

Herodotus and Egypt

HPAH5027/6027

Pharaohs, Phoenicians and Peoples of the
Sea

Dr. Katharina Zinn

HERODOTUS –The author of the first (comprehensive) history of Egypt?

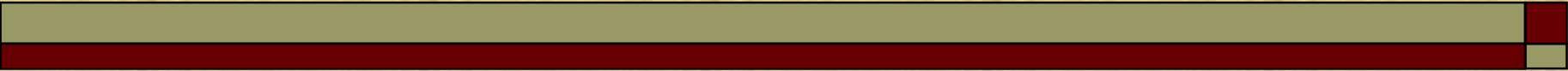
- ❑ Around 450 B.C. – Herodotus travelled for several months up the Nile to the first cataract,
- ❑ recorded impressions in highly anecdotal and entertaining manner
- ❑ relied heavily on local interpreters, including people in temples he could get hold of (mistook for priests)
- ❑ His travel journal on Egypt was written in Greek and published in Athens in 446 B.C.
- ❑ Although there are many inaccuracies in Herodotus's work, his eyewitness accounts give



Introduction to his sources

That so it came to pass I heard from the priests of that Hephaistos who dwells at Memphis; but the Hellenes relate, besides many other idle tales, that Psammetichos cut out the tongues of certain women and then caused the children to live with these women.

With regard then to the rearing of the children they related so much as I have said: and I heard also other things at Memphis when I had speech with the priests of Hephaistos. Moreover I visited both Thebes and Heliopolis for this very cause, namely because I wished to know whether the priests at these places would agree in their accounts with those at Memphis; for the men of Heliopolis are said to be the most learned in records of the Egyptians. Those of their narrations which I heard with regard to the gods I am not earnest to relate in full, but I shall name them only because I consider that all men are equally ignorant of these matters: and whatever things of them I may record I shall record only because I am compelled by the course of the story.

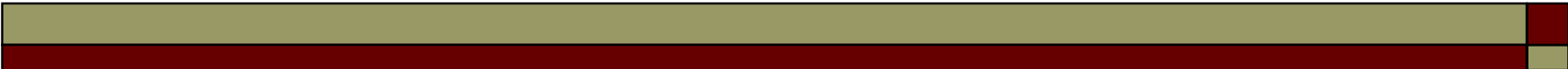


Introduction to his sources

But as to those matters which concern men, the priests agreed with one another in saying that the Egyptians were the first of all men on earth to find out the course of the year, having divided the seasons into twelve parts to make up the whole; and this they said they found out from the stars: and they reckon to this extent more wisely than the Hellenes, as it seems to me, inasmuch as the Hellenes throw in an intercalated month every other year, to make the seasons right, whereas the Egyptians, reckoning the twelve months at thirty days each, bring in also every year five days beyond number, and thus the circle of their season is completed and comes round to the same point whence it set out.

HERODOTUS –The author of the first (comprehensive) history of Egypt?

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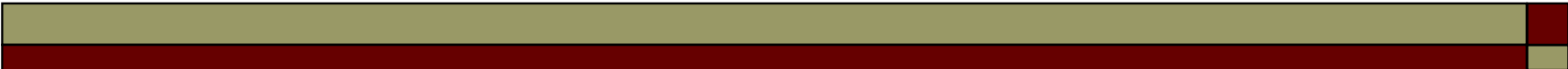
Herodotus: lies or truth?

- ❑ wanted to do more than retell the events of the past
- ❑ wanted to make sure people of the future remembered and learned from the events of the past
- ❑ wanted to relate history

Second Book of Historia

- Purpose: prove an Egyptian origin for (many of the) Greek divinities
- Regarded as history, therefore, the work of Herodotus suffers from grave defects, and it is not to be wondered at that ancient and modern critics have vied with one another in pointing them out. The attitude of many of these critics is well expressed by an Oxford rhyme:

The priests of Egypt humbugged you,
A thing not very hard to do.
But we won't let you humbug us,
Herodotus! Herodotus!



Second Book – featuring Egypt

- ❑ Introducing Egypt (2.1–4)
- ❑ Geography of Egypt (2.5–34)
- ❑ Ethnography of Egypt
- ❑ Inverse symmetries and sacrifices (2.35–41)
- ❑ Egyptian gods: Heracles, Pan and Dionysus (2.42–9)
- ❑ The naming of gods, Dodona and festivals (2.50–64)
- ❑ Animal lore (2.65–76)
- ❑ Customs (2.77–97)
- ❑ History of Egypt
- ❑ Early kings and the Helen *logos* (2.99–120)
- ❑ Rhampsinitus, pyramid builders and chronology (2.121–46)
- ❑ The Labyrinth and the Saite kings (2.147–78)

Herodotus and Egypt

Historia, book 2

2.1–4: Introductory chapters



- 1: Persian expansion into Egypt
- 2: The world's first people experiment
- 3–4: Religious matters
- 5: Egypt's achievements

2.5–34: Geography of Egypt



- 6–9: Size of Egypt
- 10–27: Significance of the Nile
- 28–34: Sources of the Nile

2.35–98: Ethnography of Egypt



- 35–41: Inverse symmetries and sacrifices
- 42–9: Egyptian gods: Heracles, Pan, Dionysus
- 50–64: Naming of the gods, oracles and festivals
- 65–76: Animal lore
- 77–98: Customs

