

Animals and other humans: the sacredness of the animal in ancient Egyptian Religion

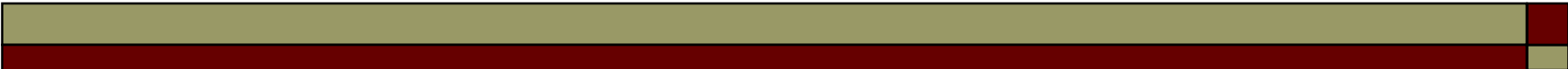
Cults, gods, mummies, symbolism

HPHP4016 Humans and other Animals

Dr Katharina Zinn

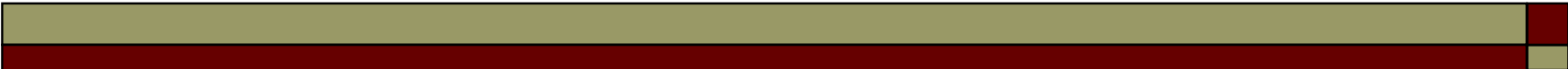
Animal – human iconography

ASPECTS OF THE DIVINE: THE POWER OF THE ANIMAL



Symbols, objects of fear, protection

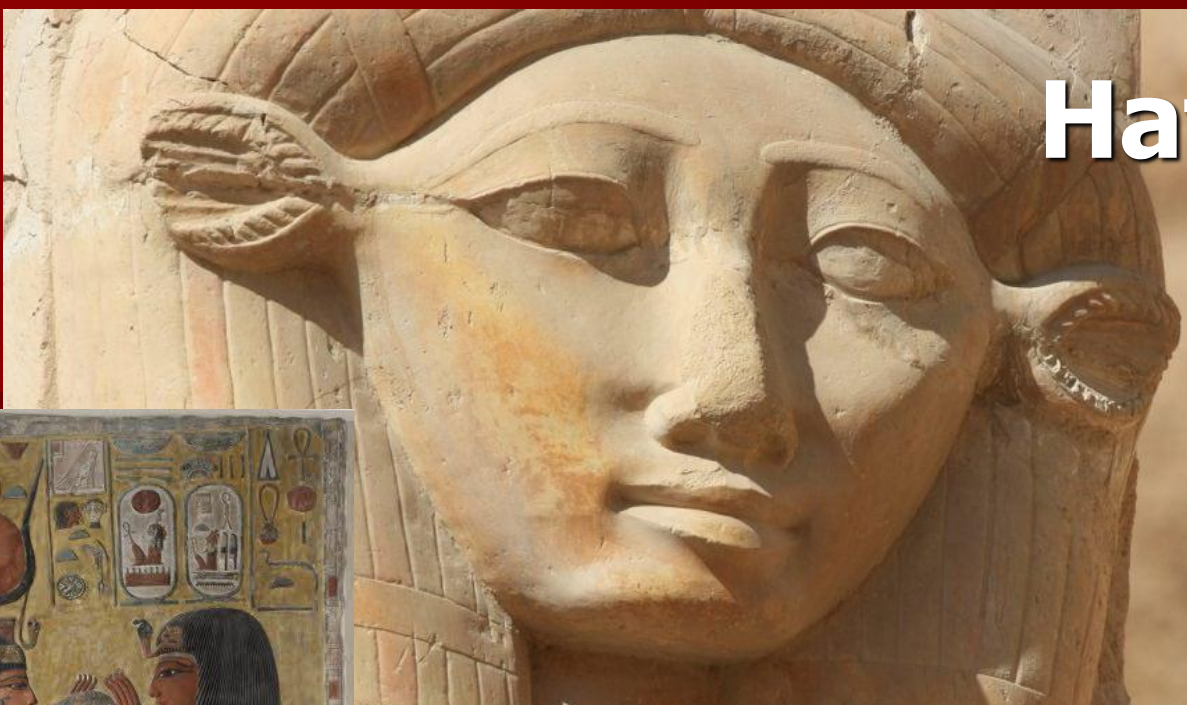
- Animal (shaped) divine entities = significant role in royal and non-royal religious expressions
- Animals → attractive qualities (admired, wanted to emulate)
 - Strength
 - ability to ward off predators
 - protective nature
 - nurturing characteristics / (re-)birth
- Display of deities in forms of animals or animal attributes – zoomorphism – (standing for their particular characteristics) → reveals each god's nature → opposite of anthropomorphism?!?
 - Careful with modern categories, need description of phenomenon



