

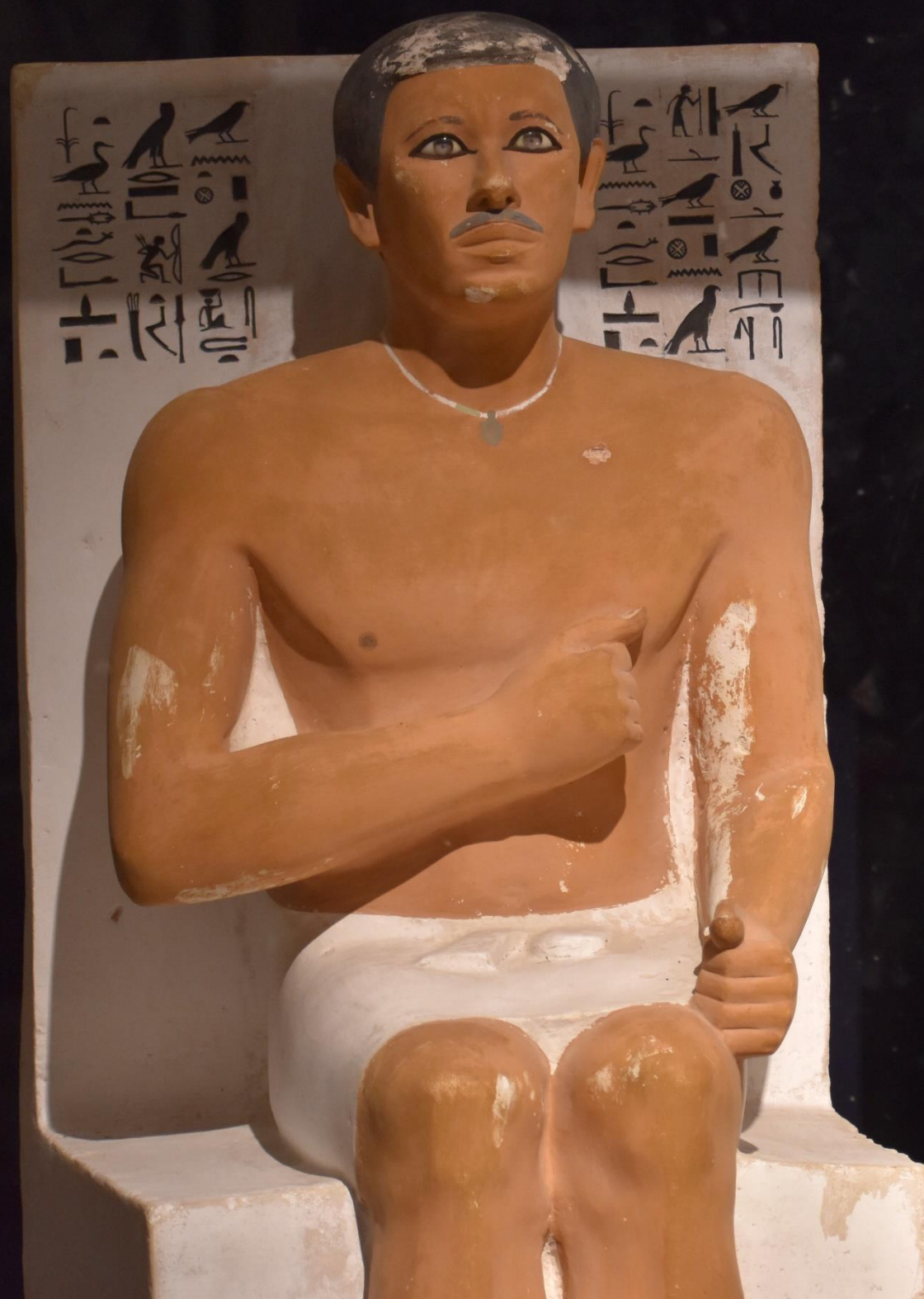
Approaching *Gender* in Ancient Egypt

HPHP4014 – Gender, Sex, & Sexuality:
Historical & Critical Perspectives

2022/23 – Block 6

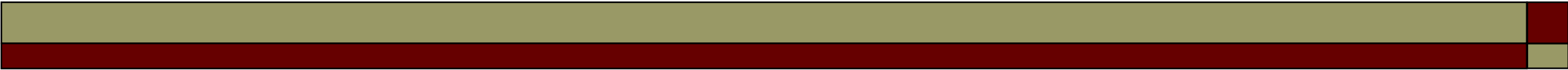
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and Heritage