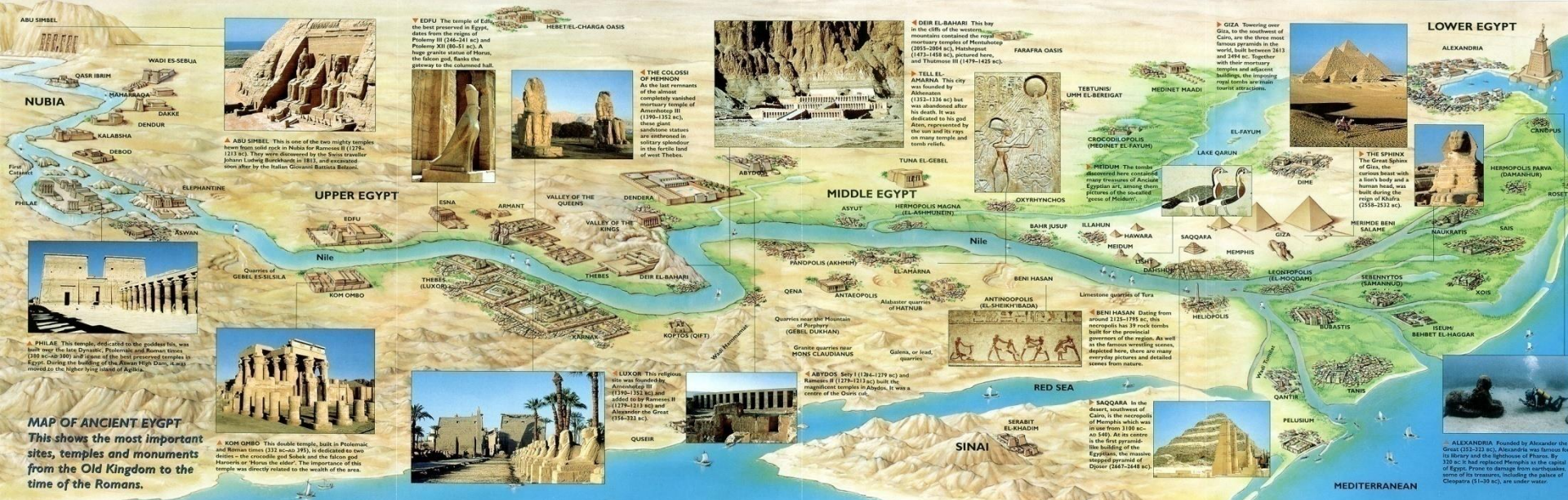
2.99–182: History of Egypt

- 99–111: Reigns of early kings
- 112–20: Helen, Troy and Menelaus
- 121–3: Rhampsimitus
- 124–6: Cheops
- 127–41: Kings after Cheops
- 142–56: Hecataeus, gods, the Labyrinth, Lake Moiris
- 151–7: Psammetichus' time in power, Buto and island of Chemnis
- 158–60: Kings after Psammetichus
- 161–9: Apries
- 169–82: Amasis





Ancient Egypt





Nile and Desert

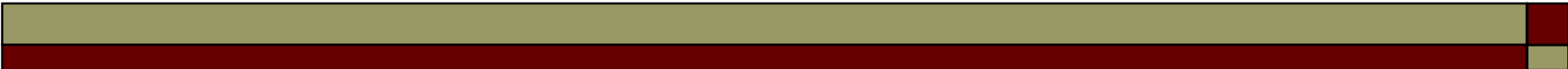


The mysteries of the Nile

- Why does the Nile rise and fall in a regular seasonal pattern (19)?
 - three theories: first 2 rejected (a – flooding is caused by the Etesian winds; b – infusions of water from the river called Ocean responsible (20-21); third theory discussed, that the flooding is caused by melting snow, also rejected)
 - own theory: changing proximity of the sun to Egypt explains the flood patterns (24-27)
- What are the sources of the Nile?
 - One priest's theory is rejected (28). Travelling down the Nile one reaches the island of Tachompso, and then the city of Meroe (29). The story of how the Egyptians known as Asmacks, or "Deserters", came to settle among the Ethiopians (30).
- travelogue of the Nile:
 - four months' journey – nothing but desert (31). Again Nile sources question. Etearchus, King of the Ammonians, story of people abducted by African pygmies and taken to a town far to the west of Ammon. Etearchus believes that a river flowing by this town is the source of the Nile (32). Endorsed by Hdt. (thought the Nile flowed west (instead of south) from Syene, (33-34).

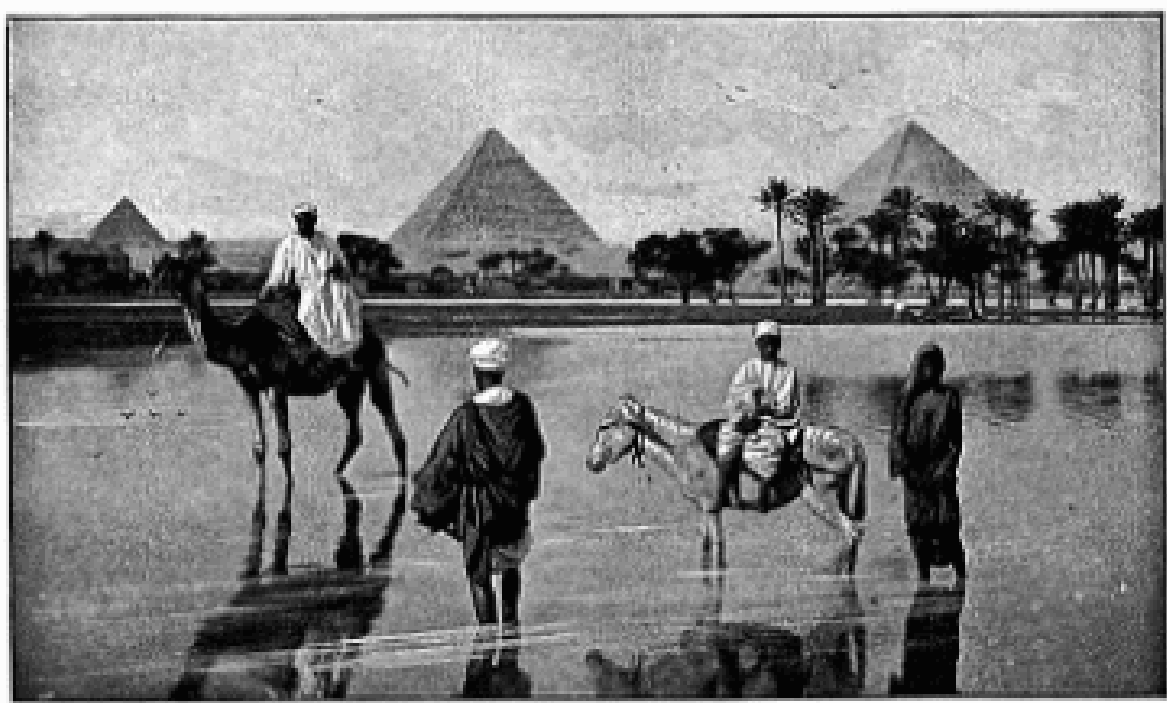
Geography and climate determine religion





Aspects of Egyptian religion

- Most should be traced back to people's observation of environment
 - Fundamental – love of sunlight: (daily, seasonal, annual) solar cycle + wellbeing brought by the regular rhythms of nature
 - and the agricultural cycle surrounding the rise and fall of the Nile.