Symbols, objects of fear, protection

- ❑ Cat – large cats symbols of status (cheetahs and lions) were kept as exotic pets and were emblems of royalty, desert animals → magical, over-humanly
- ❑ crocodiles and hippopotami revered and worshipped in order to protect Egyptians from their wrath

Hathor



Amun

- Stela with Amun in various forms (Man, goose, and ram). Sandstone. Abydos. 25th dynasty, c. 700 BC



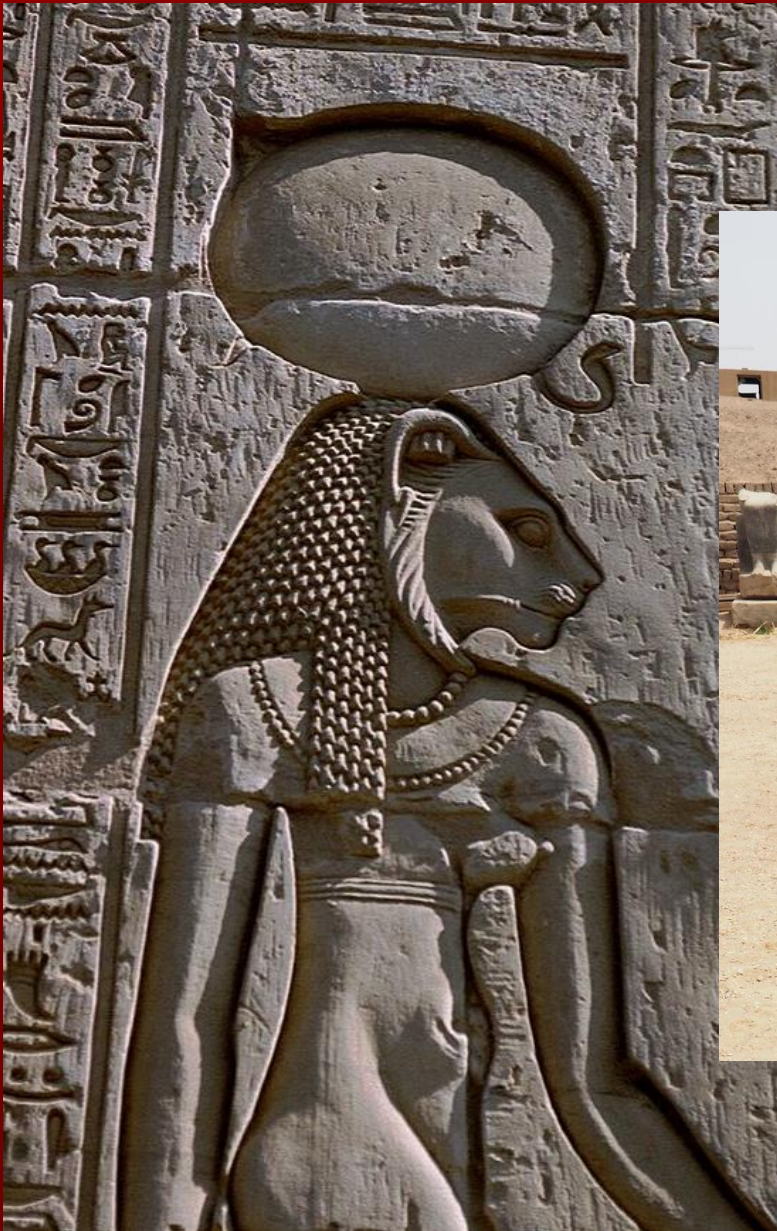
Feline: Sekhmet and Bastet

(Ashmolean Museums)



