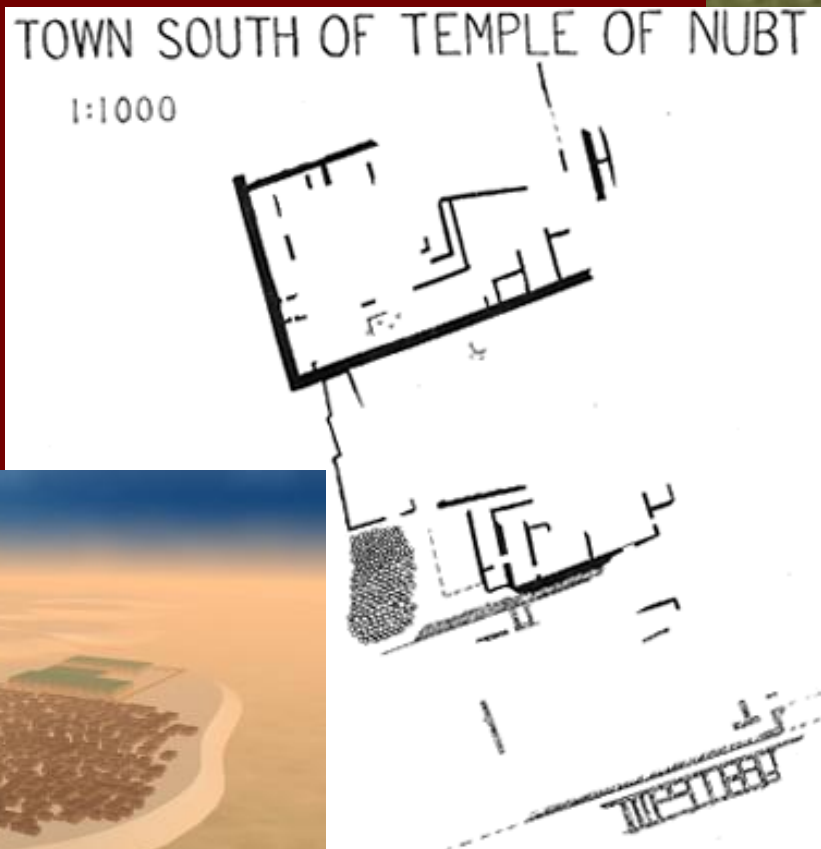
PUAM



The Prehistoric Village Near Hemamieh (Predynasty)



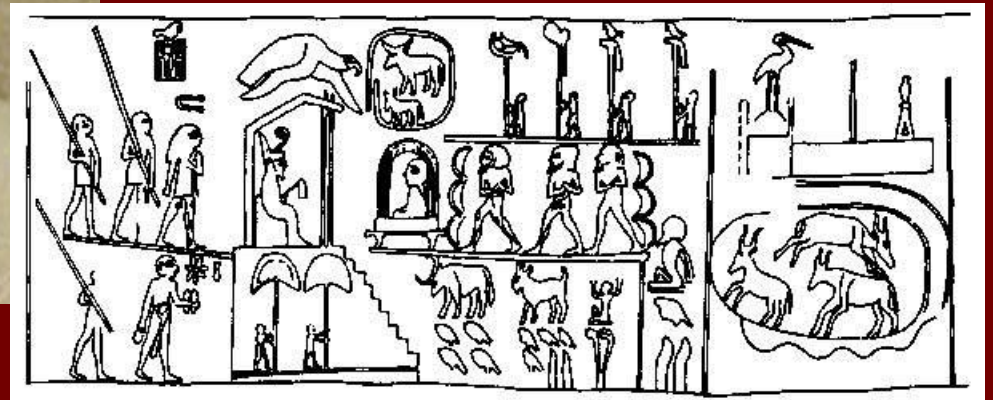
South Town of Naqada



Earliest temple: HK29A



Narmer Macehead, found in deposit in Hierakonpolis



BM EA 32650
Jar Label (Den, 1st dyn.)



BM EA 32650: Jar Label (Den, 1st dyn.)