Egypt and the sun



TEMPLE OF DUSH,
PARIS OASIS, EGYPT



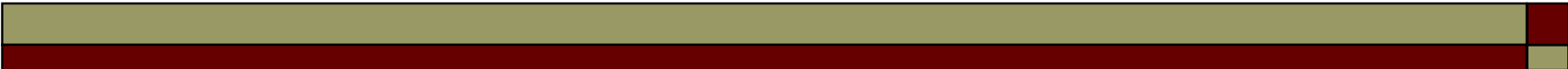


Ancient Egypt and the sun: nature forms (natural, social and religious) landscapes



Karnak

W ← → E



Making history?

- For religious and administrative purposes
 - lists of kings, sometimes with the exact length of reign
 - none of them is well enough preserved to solve every detail of absolute chronology

Palermo Stone

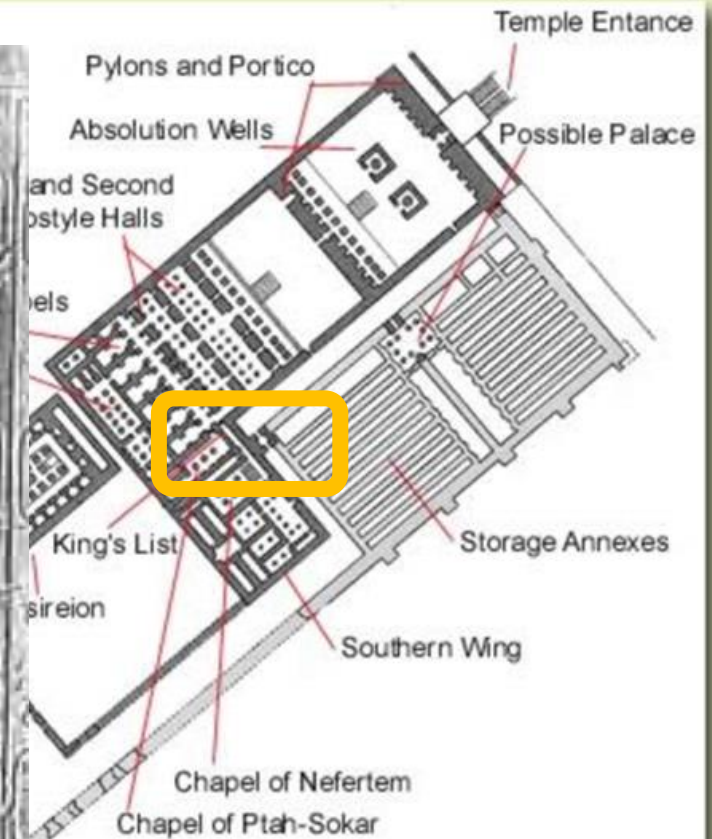
(London, Petrie Museum and Palermo)



Turin Royal Canon

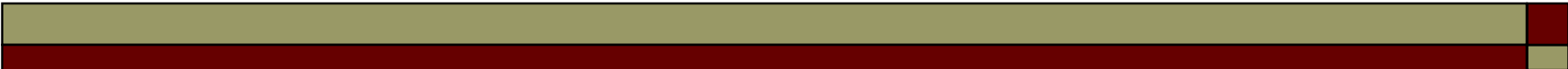


Abydos- Temple Sethos I, King List



Making history?

- For religious and administrative purposes
 - lists of kings, sometimes with the exact length of reign
 - none of them is well enough preserved to solve every detail of absolute chronology
 - Kinglists in Greek
 - by a third century BC Egyptian priest named Manetho, are preserved in summaries by early Christian writers, with excerpts in other writers of the Roman Period and later, notably the Jewish historian Josephus.



Kingdoms



□ Old Kingdom

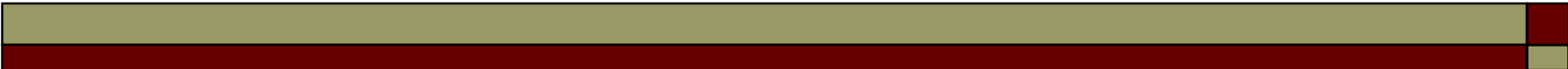


□ Middle Kingdom



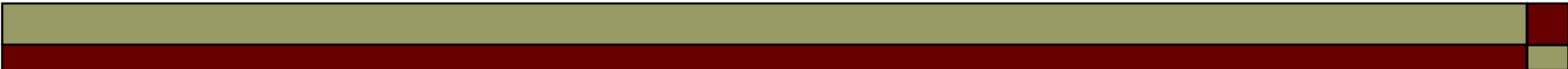
□ New Kingdom





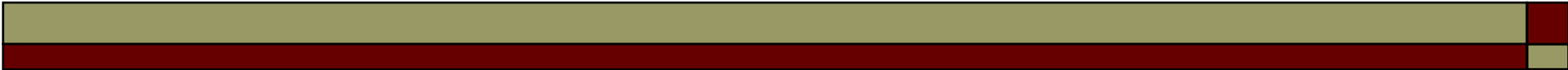
All Periods

-
- Old Kingdom
- First Intermediate Period
- Middle Kingdom
- Second Intermediate Period
- New Kingdom
- Third Intermediate Period
-
-



All Periods

- ❑ Pre- and Early Dynastic Period
- ❑ Old Kingdom
- ❑ First Intermediate Period
- ❑ Middle Kingdom
- ❑ Second Intermediate Period
- ❑ New Kingdom
- ❑ Third Intermediate Period
- ❑ Late Period
- ❑ Ptolemaic and Roman Period



Periods

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Dynasties

- ❑ Predyn. (5300-3000BC), 0-2
- ❑ 3-6
- ❑ 8-11
- ❑ 11-12
- ❑ 13-17
- ❑ 18-20
- ❑ 21-24
- ❑ 25-”31”
- ❑ No dynastic time anymore (332BC -331AD)

EGYPTIAN KINGS

Fictitious or false names are in *italics*; corrupted names of probably or possibly real rulers are underlined.