Sekhmet Kom Ombo

Sekhmet at the Mwt Precinct, Karnak

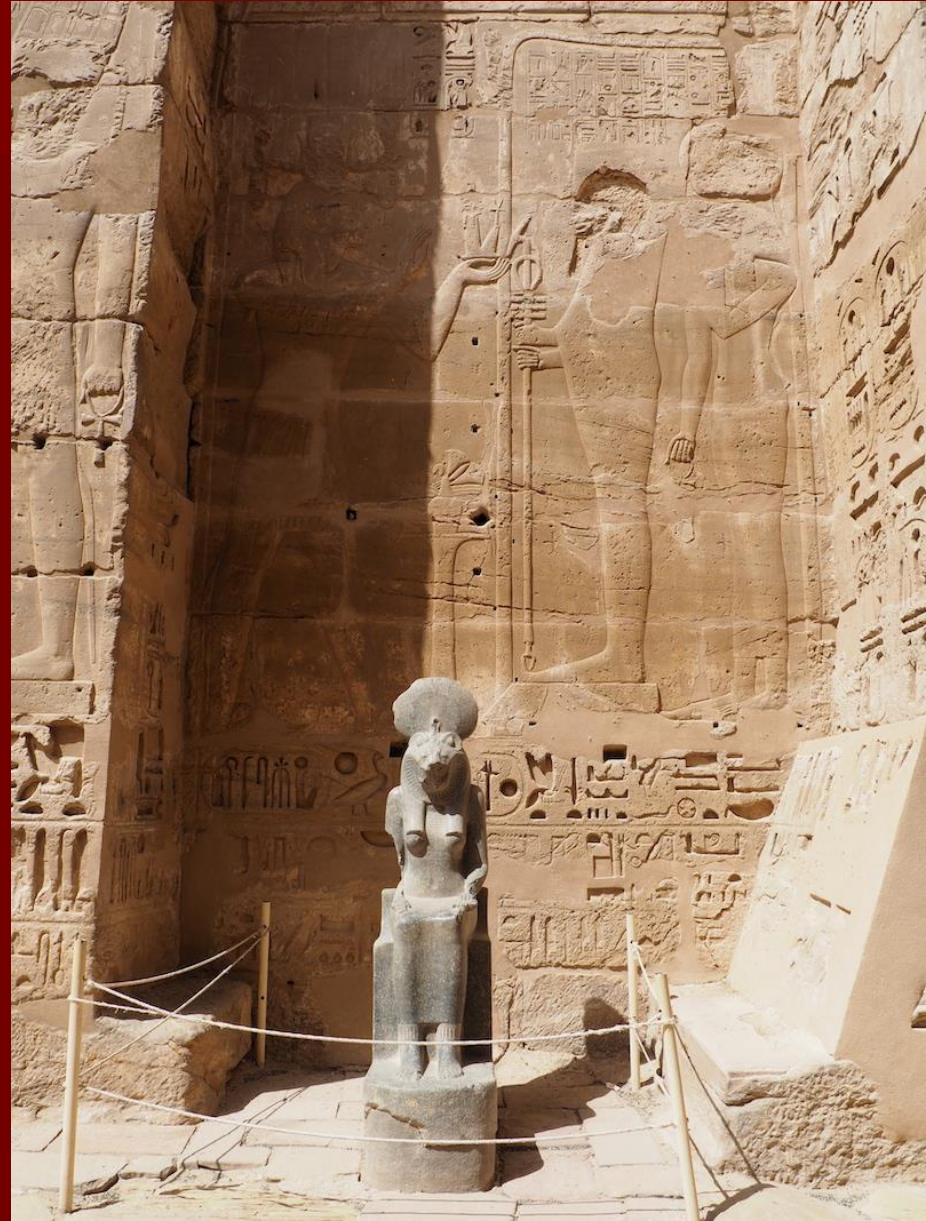


Iconography - gods and goddesses in formal Egyptian art

- deities often have mixed human and animal form
 - head identifies the theme
 - form of the body depends on the activity depicted
 - Example 1: king shown as supernatural power + his personal identity as ruler → depicted with body of a lion and the head of a man wearing the headcloth and rearing cobra unique to kingship → sphinx