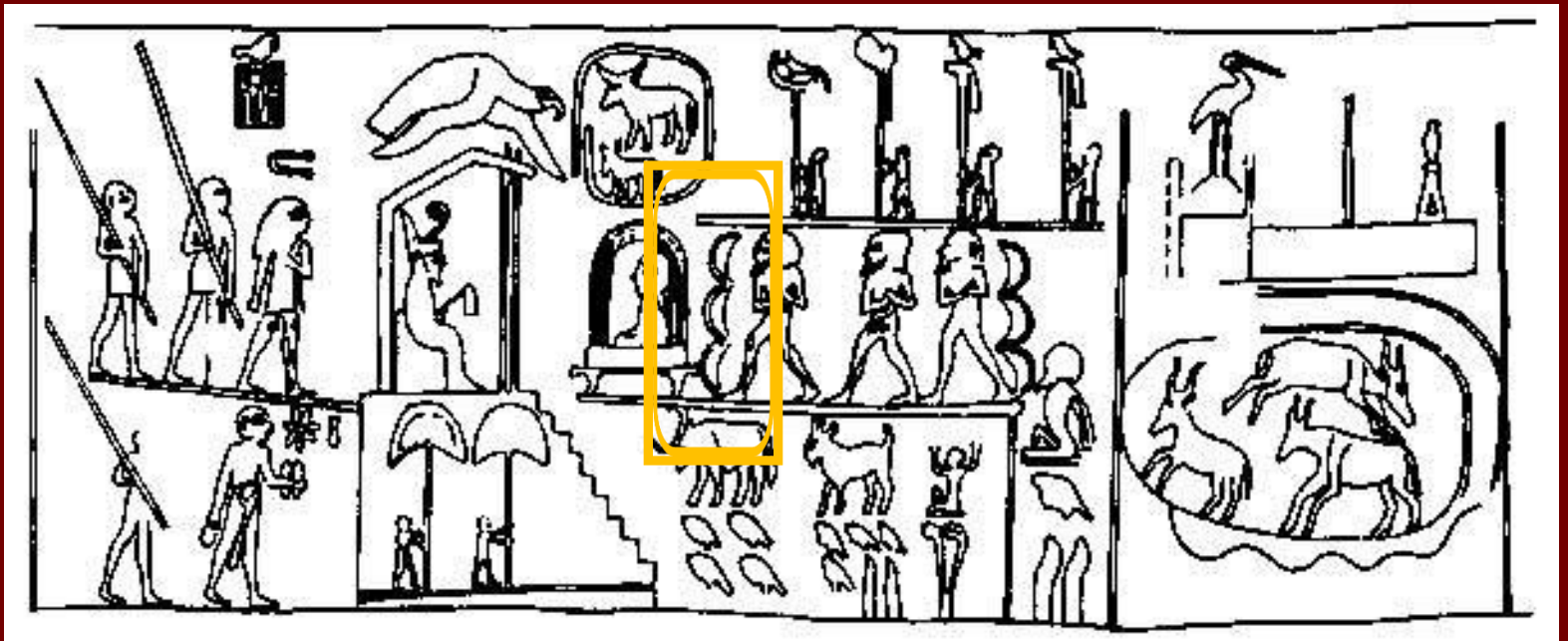
ebony oil label:
restored from two
fragments, with a hole
for attachment at the
top right-hand corner

Inscription (vertically left side, four
horizontal registers on right)