Archaic (Early Dynastic) Period: c. 3000–2686



99: Min

Old Kingdom (including First Intermediate Period): 2686–2055



100: Nitocris

101: Moeris

124–6: Cheops

127: Chephren

129–33: Mycerinus

Middle Kingdom (including Second Intermediate Period) 2055–1550



102–10: Sesostris

New Kingdom : 1550–664



111: *Pheros*

112–20: *Proteus*

121–3: *Rhampsinitus*

136: Asychis

137–40: Anysis and Sabacos

141: Sethos and Sennacherib

Late Kingdom: 664–332

151–7: Psammetichus

158–9: Necos

160: Psammis

161–3: Apries

169–82: Amasis

Who was Menes?

Scorpion II

Dyn 0



Narmer ("Strong Catfish")

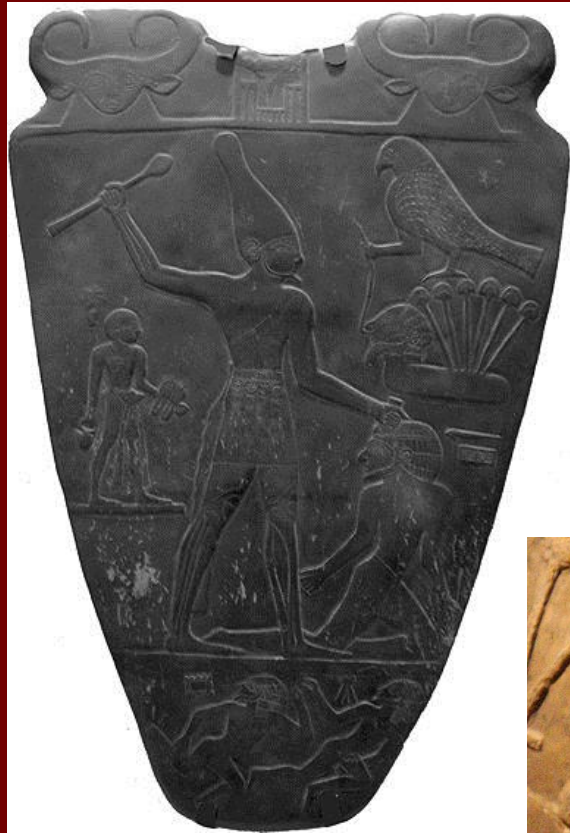
Last king Dyn 0



Aha ("the Fighter")

Dyn 1





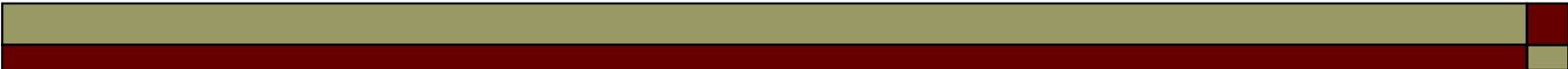
Be careful: Menes?

Allocated by
Petrie, recently
spread by several
webpages

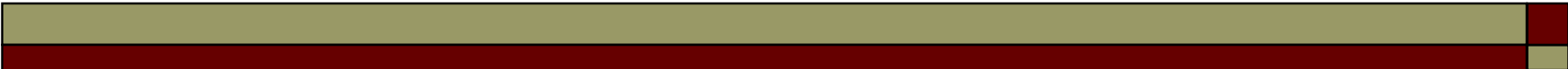
Head of an
unknown king,
probably 2nd dyn.

Petrie Museum,
UCL



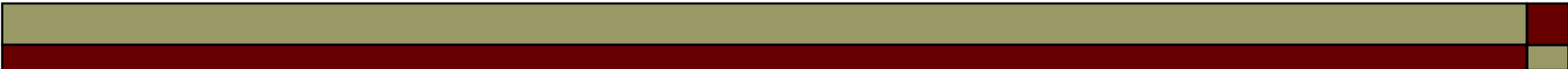


Customs of Egypt



The nature of religion

- ❑ The myth(odology) (and theology)
- ❑ The cult
- ❑ Gods and Goddesses
- ❑ **Temples**
- ❑ Festivals and Processions
- ❑ Kingship
- ❑ Afterlife beliefs



The nature of religion: temples as institutionalised religion

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The nature of religion: business done by priests

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The nature of religion: business done by priests

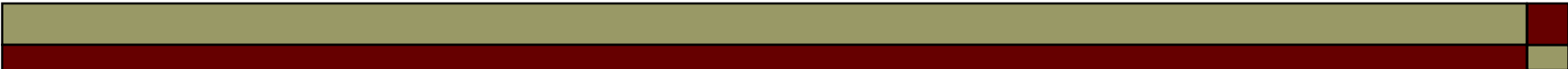
- ❑ The myth(odology) (and **theology**) → phrased by priests
- ❑ **The cult** → performed by priests on behalf of the king
- ❑ Gods and Goddesses → priest communicate with them as substitutes of the king
- ❑ **Temples**
- ❑ **Festivals and Processions**
- ❑ Kingship → close relationship as king is the highest priest – role model
- ❑ Afterlife beliefs → very strong lay priesthood throughout all layers of society

