

Yale 2013 PIER Summer Institutes

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TITLE OF UNIT: The Narmer Palette

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School: Middlesex School

Subject Area: Ancient World History

Grade Level: 9th grade

Time Frame to Allow for Unit: 40 minutes

Introduction:

Students will attempt to draw conclusions about early dynastic Egypt and the reign of Narmer based on evidence from the Palette.

Geographic Connections:

Upper and Lower Egypt (identify on a map), Nile River Delta

Essential Question: How did the early Pharaohs and Narmer in particular unite Upper and Lower Egypt?

Vocabulary: Terms, Concepts and Actors

Narmer, Narmer Palette, Pharaoh, Archaeology, Hathor, Serpopard.

Stage 1 – Desired Results

Common Core Content Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 - 5: Key ideas and details. (Replace text with object)

1. Cite specific evidence to support analysis of a primary source, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text or object.
3. Analyze in detail a series of events described in an object; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in an object, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
5. Analyze how an object uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

Understandings/Goals:

Students will understand that:

An object can convey as much or more meaning than a written text.

Questions Related to Theme:

What does the Narmer Palette tell us about Predynastic Egypt?

How do the signs and visual elements of the palette combine to convey a message?

Can Narmer be considered the first Pharaoh of a unified Egypt?

What message did Narmer hope to communicate with this palette?

Student Objectives (Outcomes):

Students will be able to put themselves in the place of archeologists trying to determine meaning from the images they are examining.

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks:

- This project will be assessed orally in the classroom.
- The guiding questions below can be used as a springboard for different groups of students to research various elements they discover about the Palette (i.e. Upper and Lower Egypt/Unification, symbolism in Egypt, enemies of Egypt, Pharaonic view of self or the world, superstition, etc.)
- Students can produce one page reports based on evidence found in the library or databases on the following topics:

Open ended inquiry for further research:

Writing: the origin and implications of hieroglyphs

Kingship: understanding the Egyptian Pharaoh

Identity: discovering issues around ethnicity, race and gender in ancient Egypt

Death: mummification, dismemberment and the cult of Osiris

Religion: Egyptian gods and temples

Egyptomania: on the recycling and reinventing of Egypt's icons and images. See especially "Echoes of Egypt"
<http://echoesofegypt.peabody.yale.edu/>

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

Learning Activities: The teacher will either project on a screen or pass out photocopies of the attached Narmer Palette images, and ask guiding questions for students to answer. Students are to come to their own conclusions. Answers below are facts to help guide the teacher.

Guiding questions:

Q: What do you think this object is made from?

A: Schist – not slate, not a flaking stone, but very hard and resilient

Q: How big is it?

A: 64 centimeters tall (about 25 inches or 2 feet), and half as wide

Q: How old is it?

A: circa 3,000 BCE or about 5,000 years old

Q: Does the palette record a specific event?

A: It would seem to document the uniting of upper and lower Egypt under Narmer (or Menes), but this document stands at a crucial juncture between history and prehistory and may have more symbolic value. There are similar images from pre-dynastic Egypt. This would seem to document the beginnings of a first or proto-dynasty. It is also a very early example of hieroglyphics.

Q: What does it say about portrayal of a despot?

Q: What does it say about attitudes toward death and dismemberment?

Q: Can we deduce anything about religion from the Narmer Palette?

Top register (back side) :

Q: What do the two cows represent on both sides of the palette?

A: Hathor, a cow goddess. But they could also be bulls that refer to the bull-like vigor of the king.

Q: The symbol between the cows:

A: A catfish and a wedge or a chisel, which pronounces Nar – Mer.

Reverse side – back behind the palette:

Q: What is Narmer doing?

A: Smiting his foe, thereby uniting Upper and Lower Egypt. He is wearing the white crown of Upper Egypt. Also notice his tail. He is grabbing the hair of his foe.

Q: Who is the small figure behind him?

A: He is followed by his sandal bearer.

Q: What is the bird doing?

A: The falcon represents the king subduing the marsh (the lower Nile Delta). The marsh is personified with a head, and the falcon is drawing its life breath out of its nostrils. There are six papyrus plants growing from the marsh, and the marsh is named “Wash”. The hieroglyphs are a harpoon above a lake. A harpoon is “1” indicating Narmer’s first victory in a marshy area.

Lower register:

Q: What do we see from their posture?

