

CULTURE FORMATIONS (II)

ART OF EGYPT

(c. 3100 BCE - c. 1070 BCE)

Why is the culture of Ancient Egypt so popular in our time?



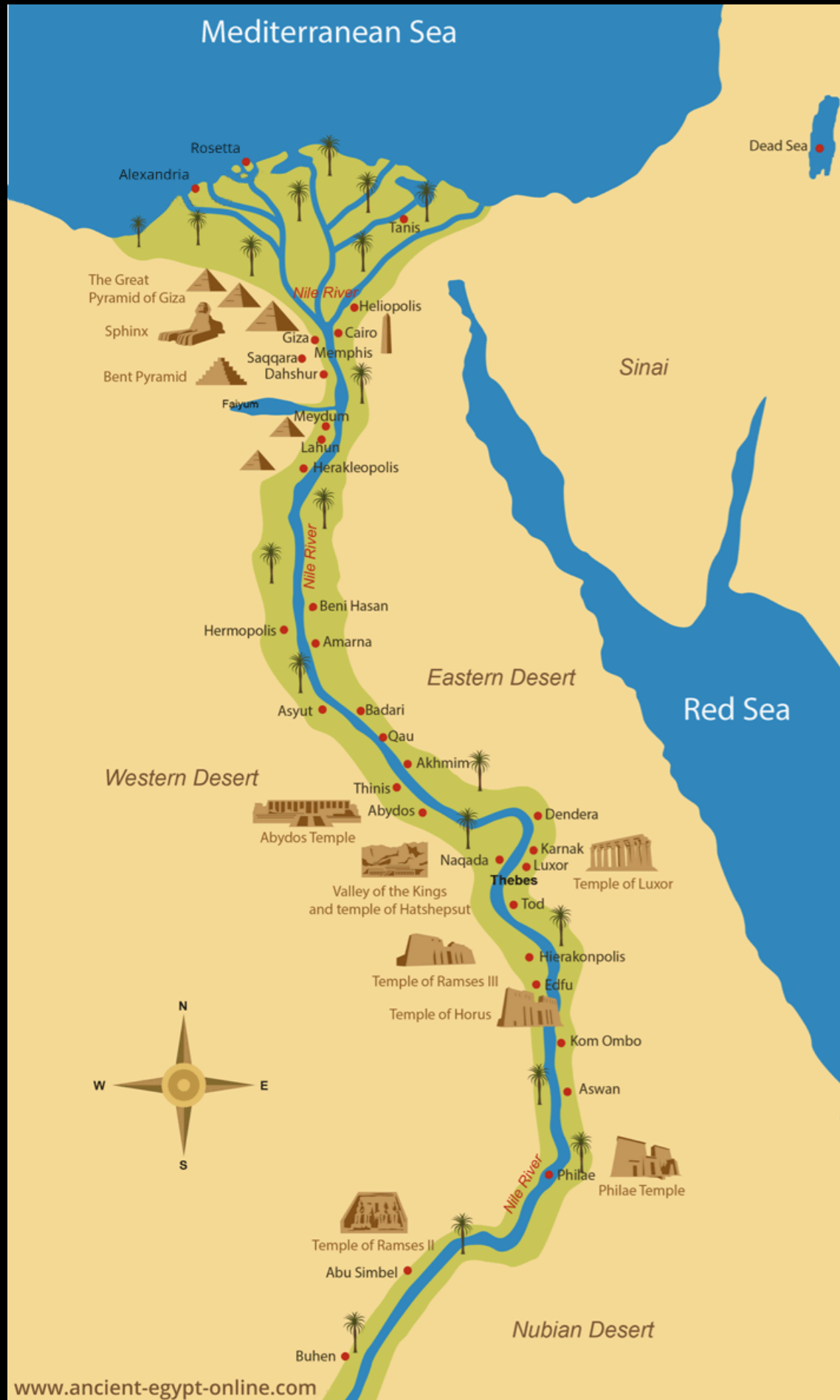
Met Museum's Heilbrunn Timeline essay on "Egyptian Revival"