Ancient Egyptian temples

- ❑ temple as focus of Egyptian state religion
- ❑ **Not** a place of communal worship
- ❑ Rituals to underpin theology: after rigorous purification king (or priestly delegates) conducted rituals → offerings needed to please god(s) + maintain universal order Maat
- ❑ Public participation only during festivals: god is leaving temple

Karnak: Sacred Lake

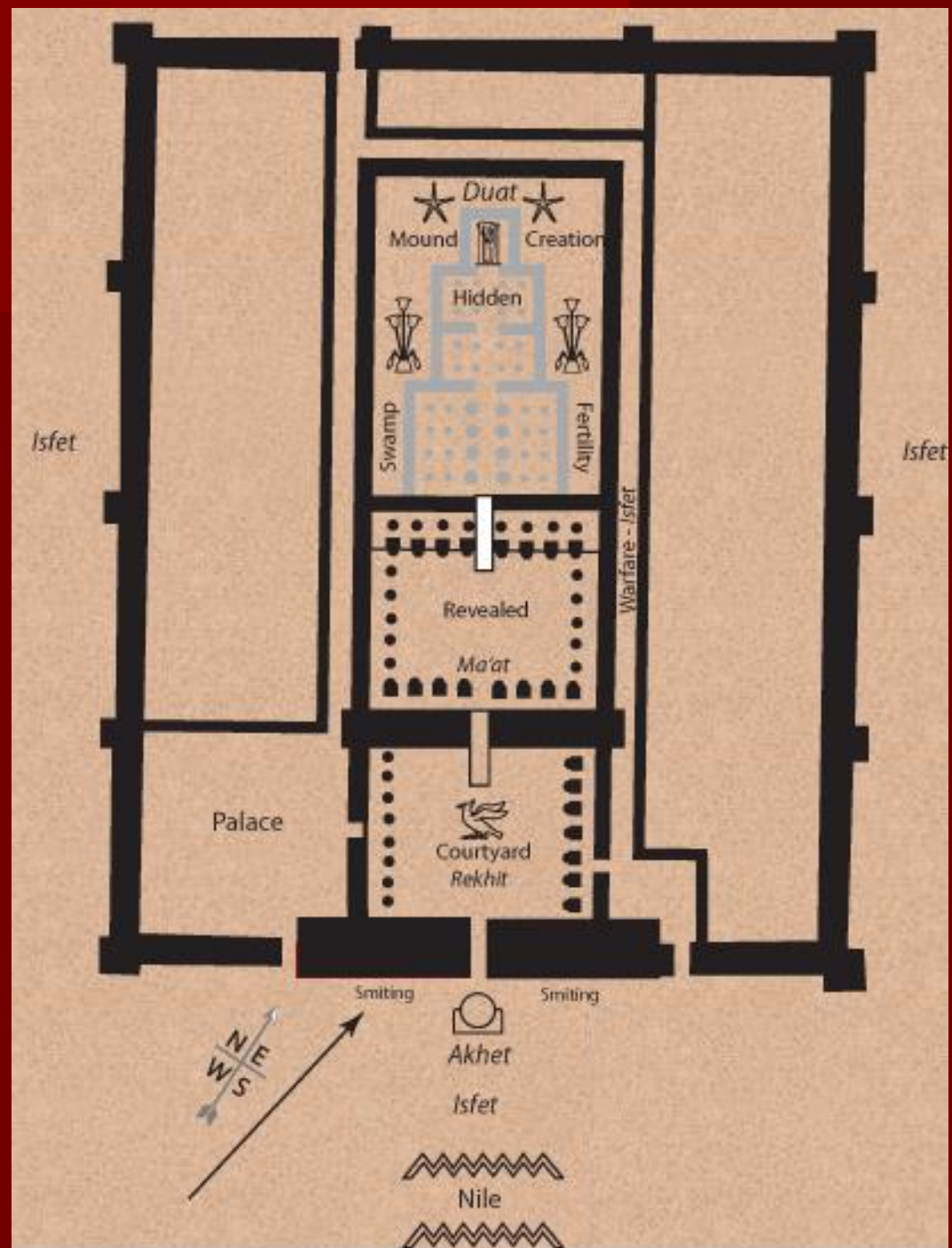




Ancient Egyptian temples - architecture

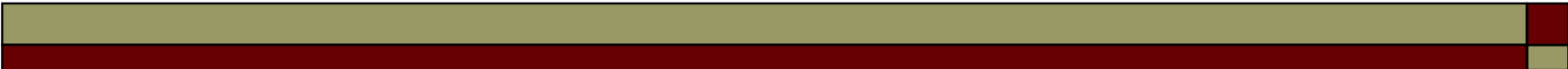
- temples = metaphor for universe and creation

The Egyptian Temple as Cosmos (ideal image of Medinet Habu)



"Temple as Cosmos"

- ❑ temple planning reflected the solar ideology of the state, materializing the cosmology of the sun god Re's daily cycle of rising and setting
- ❑ massive pylons represent the *Akhet*, (horizon)
→ sometimes despite of real orientation (more North-South than East-West)
- ❑ But Nile as main compass referent, mostly the case with Egyptian temples