Definitions

- Sex: two main categories – male, female
- Gender
 - Gender identity: personal sense of one's own gender – can correlate with assigned sex at birth or can differ from it
 - Culturally determined sets of gender categories existent – CAN serve as basis to form a person's social identity in relation to other members of society
 - most societies: still basic division between gender attributes assigned to males and females (gender binary)
 - includes expectations of masculinity and femininity in all aspects of sex and gender: biological sex, gender identity, and gender expression
 - Not always identification with some/all aspects of gender assigned to their biological sex – transgender, non-binary or genderqueer
 - some societies have third gender categories



Definitions

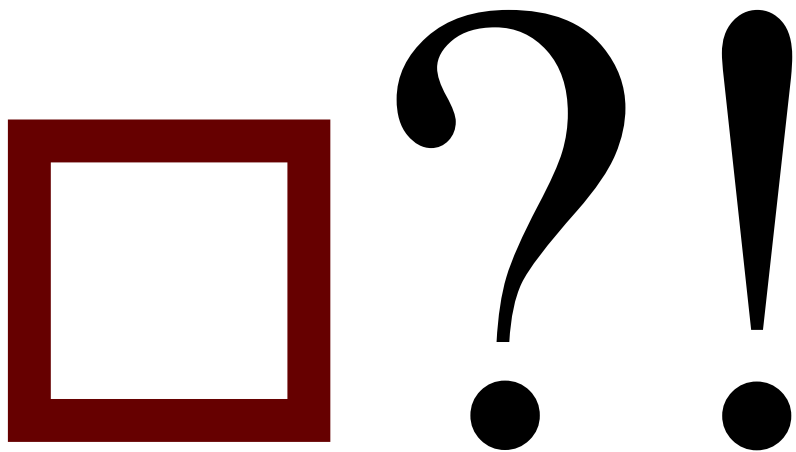
- Sex
- Gender
 - Masculinity
 - Femininity
- Culture
- role
- stereotype
- equality
- ideal

Definitions

- Sex
- Gender
 - Masculinity
 - Femininity
- Culture → being used to ideas → bias
- Role → culturally defined
- Stereotype → stems from being used to interpretation in our own culture → bias
- Ideal → dichotomy / duality of male / female
- Equality → stems from former

Sex $\leftrightarrow$ Gender Identity

- Sex = biological to the person
 - male or
 - female



Open Ocean Exploration



Open Ocean Exploration

@RebeccaRHelm

It means you may be genetically male or female, chromosomally male or female, hormonally male/female/non-binary, with cells that may or may not hear the male/female/non-binary call, and all this leading to a body that can be male/non-binary/female.

5:42 PM · 12/19/19 · [Twitter Web App](#)

70 Retweets 636 Likes

Michelle Fleming
2. März 2021 · 🌐

In case you were wondering about "gender", "biology" and "sex"...here is the skinny on the science explained in simple, short terms. Coolest thing I have read in a long time!

an Exploration
iRHelm

biologist
are talking
nd gender
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really simple.
let's find the
? Let's talk

Open Ocean Exploration
@RebeccaRHelm

If you know a bit about biology you will probably say that biological sex is caused by chromosomes, XX and you're female, XY and you're male. This is "chromosomal sex" but is it "biological sex"? Well...

5:28 PM · 12/19/19 · [Twitter Web App](#)

32 Retweets 508 Likes

Ann

Open Ocean Exploration
@RebeccaRHelm

Sometimes that SRY gene pops off the Y chromosome and over to an X chromosome. Surprise! So now you've got an X with an SRY and a Y without an SRY. What does this mean?

5:30 PM · 12/19/19 · [Twitter Web App](#)

25 Retweets 482 Likes

Open Ocean Exploration
@RebeccaRHelm

A Y with no SRY means physically you're female, chromosomally you're male (XY) and genetically you're female (no SRY). A Y with an SRY means you're physically male, chromosomally female (XX) and genetically male (SRY). But biological sex is simple! There must be another answer...