Medinet Habu





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 - Example 2: goddess with head of a lion → show fury OR head of a cow → show maternal love; but with body of a woman, if she is holding a sceptre
- Due to proportions and canon – inherent possibility to create harmonious hybrid forms

Iconography - gods and goddesses in formal art

□ Iconography

- pictorial material relating to or illustrating a subject
- traditional or conventional images or symbols associated with a subject (religious, legendary)

□ **ICONOGRAPHY AS VISIBLE RELIGION**

- imagery or symbolism of art

□ Description

- account – what do you see?
- Explanation – how do we have to understand this?
- Narrative – what are the cultural ideas behind that?

□ Artefact

Iconography - gods and goddesses in formal art

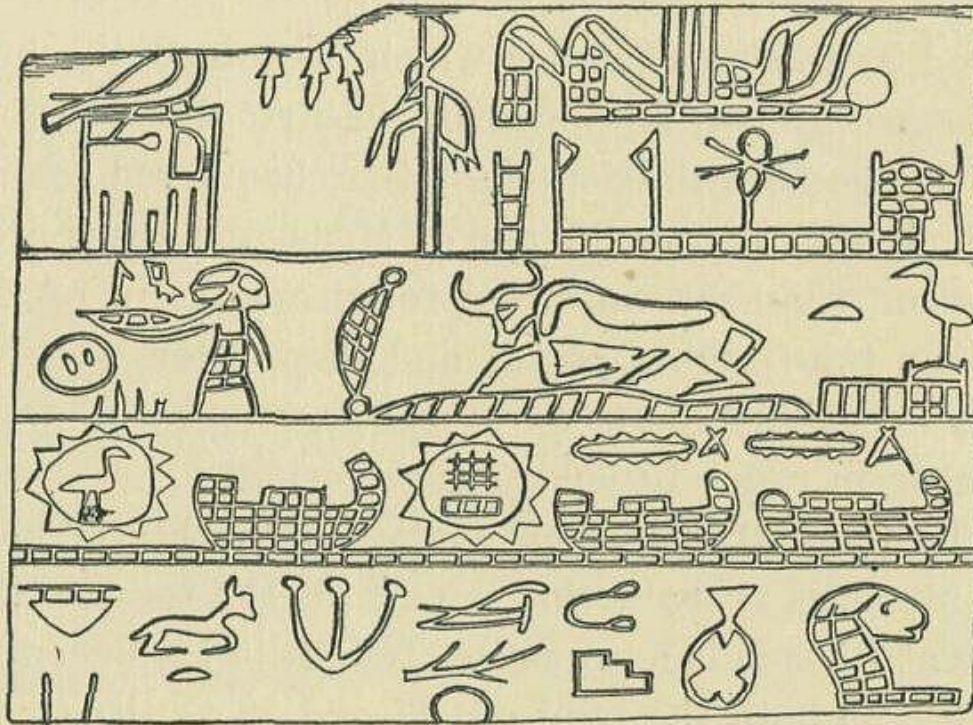
- iconography as guide not to names but to themes:
 - any goddess related to the power of the sun and creator may wear a sun-disk with rearing cobra
 - any goddess with the power of fury can be depicted as a lion or with a lion head