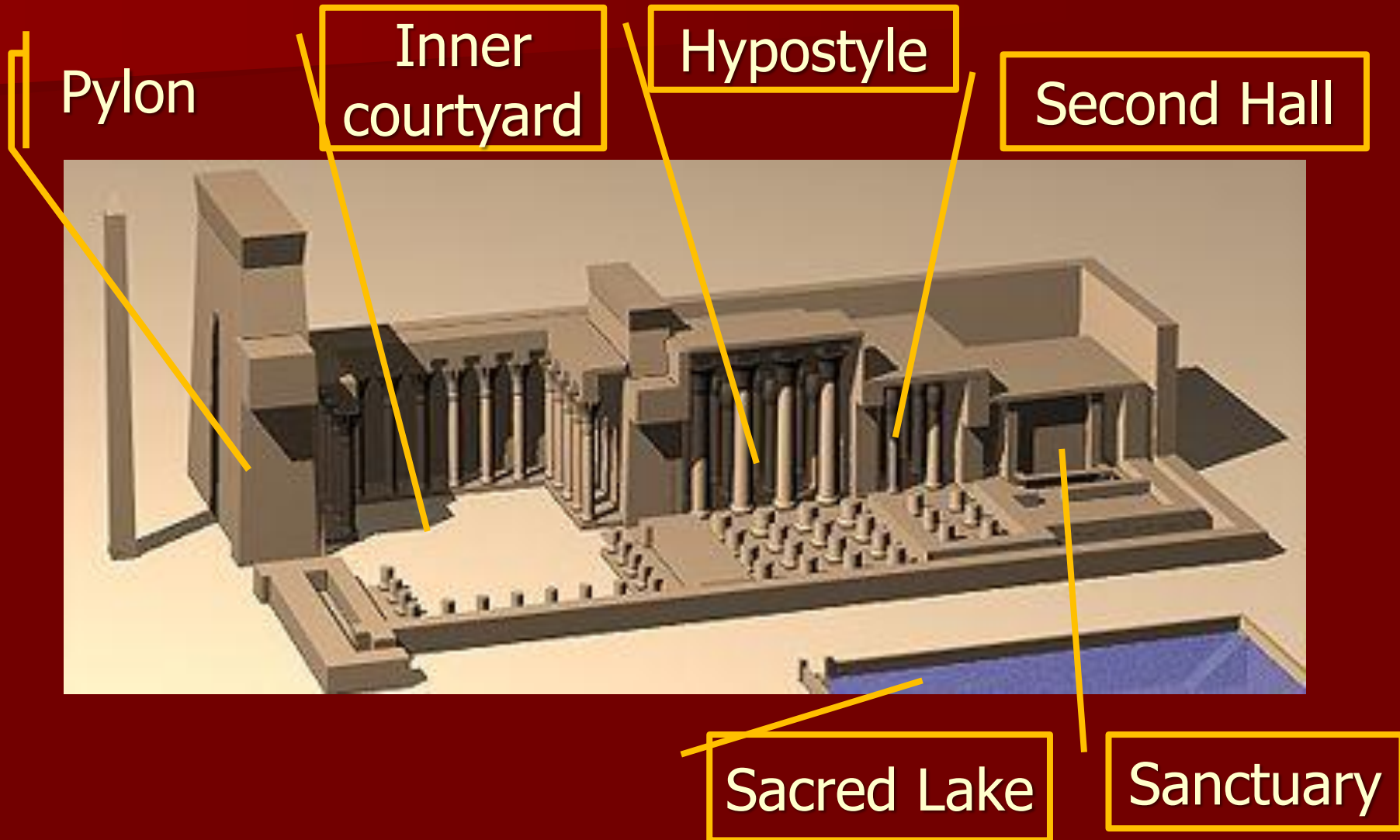


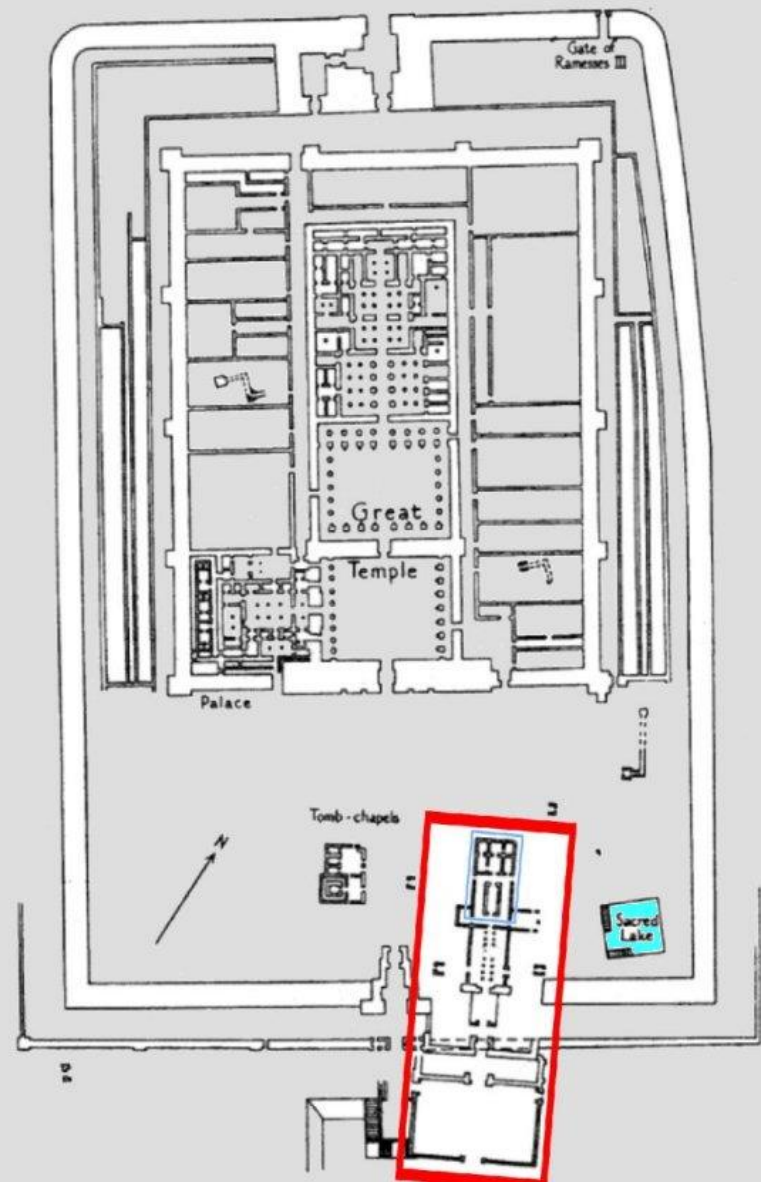
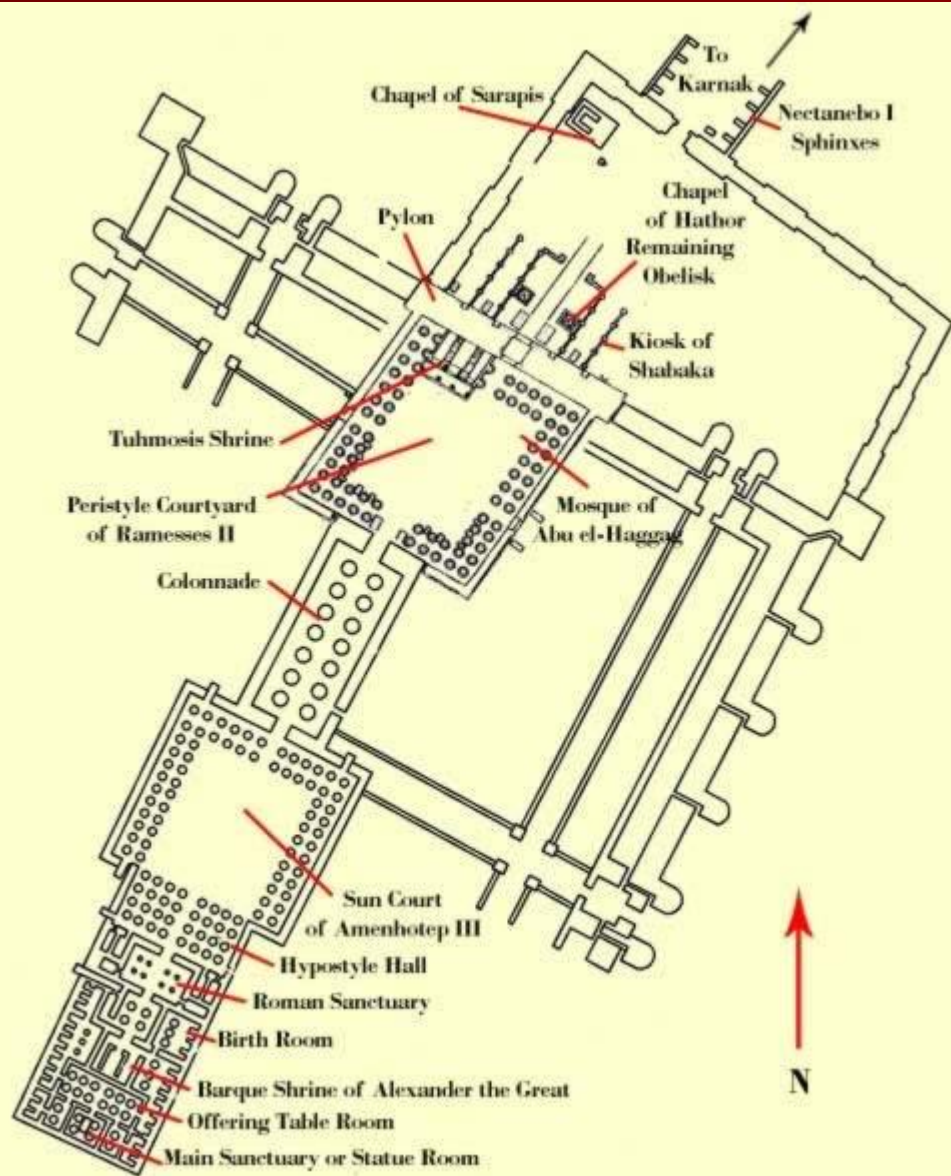
Ancient Egyptian temples - architecture

- ❑ temples = metaphor for universe and creation
- ❑ floor rose through courts, ceiling lowered
- ❑ halls of columns shaped like papyrus and lotus plants representing landscape of first creation