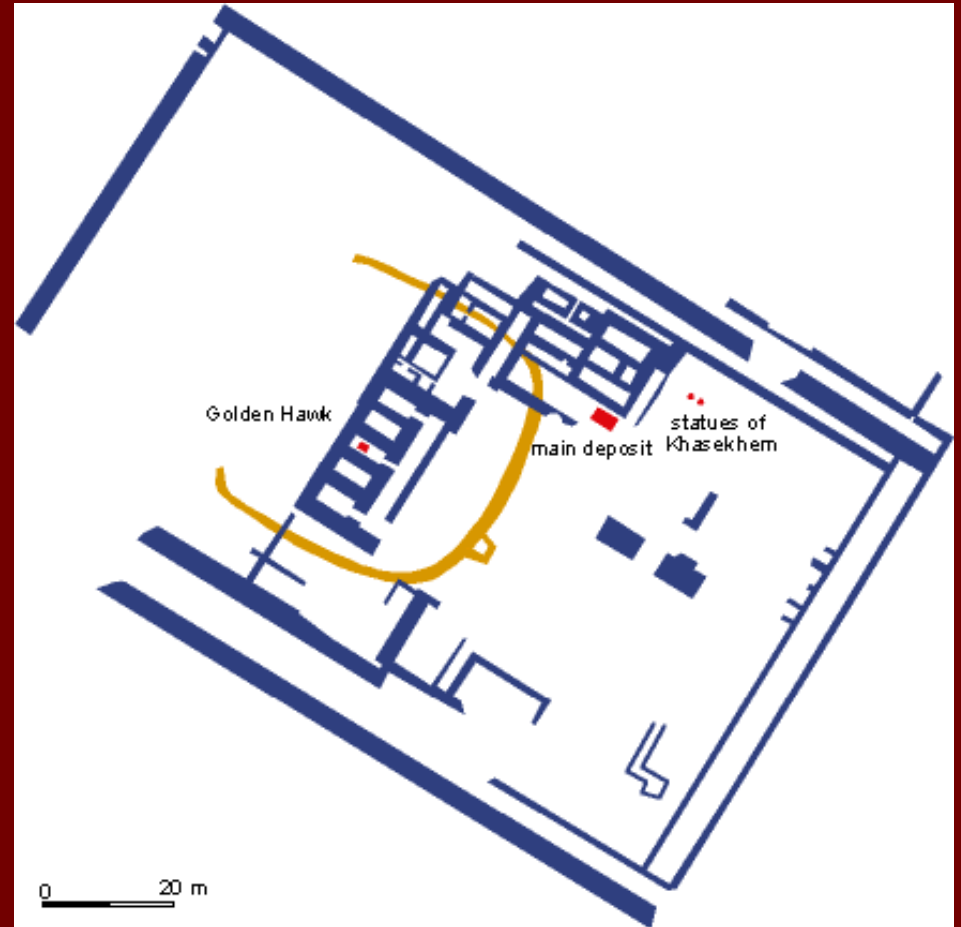
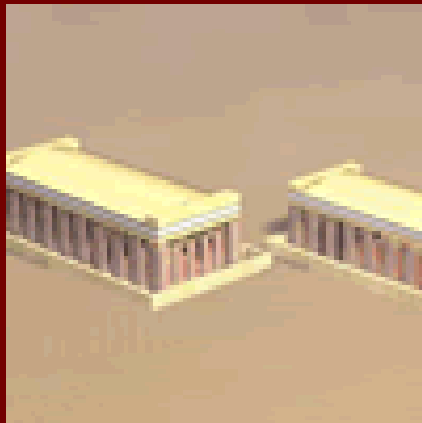
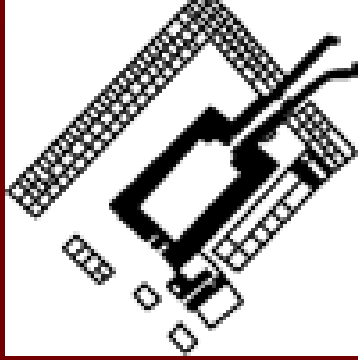
four registers bordered by 'rnpt' →
text records events of a particular
year

top register = scene of Sed-festival:
king wearing double crown, cloak
(?), running as part of ritual, seated
on throne in booth.

- meaning of the lower registers not
clear, but references to destruction
of stronghold, taking of captives.



Architecture in Early Dynastic Egypt



Koptos, Temple of Min

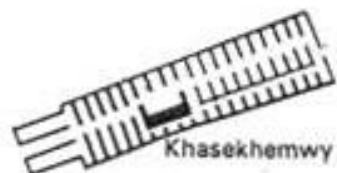


FRF

The royal tombs and funerary palaces at Abydos.