Ra / Re

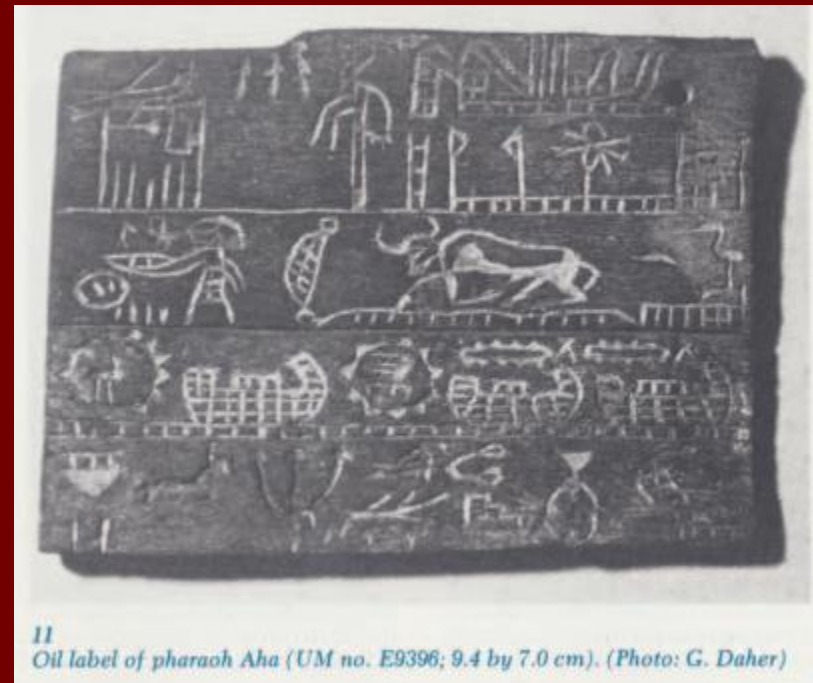
- ❑ identified as sun, most often depicted as sun's disk itself, or falcon-headed man wearing a sun-disk on his head
- ❑ “chief” / state god of OK → part of royal titulary (s3 Ra), sun temples 5th dyn.
- ❑ chief cult centre was Iunu (Greek name Heliopolis - City of the Sun)
- ❑ manifests himself in several other forms: Atum (evening sun); Khepri (morning sun, depicted as a scarabaeus or dung-beetle); Horakhty (represented by the Great Sphinx at Giza).



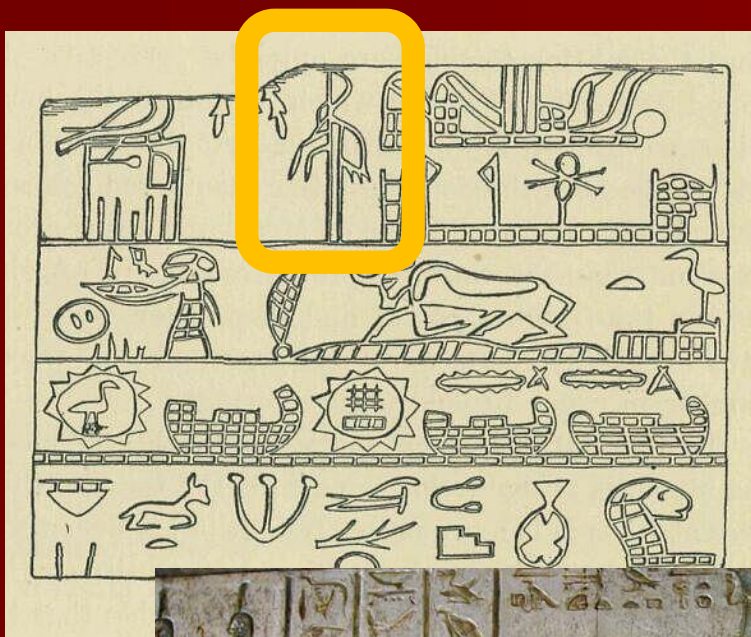
From Abydos (tomb of AHA) – SACRED LANDSCAPES AS SPACES FOR ROYAL FESTIVALS



EBONY TABLET OF KING AHA-MENA.