A: Two victims, either running away or lying supine or dead. They are next to two symbols: a city and a knot, possible place names.

Front side. The front side has the next scene in the story:

Q: What is Narmer doing? What is he wearing?

A: Under the two cows, we see Narmer in a victory parade. He is wearing the crown of Lower Egypt. He is holding a mace in his left hand and a whip in his right hand. He is possibly led by a priest and followed by his sandal bearer. In front of the foreign priest (Egyptian priests were later always bald), there are four standard bearers or flag bearers, from left to right, an animal, a dog, and two falcons. A ship with a harpoon and falcon indicates the 7th lower Egyptian province above 10 decapitated corpses shown lying on the ground.

Q: Why are the figures different sizes?

A: size denotes rank.

Q: What are the two animals that form the palette?

A: The central scene is of two “serpopards”, or fantastic animals. The bottom of the beast is a body similar to lionesses. The top has a long giraffe’s neck with a lion’s face. The long necks form a

palette to mix pigments in, hence it is called the Narmer palette. The taming of wild animals has often been viewed as a metaphor for the taming of Upper and Lower Egypt. This strange animal is unique. There are no other known parallels, so it is possible that the artist simply intended to create a circular area in the center for use as a palette for mixing pigments.

Bottom register:

A bull, symbolizing the king, destroys the walls of a city or fortress. This continues the imagery of conquest and victory. The bull is a symbol of the king's vigor and strength, trampling his foe, and attacking the walls of the city. The name of the city is written with the walls.

Overall meaning:

The overall symbolism is clear. The king is shown again and again as victorious over his enemies. He is shown striking down a kneeling enemy wearing the crown of Upper Egypt, and on the other side wearing the crown of Lower Egypt. This was clearly an important conquest for Narmer. It could be viewed as an ancient historical document chronicling the conquest of the eastern part of Lower Egypt.

Resource List/Bibliography:

Davis, Whitney. *Masking the Blow: The Scene of Representation in Late Prehistoric Egyptian Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992
<http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft7j49p1sp;chunk.id=d0e2187;doc.view=print>
(7/26/13)

Kinnaer, Jacques. *The Ancient Egypt Site*, updated on 7/25/2009
<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/narmer/index.html> (7/26/13)

Raffaele, Francesco. *Late Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt*, updated on 3/9/2012
<http://www.ancient-egypt.org/index.html>, (7/26/13)

Raffaele, Francesco, *The Narmer Palette*
<http://xoomer.virgilio.it/francescoraf/hesyra/palettes/narmerp.htm> (7/26/13)

Shaw, Ian. *Ancient Egypt: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004

Wilkinson, Toby. *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*. New York: Random House, 2010

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narmer_Palette (7/26/13)

How Are You Going to Use This Unit?

Ancient World History, Egypt Unit, 9th Grade, Middlesex School, Concord, MA, November, 2013