+12

3,923 Kommentare 74.603 Mal geteilt

[Kommentieren](#)

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Sex $\leftrightarrow$ Gender Identity

- Sex = biological to the person
 - male or
 - female
- Gender identity - Gender (like race or ethnicity) functions as an organizing principle for society because of the cultural meanings given to being male or female.
 - masculine or
 - feminine



And in Ancient Egypt?

- Sex and gender can be expressed in art and texts (our evidence)
 - Are femininity and masculinity expressed? If so, how?
 - Why is it important to erase our own preconceptions of human representation?
 - It is said that sexuality is stressed in Egyptian art but what does it mean?
 - What is the purpose of nakedness in Egyptian art?

Gender in Ancient Egypt

- Ancient Egyptian society was **highly gendered**
- → participation in most aspects of ancient Egyptian life depended on whether one was male or female
- positions, jobs, almost all types of labour were divided by sex (could change over the course of history – weavers)
- from the king down to the lowest rank of official, power structure + government administration = entirely male



Instruction of Any

*Take a wife while you're young,
That she make a son for you;
She should bear for you while you're youthful,
It is proper to make people.'* ...



Nikon D5600, 190mm, f/5.3, 1/125s



What is marriage in AE?

- Problematic! – but whatever it is, it is aimed to ensure continuation of family → children
- No legal ceremony, no formalisation!
 - But sometimes marriage contracts (especially Late Period and following)
- Maybe active after cohabitation? (entry of woman in house of man) – *grg per* “to establish a household” (“to live together”)
 - → Therefore divorce = “expulsion” / “departure”
- Other term “take somebody as wife”, never take as husband found
- Sometimes third party = asked to sanction

Adultery

- ❑ Men could have affairs
- ❑ (married !) women not
- ❑ → evidence from DeM: “...(a) wife is a wife. She should not make love. She should not have sexual intercourse.”
- ❑ Again: Marriage as social recognition of couples to produce children → filiations important

Instruction of Any

*'Beware of a woman who is a stranger,
One not known in her town;
Don't stare at her when she goes by,
Do not know her carnally.
A deep water whose course is unknown,
Such is a woman away from her husband.
"I am pretty," she tells you daily,
When she has no witnesses;
She is ready to ensnare you,
A great deadly crime when it is heard.*

Instructions of Ani

- text = giving advice to up-and-coming young middle class men
- working male official vs. stay-at-home wife
- man is asked about his position
- woman is asked about her husband
- → VERY specific context



Nikon D5600, 100mm, f/4.8, 1/60s



Nikon D5600, 8



How is sex and gender presented?

- How might we distinguish true eroticism from representations of fertility?
- What might some of the icons of female & male sexuality be?
- Egyptian constructions of eroticism, obscenity, and sexuality are quite different than ours. How do they differ?
- How is that presented?

CODES → DECORUM

- ❑ Eroticizing ancient Egyptian women?
- ❑ NO (not in our sense anyway...)
- ❑ visual art is coded
- ❑ will be comprehensible to others of that society
- ❑ codes & symbols are culturally specific
- ❑ DECORUM
 - representations follow specific conventions – unwritten rules
 - ❑ → you don't show a picture of the queen on the toilet

Human representations and gender

- ❑ Men depicted larger than women (greater importance?)
- ❑ Men: brown, or dark skin
- ❑ women had pale white or yellowish (reflecting being indoors and spending less time out in the sun?)
- ❑ Standing statues: men striding, women feet together (passiv? or powerful?) → suggesting difference between being physically active versus passive
- ❑ **What is represented: Sex or Gender?**