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/erev/hd_erev.htm

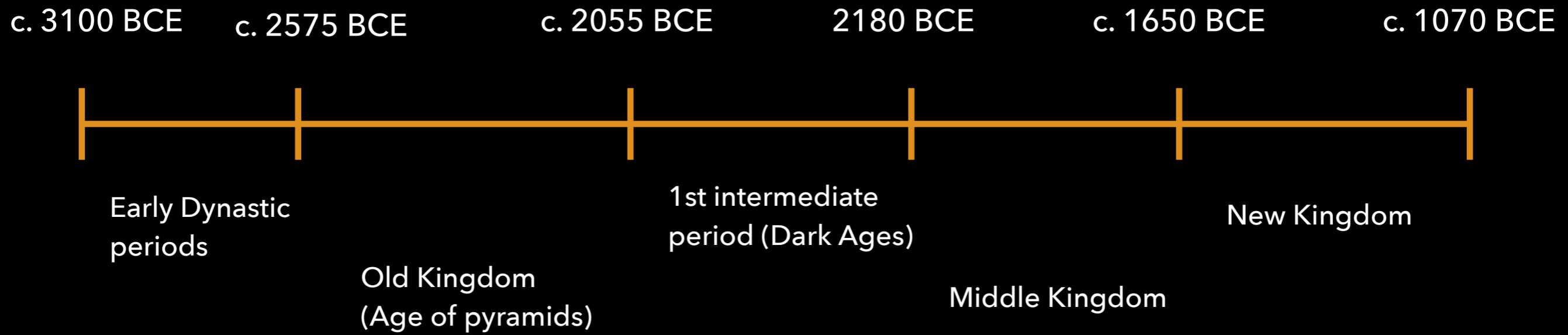
Key concepts

- ▶ The Canon or the ideal representation of the human figure
- ▶ Art and Power
- ▶ Death and the Afterlife





A TIMELINE OF ANCIENT EGYPT



What is “culture”? What does the formation of a culture mean?

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culture noun

 Save Word

cul·ture | \ 'kəl-čər  \

Essential Meaning of *culture*

- 1** : the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time
// a study of Greek language and culture
// today's youth culture
// Her art shows the influence of pop/popular culture.
- 2** : a particular society that has its own beliefs, ways of life, art, etc.
// an ancient culture
// It's important to learn about other cultures.

Early Dynastic period (c. 3100–2575 BCE)