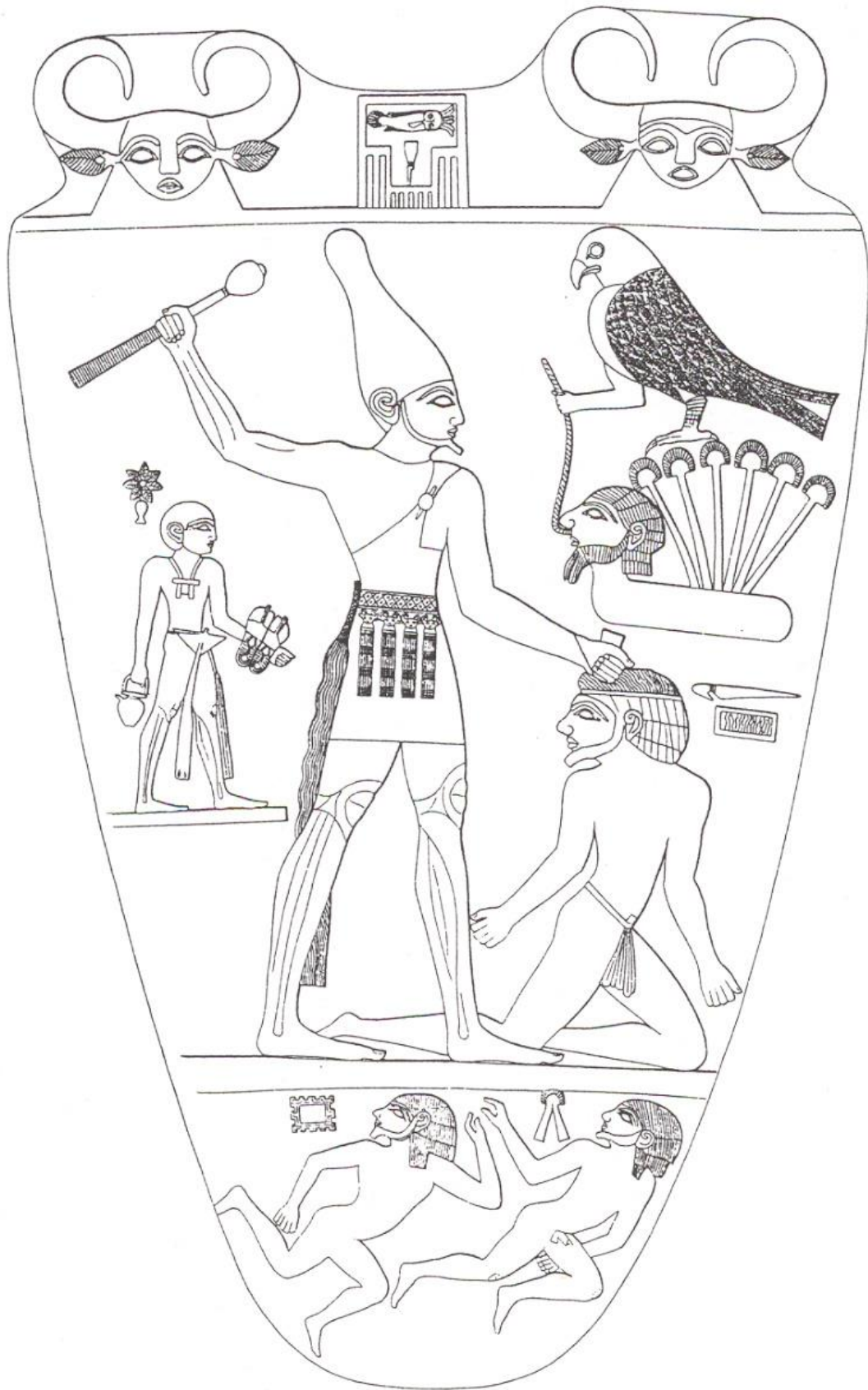


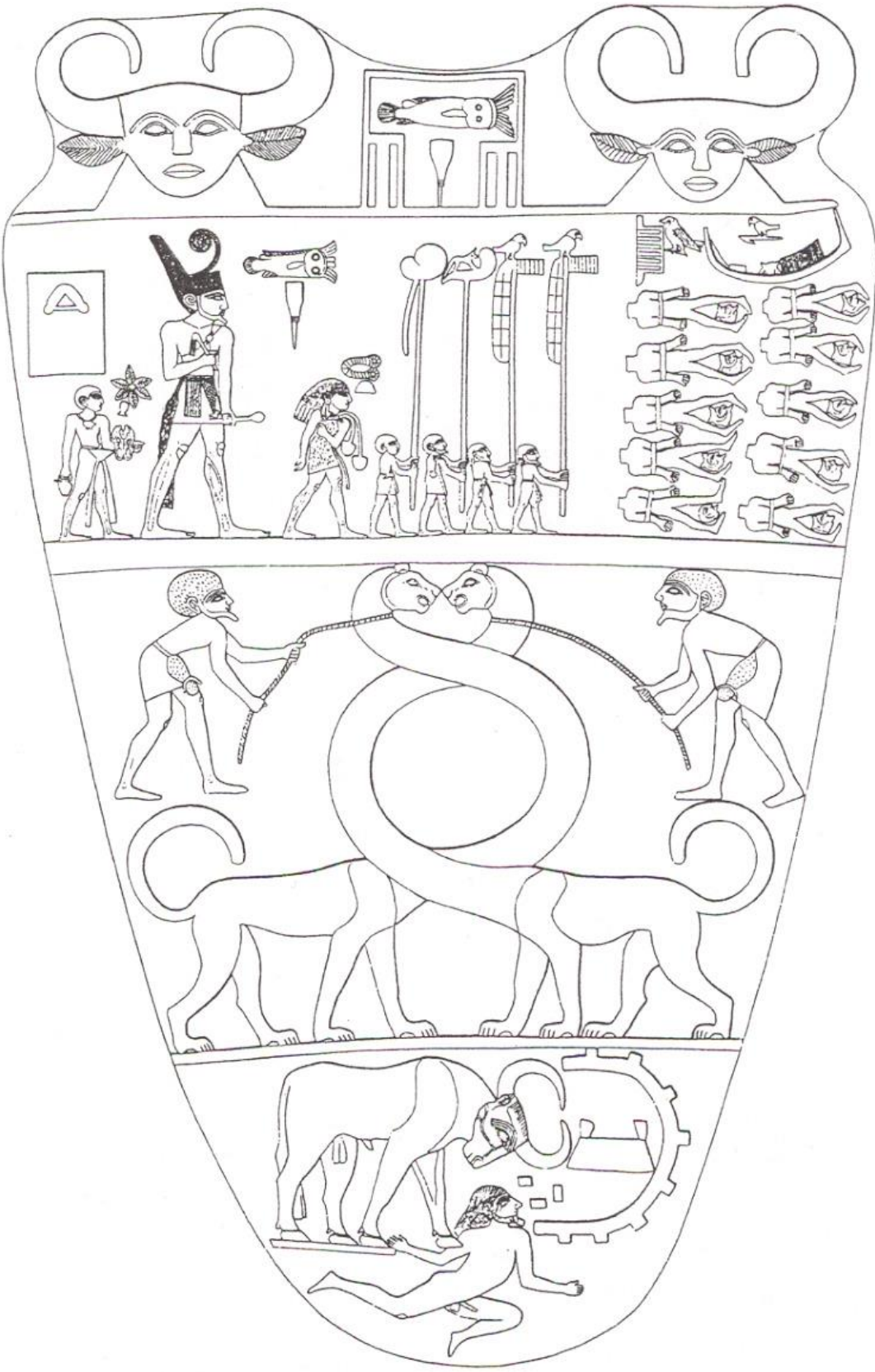
FRAP

<http://xoomer.virgilio.it/francescoraf/hesyra/palettes/narmerp1.jpg>



FRAP

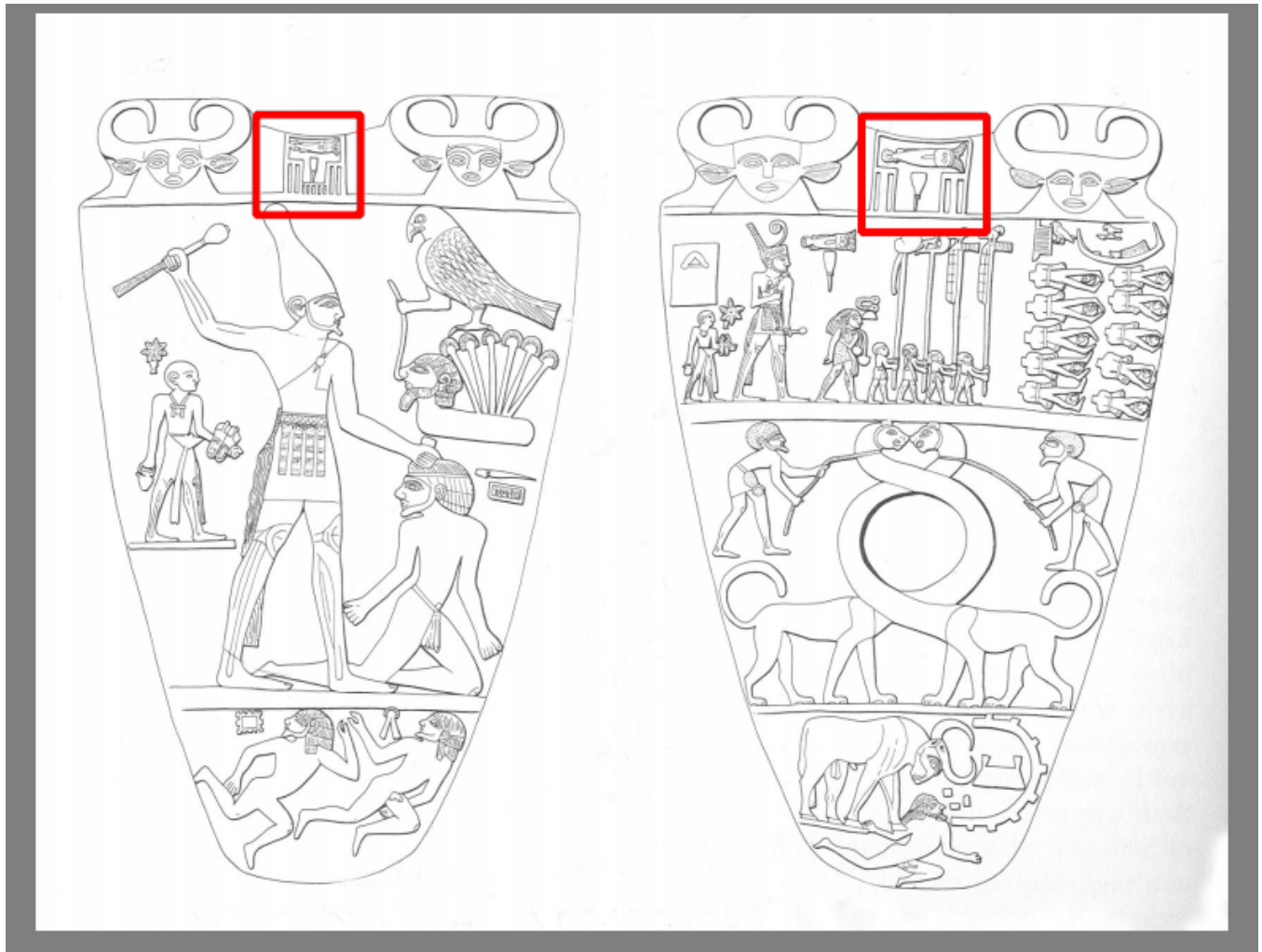




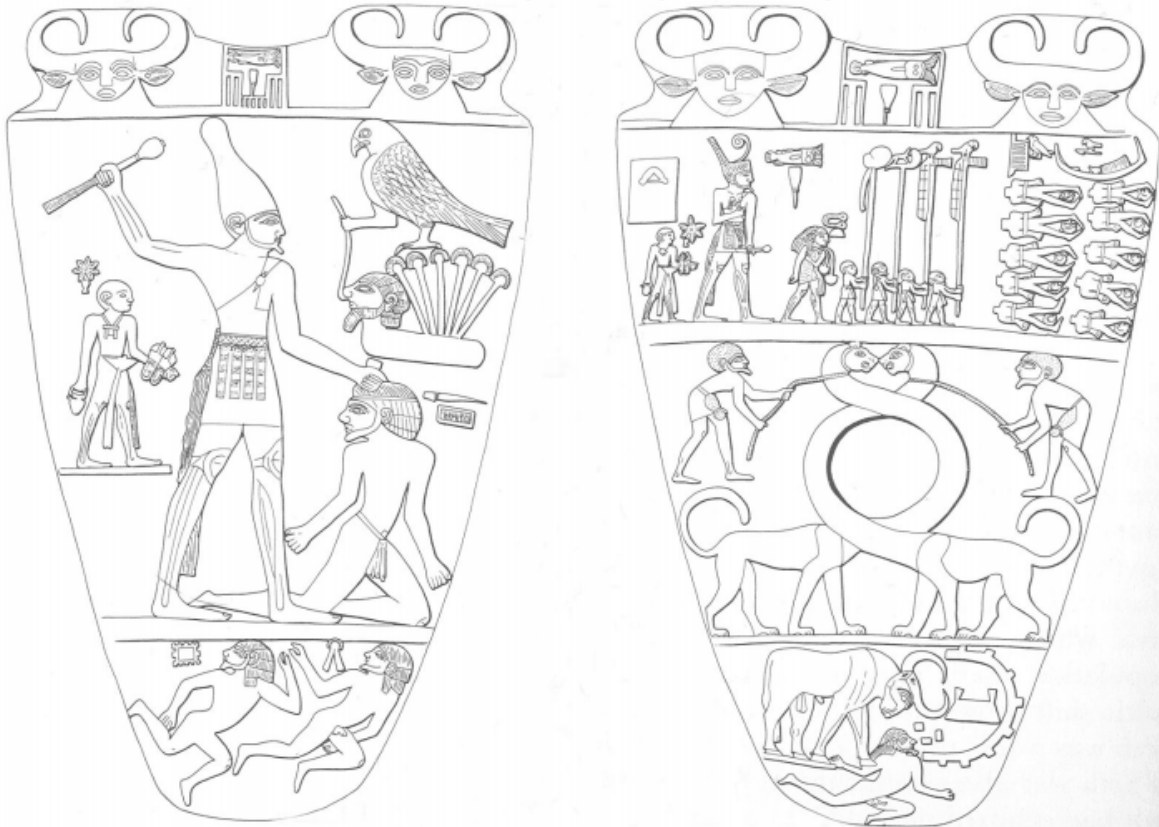
<http://www.unc.edu/courses/2005fall/art/080a/001/IMAGE%20BANK/images-early%20dynastic%20egypt/NarmerReverse-web.jpg> (link for image source)