0 50 100m

Umm el-Qaab



Khasekhemwy

General plan of Abydos

0 1 km

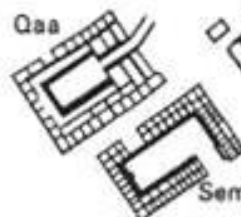
Umm el-Qaab
Royal tombs

Funerary
palaces

Temple of
Ramesis II

Osiris
Temple
enclosure

Desert edge



Qaa

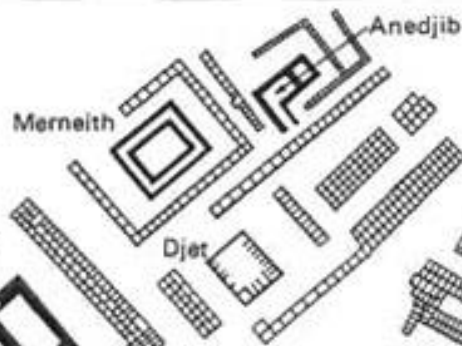
Den

Merneith

Djet



Semerkhet



Djer

Peribsen

Cemetery U

Cemetery 'B'

0 100m

B. Trigger, in: Trigger, Kemp, O'Connor, Lloyd, Ancient Egypt: A social History, 1983, fig. 3.2 (with some modifications)

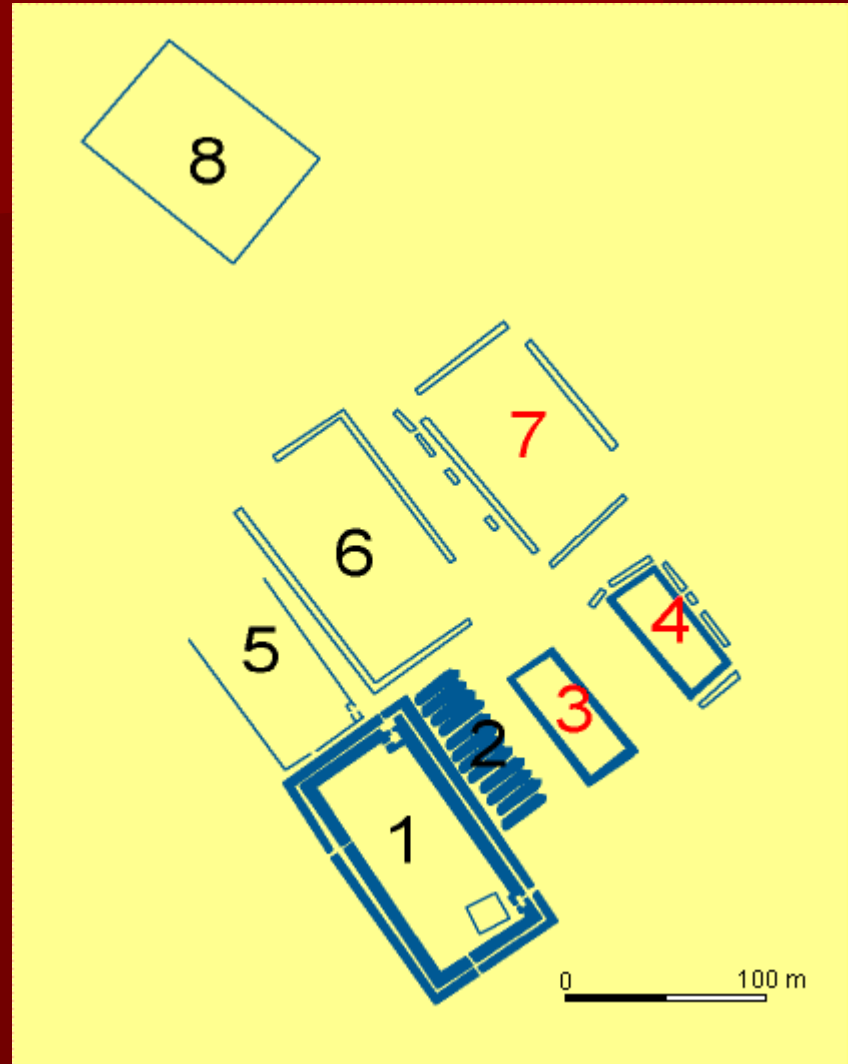
MMA 1.4.93

Private stela
Senba
Abydos,
King Djer



Abydos – Royal Enclosure

1. Khasekhemwy
2. Funerary Boats
3. Anedjib or Semerkhet
4. Merytneit (or Den ?)
5. Peribsen
6. Djer
7. Djet
8. Qaa (?)



Paris, Louvre 290

Limestone

Upper part stela, king
Wadj (dyn. 1)

One of a pair, set up
on east side of kings
tomb (offering place)



Khasekehmui (Shunet ez Zebib, Abydos)