11
Oil label of pharaoh Aha (UM no. E9396; 9.4 by 7.0 cm). (Photo: G. Dahér)



Imiut - fetish



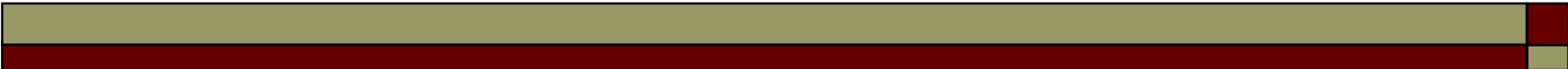
Animal Mummies

**Oxford Pitt Rivers
Museum 1908.64.4
Crocodile**



**PRM 1884.57.5
Cat**





Mummification of animals

- three main reasons
 - religious reasons (unconnected with human burial)
 - beloved pets: mummified by their owners (hope that they might join them in afterlife)
 - food source for the deceased
- certain species seen as sacred → large numbers of animals kept at temples
- visitors to temples: choose animal, when able to pay for mummification
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Animal Mummies

**Oxford Pitt Rivers
Museum 1908.64.4
Crocodile**



Sobek

**PRM 1884.57.5
Cat**



Bastet

Intro

- Salima Ikram about mummification of animals

Dr. Salima Ikram Explains How Animal Mummies Were Made

- And animal cults

Dr Salima Ikram
shares the Secrets
of Egypt's Animal Cults



BM EA 6773



- Mummified bullock; linen wrappings
- Horns, ears + facial details = imitated in coloured linen
- Elaborate geometric pattern on chest
- false eyes
- Even not an Apis bull, shows triangular patch at forehead

Bull Cults



- Buchis – Armant
- Apis – Memphis
- Mnevis – Heliopolis
- → received burials and mummification

Embalming table for Apis, Memphis



Usage show in documentary “The Ancient Egyptians”