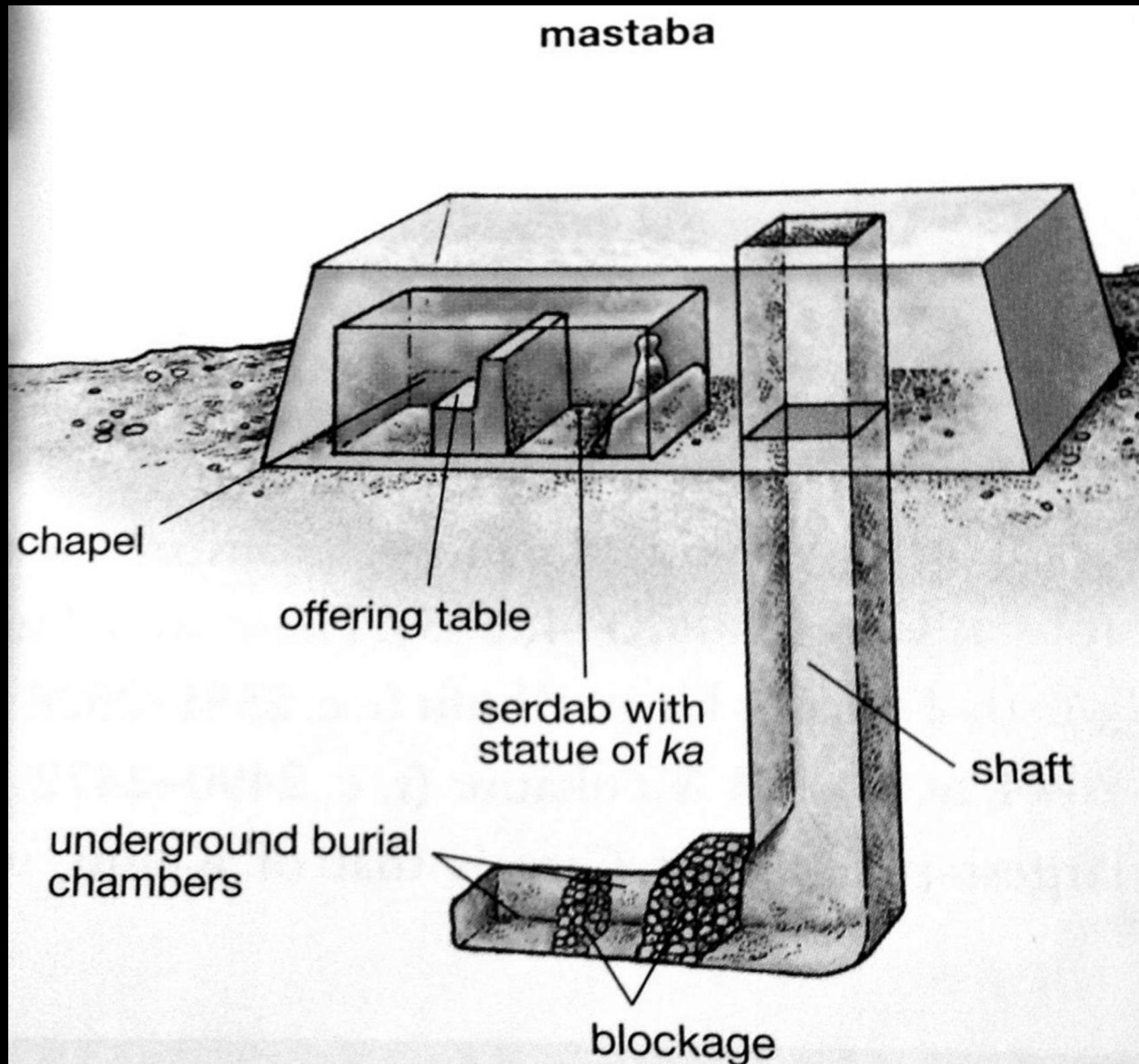
Period following prehistoric Egypt

- ▶ The hallmarks of Egyptian society- **art, architecture, religion** was developed in this period.
- ▶ **Divine kingship** became well established as Egypt's form of government.
- ▶ Art forms now depicted gods, heroic battles and nature- intended to provide solace in the afterlife.
- ▶ Egyptian **writing system** was developed: initially composed of a few symbols
- ▶ **Mastabas** were constructed which would become the models for the pyramids later on



Mastabat al-Fir'aun
Grave monument of the ancient
Egyptian king Shepseskaf (reign
circa 2510-2503 BC)