- ❑ ceilings decorated with stars → sky
- ❑ sanctuary was at the highest point, representing the Primeval Mound (seat of creation)

The ideal temple in Ancient Egypt

(from 18. dyn., 1500BC onwards)



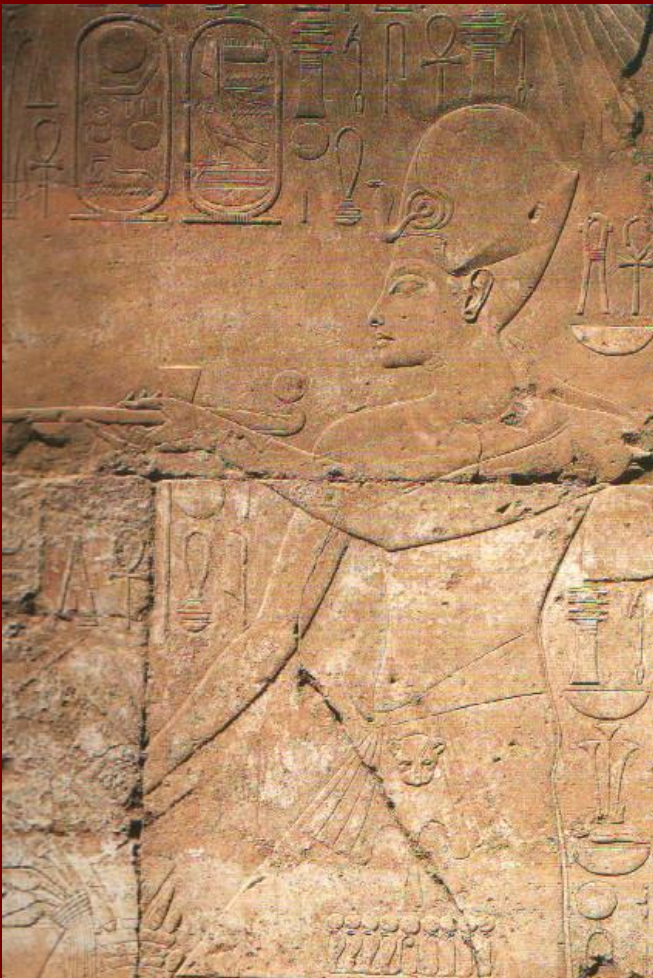


Interior decoration – reliefs

(showing priest – including king performing the duties)