Human representations and gender

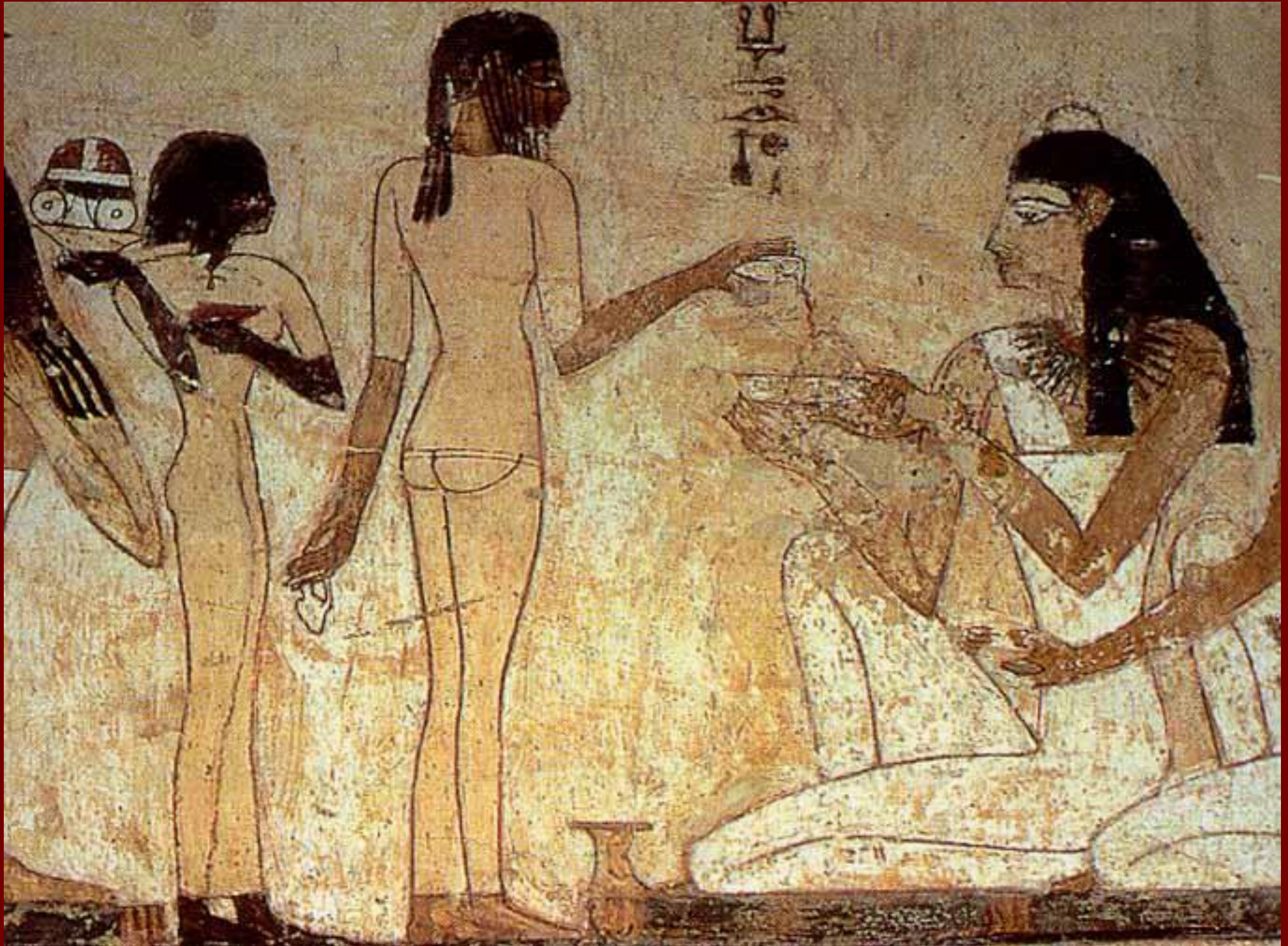
- Groups: person who touches or holds another person = less important than the person being touched → almost always, a woman is shown touching her husband/son
- tomb statuary + relief decoration: men = shown young (in prime physical shape), or old and corpulent (signifying wealth/power; women shown young + beautiful (irrespective age)
- Women NOT excluded but take second place



FEMININITY & MASCULINITY

- ❑ Note difference between SEXUALITY versus and FEMININITY & MASCULINITY
- ❑ Definitions of femininity and masculinity are entirely subjective observations of their authors

What do you see?