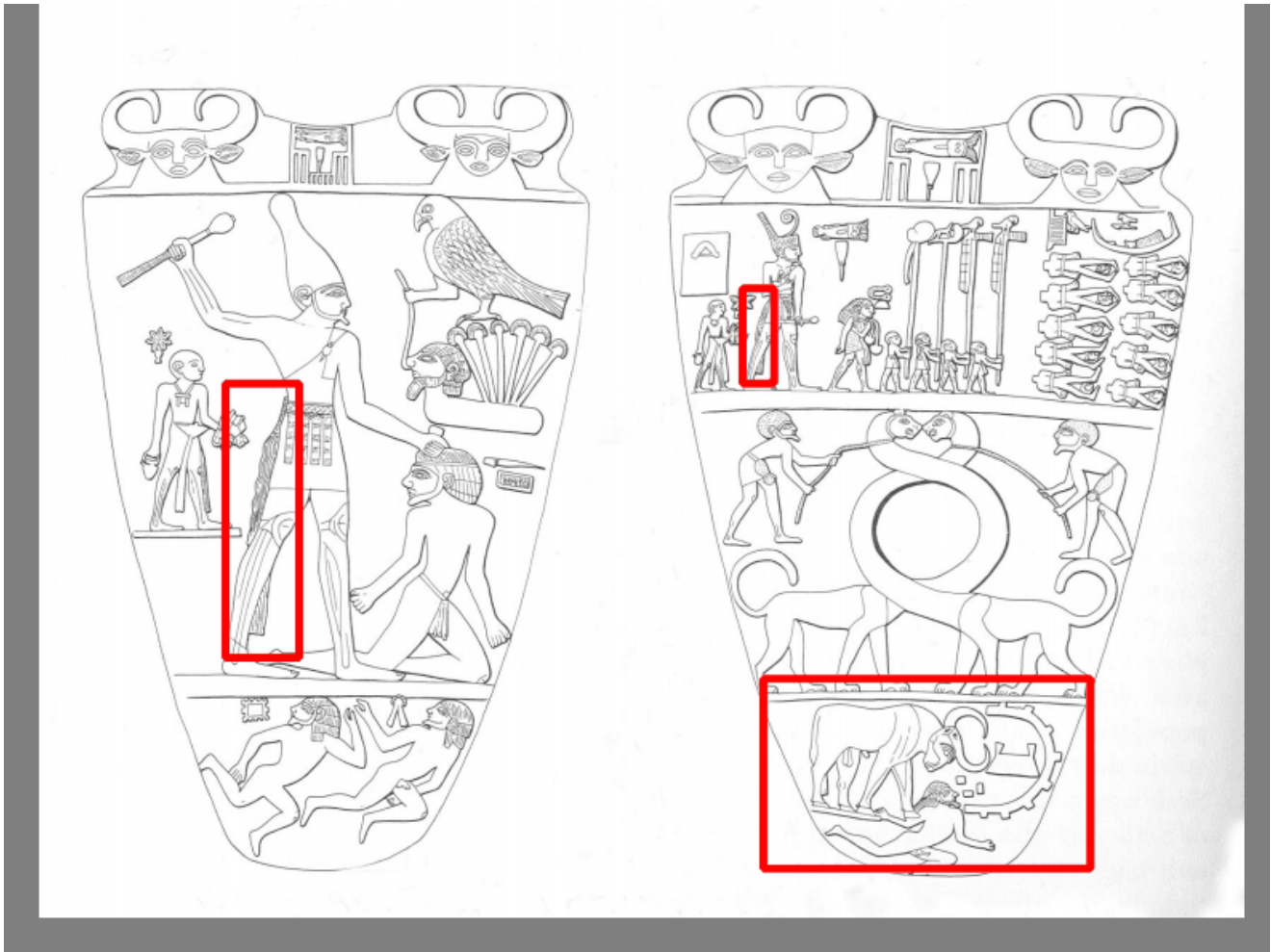
<http://www.unc.edu/courses/2005fall/art/080a/001/IMAGE%20BANK/images-early%20dynastic%20egypt/NarmerObverse.-web.jpg> (link for image source)

The following images are from “Echoes of Egypt” by Colleen Manassa (used with permission). Slide one: the name “Nar-Mer” is indicated as a catfish above a wedge or chisel.