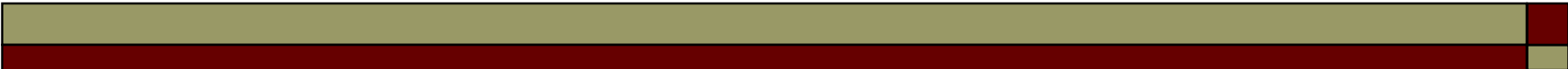
Opet festival:

Tutankhamun (Luxor)



Sokar and Min festivals (Medinet Habu: exterior of south wall → list of festivals)





Ancient Egyptian temples – decoration

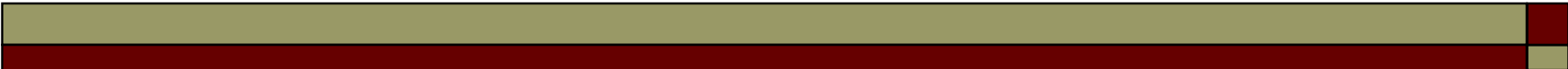
- interior decoration:
 - Reliefs
 - showed the king performing the cult rituals of the god
 - equipment
- Exterior decoration
 - Reliefs
 - showed him repelling the forces of chaos

Exterior decoration – reliefs: battle scenes

Seti I Karnak Hypostyle
North



Ramses II Karnak
Hypostyle South



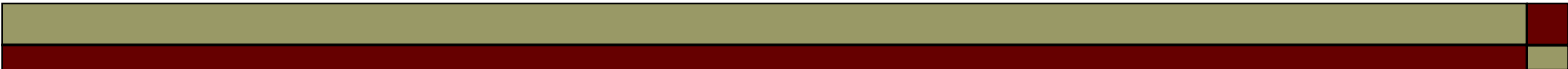
Ancient Egyptian temples – economy

- interior decoration: of the temple showed the king performing the cult rituals of the god, while the exterior showed him repelling the forces of chaos.
- Temples = pivotal role in economy of Egypt
 - Each = endowed with large areas of agricultural land → employing large workforces
 - main temple surrounded by granaries, storerooms and slaughterhouses
 - Processing + stored of offerings These daily offerings were usually redistributed among the priesthood and other staff.

Koptos, Temple of Min



The religious system: priests



Priests

- ❑ Servant of god – hem netjer
- ❑ Worked full- (NEW from NK onwards), part-time or as lay person in temple
- ❑ Were not always very well versed in religious doctrine – especially in smaller temples
- ❑ Most priests did not come into contact with cult image of god or goddess

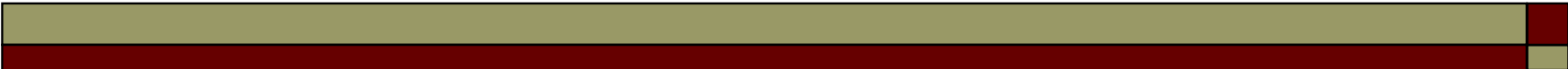
Priest of Hapy

This bronze statuette represents the priest of Hapy, the god of the annual Nile inundation

(Temple of Hapy in Aswan?)

Dynasty 20, (1200-1085 BC).





In Fact:

- ❑ ALL cult activity required the presence of a supreme authority or his representative → so all ceremonies, rituals etc. carried out by the king himself
- ❑ See temple walls: total absence of priests, we see only king carry out rituals
- ❑ In theory: only king attends gods (as high priest)
- ❑ In praxis: king's authority was delegated to chief priest (First Prophet) of each temple: **Delegation of Royal Power** → had therefore significant power and even influence in secular matters
- ❑ Second prophet = involved in all economic matters
- ❑ Lower ranks: wab-priests: attended numerous other duties

The different roles of the priests

<i>Hem-Netjer</i> <i>servant of god</i>	The "Hem-Netjer" prepared and carried forward offerings to the god and assisted at ceremonies and processions. They had access to the sanctuary where the divine image was kept, and controlled the entrance to the temple.
<i>Hem-Netjer Tepey</i> <i>high priest</i>	The position of "Hem-Netjer Tepey" or "overseer" was used at cult centres where there were a large number of hem-netjer (servants of god). They would often work on their land or tend to their jobs in the state administration when they weren't doing their temple service. Generally this role was performed by high ranking individuals, often the sons or sons-in-law of the pharaoh, and on occasions even the viziers.
<i>Wa'eb</i> <i>pure one</i>	The "Wa'eb" would assist the hem-netjer by carrying out lesser tasks in the maintainance of the temple and its rituals. He assured the purity of the ceremonial rooms, the people, instruments and tools. A basic but important role, all priests would have been trained as a wa'eb, and as such, could always act as a wa'eb if necessary.
<i>Kheri-Heb</i> <i>lector priest</i>	The "Kheri-Heb" would recite, sing or chant rites directly from the sacred books at ceremonies and processions. They also recited formulae and prayers to appeal to the gods, and functioned as oracles for people who sought out advice of the deities. Distinguished by a broad band worn diagonally across their chests, several kheri-heb could be based at each greater temple, taking turns to perform their functions.
<i>Sem priest</i>	The "Sem" priests performed the elaborate rituals at mummifications and burials. They are particularly associated with the "opening of the mouth" ritual, and are shown distinctively dressed in a panther or leopard skin.

70



High Priest: *hem-netjer tepy*

- At certain temples the post had a specific title, saying something of what the work involved entailed.
- → Overseeing distribution of offerings to all temples: Chief of the Servants of God of Upper and Lower Egypt

Priests at a procession (Petrie Museum)





Wab-priests

- ❑ Perform lesser tasks requisite to maintaining temples and rituals, taking part in processions
- ❑ Leader: Great Wab – handles instruments and cultic objects
- ❑ → therefore they had to be pure – wab
- ❑ Not allowed to enter sanctuary or feed themselves in offering hall, had rations in tertiary sacred zone between enclosure wall and temple proper
- ❑ Could be promoted to hem-netjer (from NK onwards)

Karnak: Sacred Lake