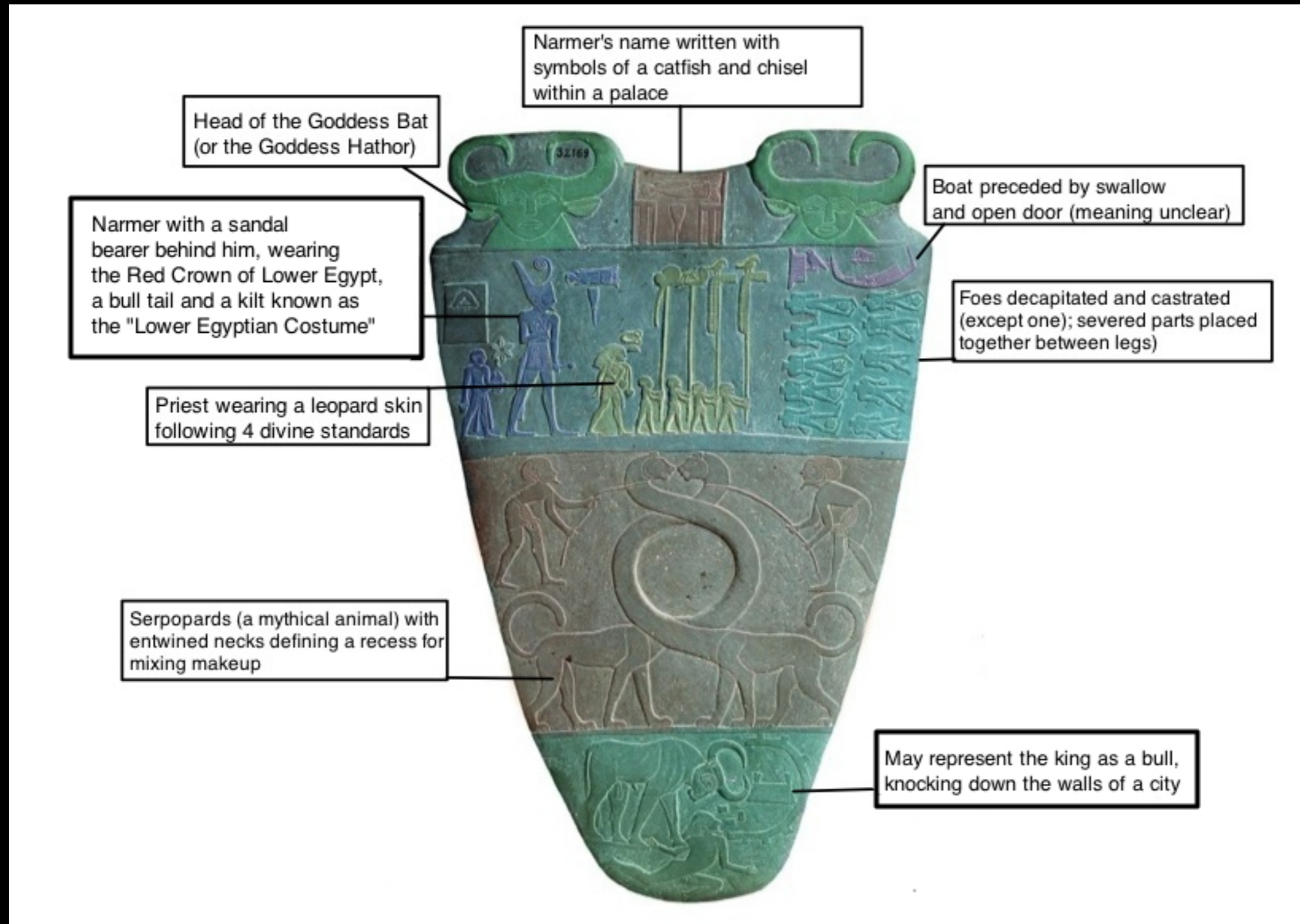
Mastaba: standard tomb type in early Egypt. Characterized by rectangular stone or brick structure with sloping sides and a flat top over an underground burial chamber



The entire *mastaba* consists of the underground burial chamber and the rooms above it at ground level, in which offerings were stored



Palette of King Narmer, from Hierakonpolis, Egypt, Predynastic, c. 3000-2920 B.C.E., slate, 2' 1" high (Egyptian Museum, Cairo)



- ▶ **Symbolism:** The representation of intangible concepts or ideas through a pictorial form
- ▶ **Registers:** horizontal bands used to neatly order the pictorial elements (preferred more for narrative art in Mesopotamia)