Serapeum, Saqqara



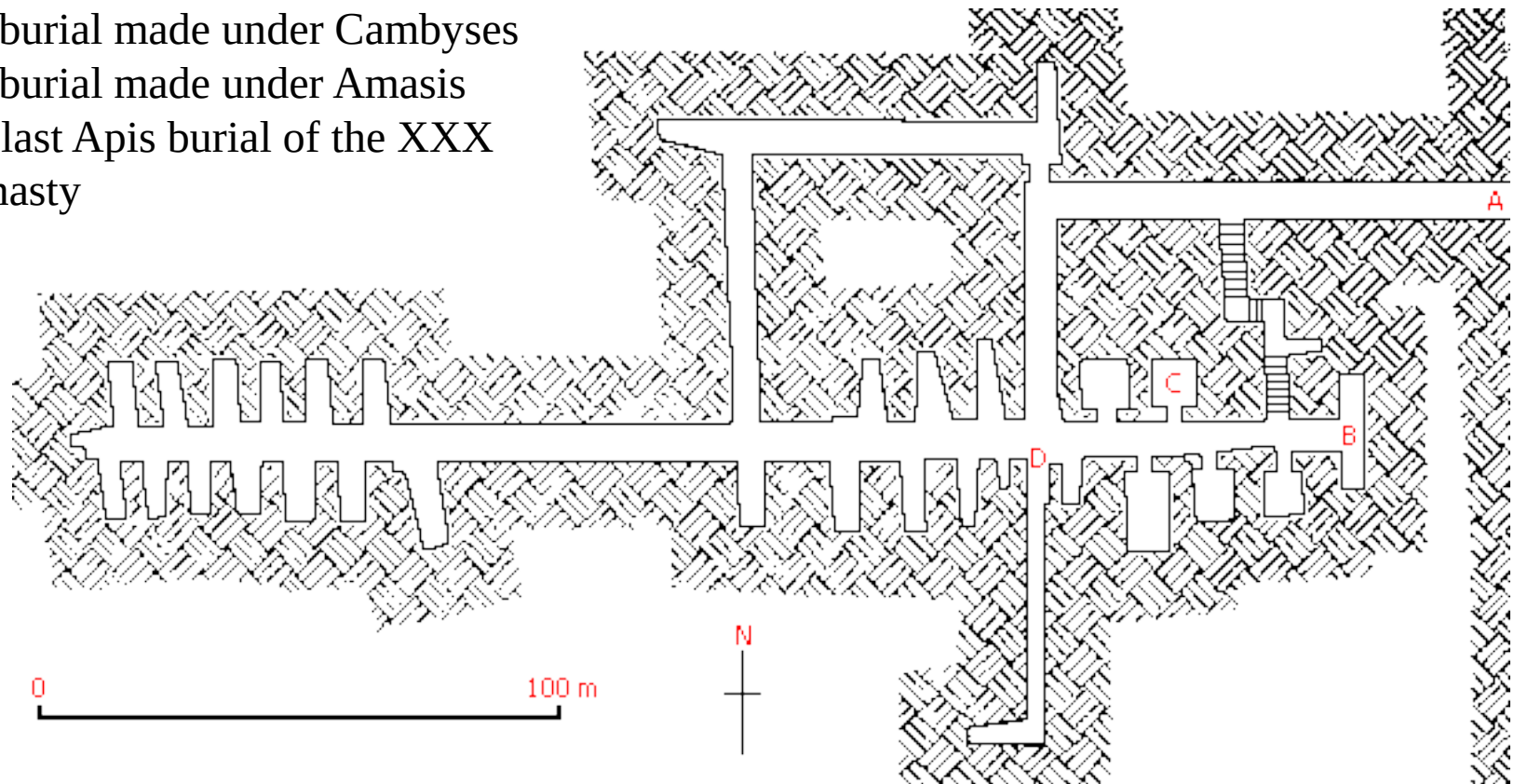
Serapeum

A - entrance

B - burial made under Cambyses

C - burial made under Amasis

D - last Apis burial of the XXX
Dynasty



Reconstructed Buchis burial Armant (stone sarcophagus in vault, stela of emporor Valerian, offering table, offering stands)