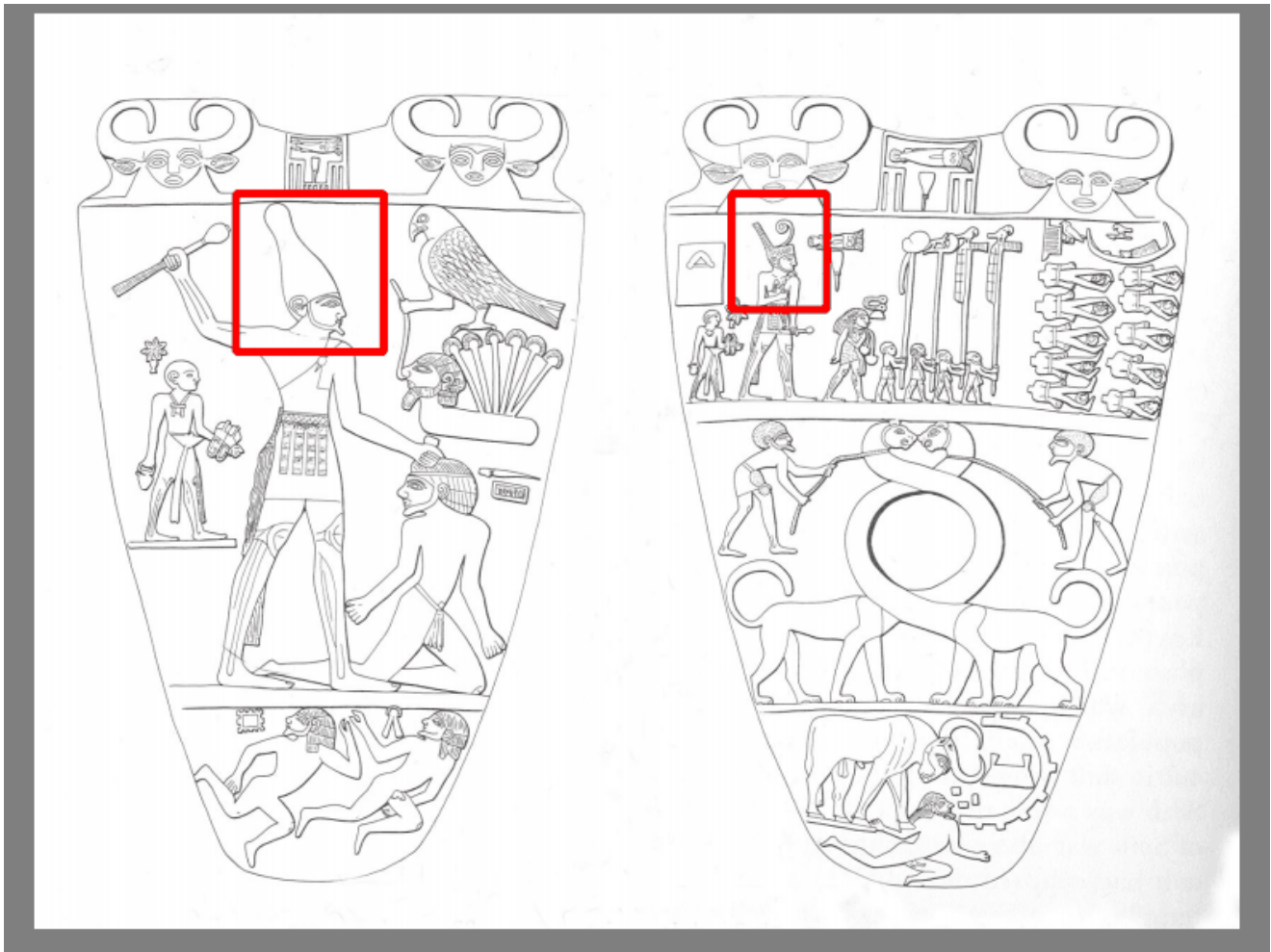


Notice the difference in clothing in the figures throughout the palette

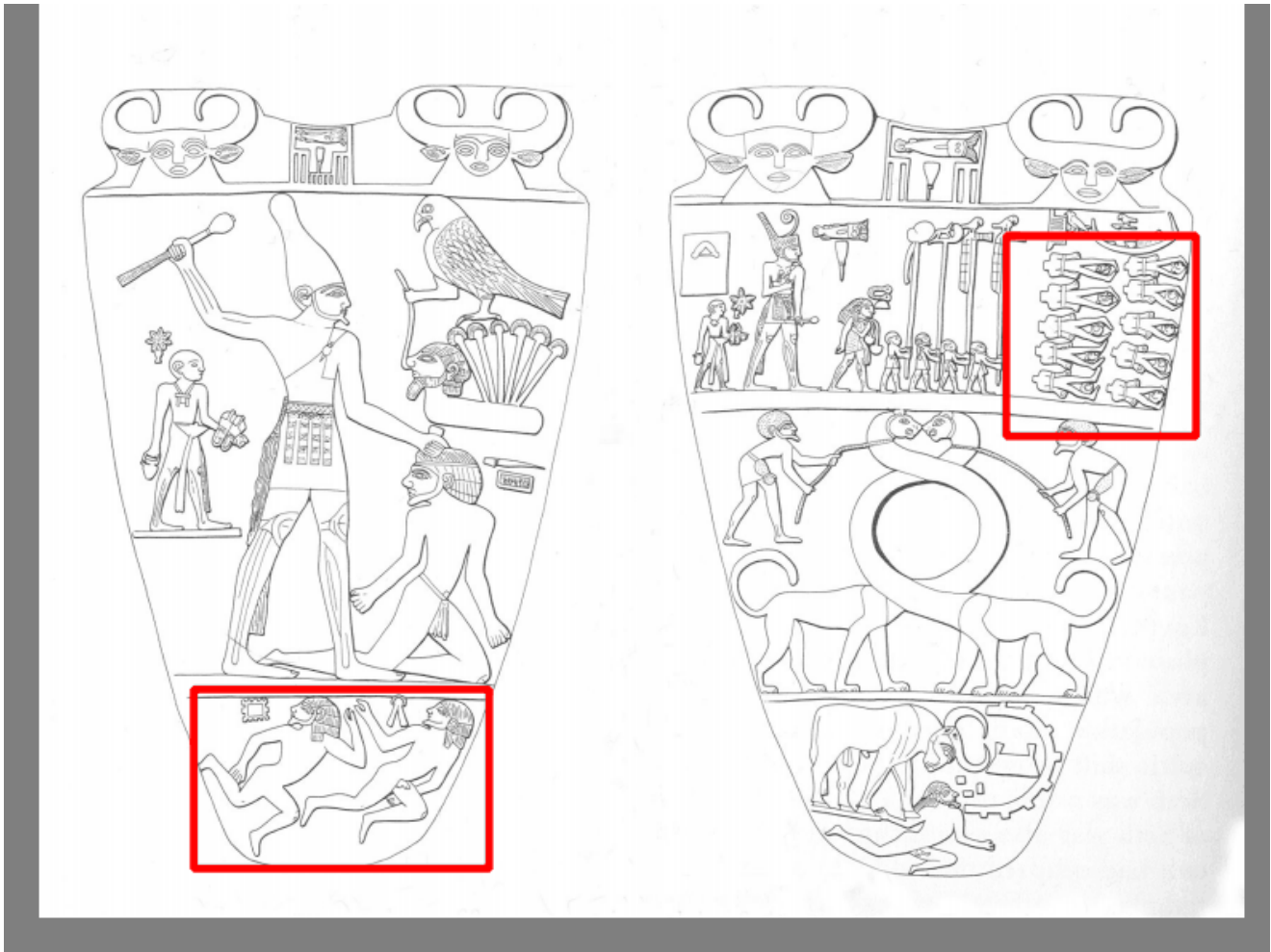




Show relationship between the king and the bull (see bull tail).



Headdresses from Upper and Lower Egypt



Images of victims. (from Colleen Manassa)