- ▶ **Composite view:** A convention of representation in which part of the figure is shown in profile and another part of the same figure is shown frontally
- ▶ **Idealization:** Depiction of the human figure in a way that is considered the most perfect of its kind according to conventions of the time
- ▶ **Canon:** the most ideal form; the ultimate standard of a thing
- ▶ **Hieratic scale:** where size indicate relative importance of the subject

Old Kingdom (c. 2575–2055 BCE)

Period of political stability and economic prosperity– includes 3rd to 6th Dynasties

- ▶ Revolutionary advancements in funerary architecture: state sponsored projects of building tombs for kings
- ▶ Mastabas developed to **step pyramids** and then **true pyramids**
- ▶ The Pyramids of Giza are considered the greatest architectural achievement of the time and include three pyramid structures and the Great Sphinx monument.



Pyramids of Giza with step pyramids

<https://stories.wgbh.org/explore-ancient-egypt/>

The Great Pyramid of Giza

Height: 146.6m (481ft)

Ventilation shaft

Grand Gallery

King's chamber

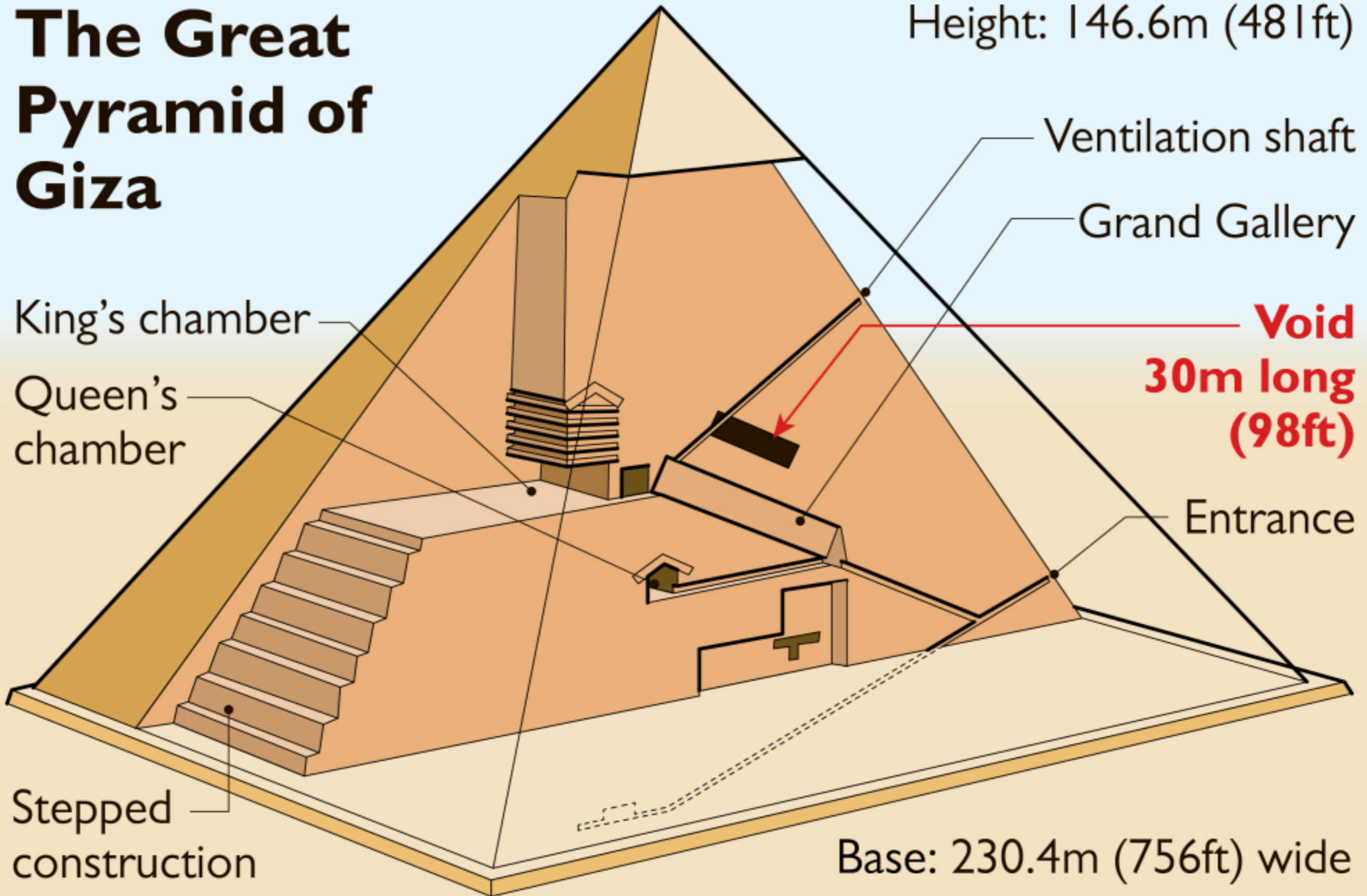
Queen's chamber

Void
30m long
(98ft)

Entrance

Stepped construction

Base: 230.4m (756ft) wide



Monolith: A large single block of stone used in architecture and sculpture



The Great Sphinx, Egypt, 241 feet long, 63 feet wide, and 66.34 feet high



The Great Sphinx (front view), Egypt, 241 feet long, 63 feet wide, and 66.34 feet high

First Intermediate Period (c. 2181–2055)

- ▶ Egyptian rule was divided between two kingdoms.
- ▶ Temples were pillaged, artworks were vandalized, statues of kings were destroyed
- ▶ Eventually erupted in a civil war

Middle Kingdom (c. 2575–2055 BCE)

Period of reunification following the 1st Intermediate period or the dark age

- ▶ The war ended with the victory of Mentuhotep II, who restored stability and peace
- ▶ Rulers tried to revive the arts after the destruction of the Dark Ages- resurgence of literature, building of tombs, funerary arts etc.
- ▶ The style of objects and architecture remained similar to the Old Kingdom but were made more accessible- Pyramid texts for example now included spells that were more relatable to the common man

New Kingdom (c. 2575–2055 BCE)

Known as the Golden Age of ancient Egypt- period of many famous pharaohs

- ▶ Wealth gained through military dominance resulted in buildings of a grander scale than anything before
- ▶ Although pyramids were no longer built, magnificent tombs were constructed for pharaohs and other powerful nobles

