

# [As palette shows historians the unification of upper](https://assignbuster.com/as-palette-shows-historians-the-unification-of-upper/)

As Egypt grew and flourished to a powerful and rich nation, itleft behind for today’s historians, clues and artifacts of a oncedistinctive, well established and structured society. Proof ofthis is clearly depicted in king Narmer’s Palette. This Paletteshows historians the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, whichsignified the beginnings of a civilized era centred around theNile. The unification of Egypt occurred around 3100 B. C., under theFirst Dynasty of Menes(3100-2850 B. C.

). This age is commonly knowas the Protodynastic era, which is known for the establishment ofa firm political structure of the land which was unified in thehands of the king. The glorification of Lower and Upper Egyptuniting was portrayed in Narmer’s Palette, which was found in theancient southern capital of Hierakonpolis. The general function ofNarmer’s Palette was to commemorate a victory over his human foes. With Narmer’s victory, the Palette also depicts his successfulclaim and conquest of all of Egypt, thus establishing unificationof Lower and Upper Egypt under his rule. The dominant themhowever, is the victory of the god incarnate over the forces ofevil and chaos. The Narmer Palette, while depicting several social aspects andtendencies of the Egyptian society, also reveals and emphasizestheir structured positions within a hierarchy of command. Bothsides of the Palette reveal, at the top, the name of king Narmer, which first documents, in the written history of Egypt, that we noware dealing with a civilized state.

When the scribes wanted towrite king Narmer’s name, they placed a small fish called a ‘ nar’over a chisel, pronounced ‘ mer’. This combination of the wordsgave them ‘ Narmer’. The Palette also depicts king Narmer(probablythe legendary Menes) wearing the Red Crown of Lower Egypt and theWhite Crown of Aphroditopolis, which represented Upper Egypt. Since Narmer had claimed victory over the northern king, thusbecoming the first Pharaoh, the unification of Egypt was completed. The reverse of the Palette portrays Narmer clubbing a foeman. Narmer is then followed by his foot-washer, which should be notedis shown on a smaller scale and standing on a separate registerline, as suited to his relative rank and position in Egypt’shierarchy. Narmer stands before the supreme sky-god Horus, of whomNarmer is also an incarnation, represented as a falcon with a humanarm holding a papyrus thicket.

On the obverse of this palette, Narmer inspects a battlefieldnear Buto, with several decapitated bodies of his foemen. Narmeris then preceded by his four standard-bearers and his priest. Themiddle register of this highly organized recording shows two long-necked lionesses and their attendants, symbolizing the newlyestablished unification of Egypt. In the lower register Narmer isin disguise of a bull, which is destroying a fortified fort andkilling any opponents in his path. The Narmer Palette reveals several important social aspectsabout how the Egyptians lived and were structured. The Palettealso shows their value in recording historical events – with suchitems of war and political power struggles being ‘ newsworthy’events. It would be a mistake however, to read the Narmer Paletteas a mere tale of conquest.

Through military conquests however, Narmer was able to lay the political foundations of the kingshipwhich endured thereafter as long as a Pharaoh wore the two crownsof Egypt. The actual finding of a Palette proves that Egyptianshad established a written form of communication, which is todaycalled hieroglyphic script. The Palette however, was depicted byEgyptian scribes using a complex combination of ideograms andphonetic signs. While king Narmer’s name appears as hieroglyphiclabels at the top of the Palette, it emphasizes that Egypt at thistime was structured and had firmly established a civilized state. The entire Nile, now under the control of one king, was ableto be utilized as the most important form of transportation.

Itwas used for military campaigns, economic trading, and as a form ofcommunication via boats. The Nile also provided a rich soil basewhich encouraged farmers to build huts and plant their crops alongthe river bank. Egyptian agriculture and the farmers’ practices inirrigation revealed that the Egyptians had the man power andcapabilities to divert water to particular fields for their crops. Although each community along the Nile was divided into districts, each governed by a man appointed by Narmer, each practised the samemethods of collecting and diverting water. Also each manappointed to a particular district saw to it that taxes werecollected and that the fields were drained and properly irrigated. The most significant piece of evidence that suggests that Egypt wasindeed a civilized state was a special calendar with a 365-dayyear, as well as keeping records of special events and a system ofstandard measures for surveying fields and dividing produce. While Egyptians were basically confined to the Nile valley, they were able to draw many strengths from their isolation. Fromthe beginning the Egyptians looked to a central authority in theperson of a king, or god, which was all held together and relatedto the Nile river.

While king Narmer was able to bring economicgrowth and political stability to the newly formed Egypt, he wasunable to control the external pressures which would eventuallybreak up Egypt and lead to the collapse of the ruling Pharaohs.