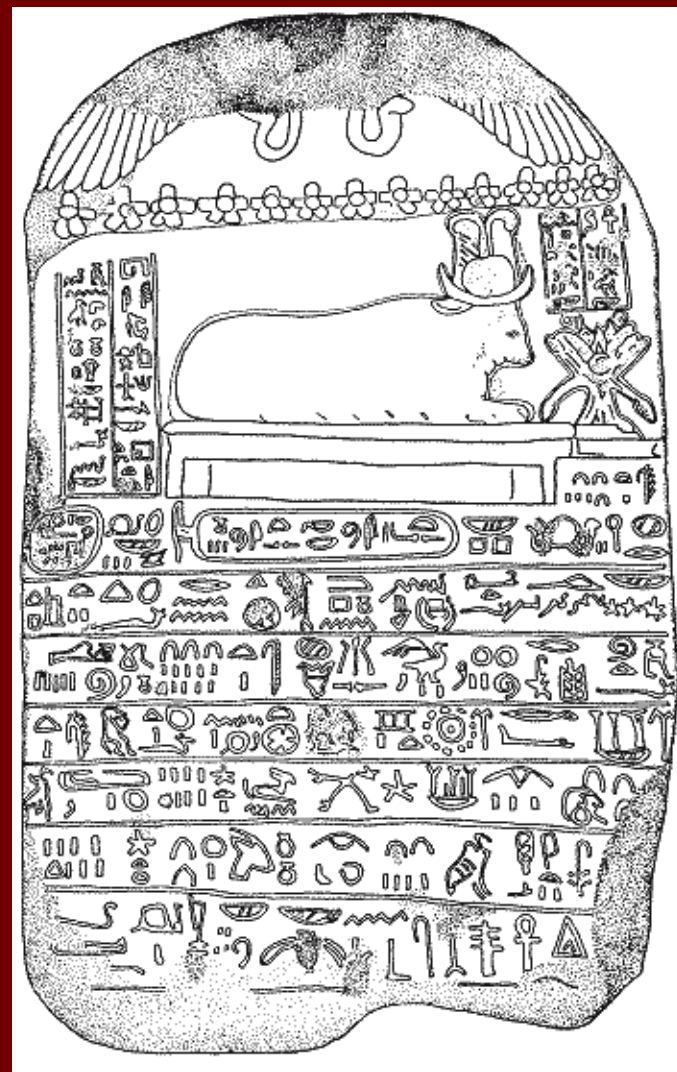


Buchis Bull





- Under the bull's image
The lord of the gods, who created the goddesses, arrived on earth at Thebes, Tai-Ist was his mother. He was led to Hermonthis which rejoiced seeing him. In the year 39 an abode was set up for him with great festivity in the region of /// of Re, his beautiful town. In the year 57, month 3 of the season of Akhet, on day 8 at 7 o'clock of the day, his ba entered [the heaven] /// his reign lasted 24 years, (?) months, 20 days and 7 hours /// may he give you eternal life, all permanence, all power, all force as well as all joy like Re, for eternity!



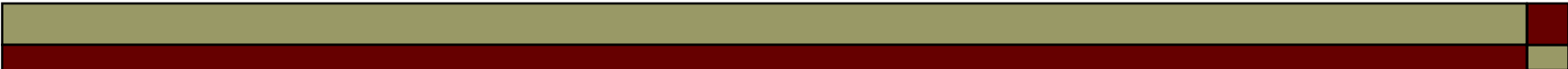
Ibis Galleries, Saqqara, Animal Necropolis



- sacred ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*) seen as incarnation of god Thoth
- Late and Ptolemaic Period: ibises mummified and buried in catacombs (especially at Tuna el-Gebel and Saqqara)
- votive objects found in galleries (amulets, statuettes: produced in the shape of the ibis)
- mummified ibises bought by pilgrims, donated as gifts to Thoth







Mummification of animals

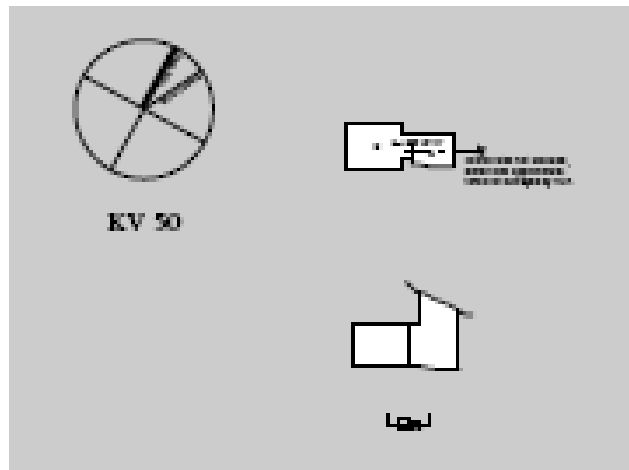
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Dog mummy (Cairo museum), from KV50



Dog mummy

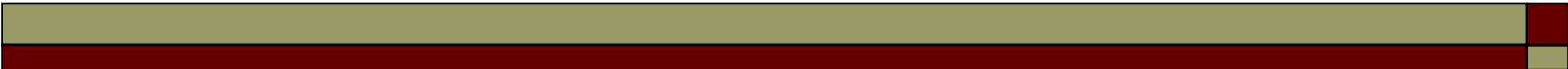
- ❑ Hunting dog
- ❑ Found in [KV50](#)



- ❑ Eviscerated along length of belly
- ❑ No wrappings except on paws

- **The mummy of a baboon, revered by the Ancient Egyptians as sacred to the god Thoth (from KV50)**





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Food offerings (Cairo CG 29856)



Vertebrae (CG 29856,
JE 46906); L: 30, W: 7

Coarse linen
bandages, spirally
wound around long
package, secured by
being tied in a knot →
caudal vertebrae (at
least eighteen) from
the tail of a calf
→ oxtail soup on the
menu in the Afterlife?

Additional Reading

- Ikram, S. (2004). Victual, Ritual, Or Both? Food Offerings From The Funerary Assemblage Of Isitemkheb. In: *Studi di Egittologia e di Papirologia* 1: 87-90.