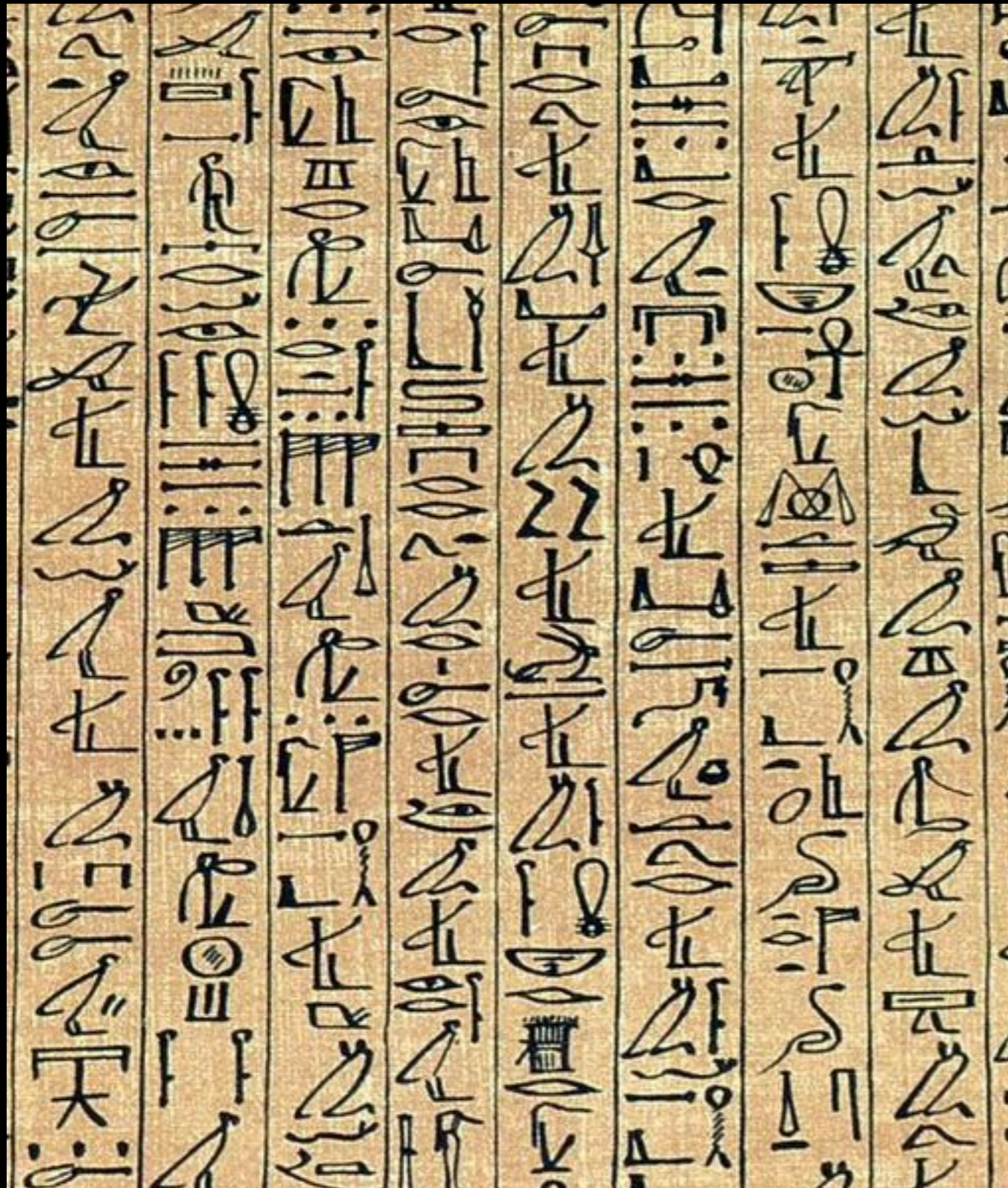
Book of the Dead, c. 1550–50 BCE

Ancient Egyptian collection of funerary texts made up of spells or magic formulas, placed in tombs and believed to protect and assist the dead in the afterlife.



Anubis weighing the soul of the scribe Ani, from the Book of the Dead, c. 1275 BCE.





- ▶ **Pictographs (hieroglyphics):** An ideogram that conveys its meaning through its pictorial resemblance to a physical object; often used in writing and graphic systems
- ▶ **Papyrus:** A material similar to paper made from the *Cyperus papyrus* plant.

Cursive hieroglyphs from the Papyrus of Ani: During the New Kingdom, the *Book of the Dead* was typically written in cursive hieroglyphs.



Tomb of King Tutankhamun
(ruled from 1332 BC to 1323
BCE)

Sarcophagus: a box-like funeral receptacle for a corpse, most commonly carved in stone, and usually displayed above ground, though it may also be buried.



Coffin of Tutankhamun

c. 1323 BCE

Gold with inlay of enamel and semiprecious stones

DISCUSSION

Animal representations: Where did the inspiration to incorporate animal parts to gods and goddesses come from? Ancient Egyptian art was always very detailed and hardly had human faces, it was mostly animals faces with human bodies or vice versa, but why? Why did they like to give animal sculptors human like features?

Class and status: What was the goal of creating the artworks in Egyptian culture to document present events or to glorify the upper class?

Tools and techniques: Their art is more ornate than prehistoric art. What is the difference in tool use? What kind of tools and resources did Egyptians have? How were the ancient Egyptians so well skilled in their ancient art?

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