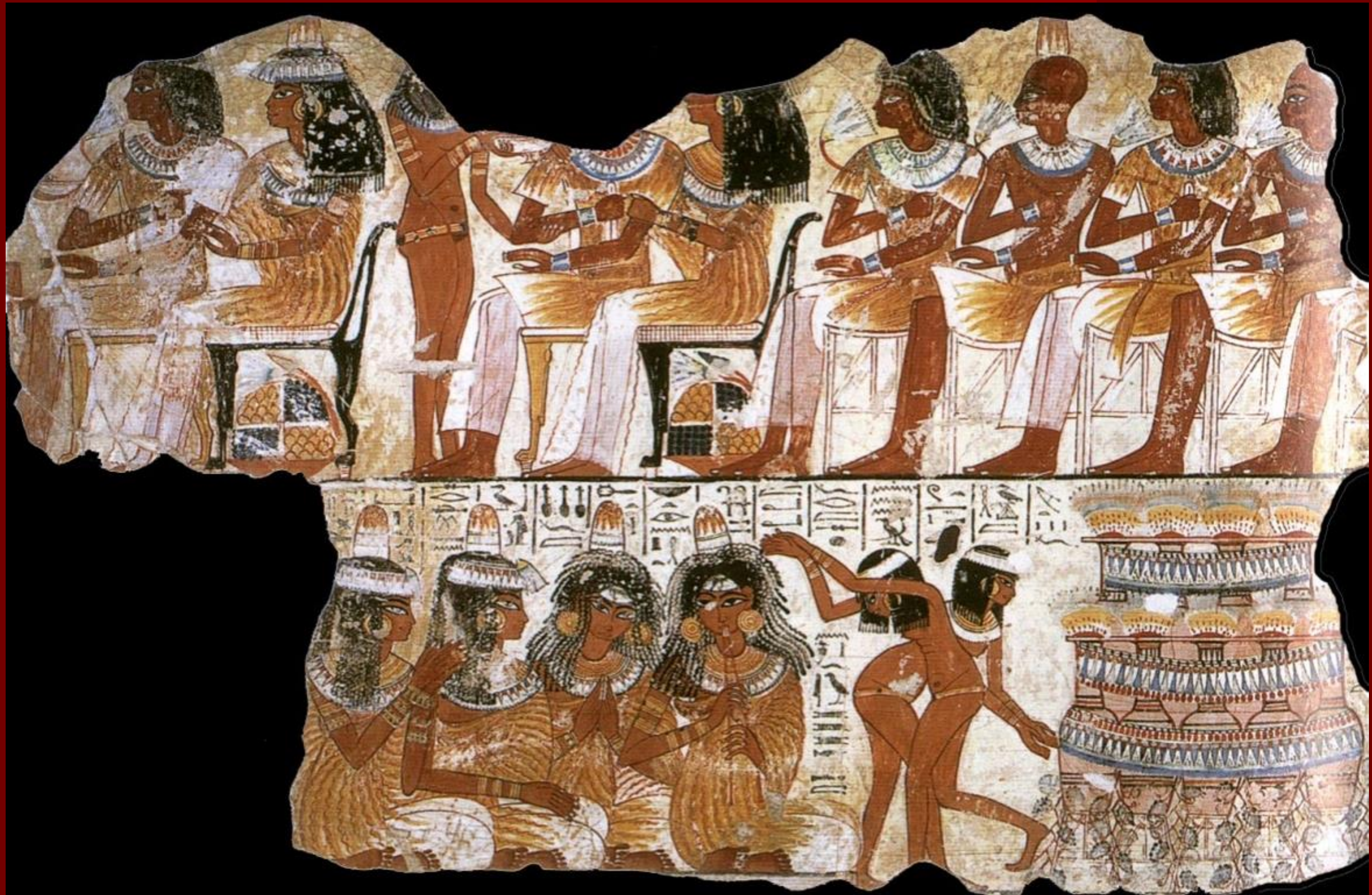




FEMININITY

- ❑ behaviour, actions, quality, appearance associated with being a woman
- ❑ Traits that are considered feminine can be categorized into
 - Physical (such as breasts, wider hips in relation to body size, softer facial features without facial hair, etc.)
 - Psychological (manifested in such things as a concern for relationships (sympathy, sensitivity, high language skills, receptivity)
 - Aesthetics (decoration and ornamentation of home and person)

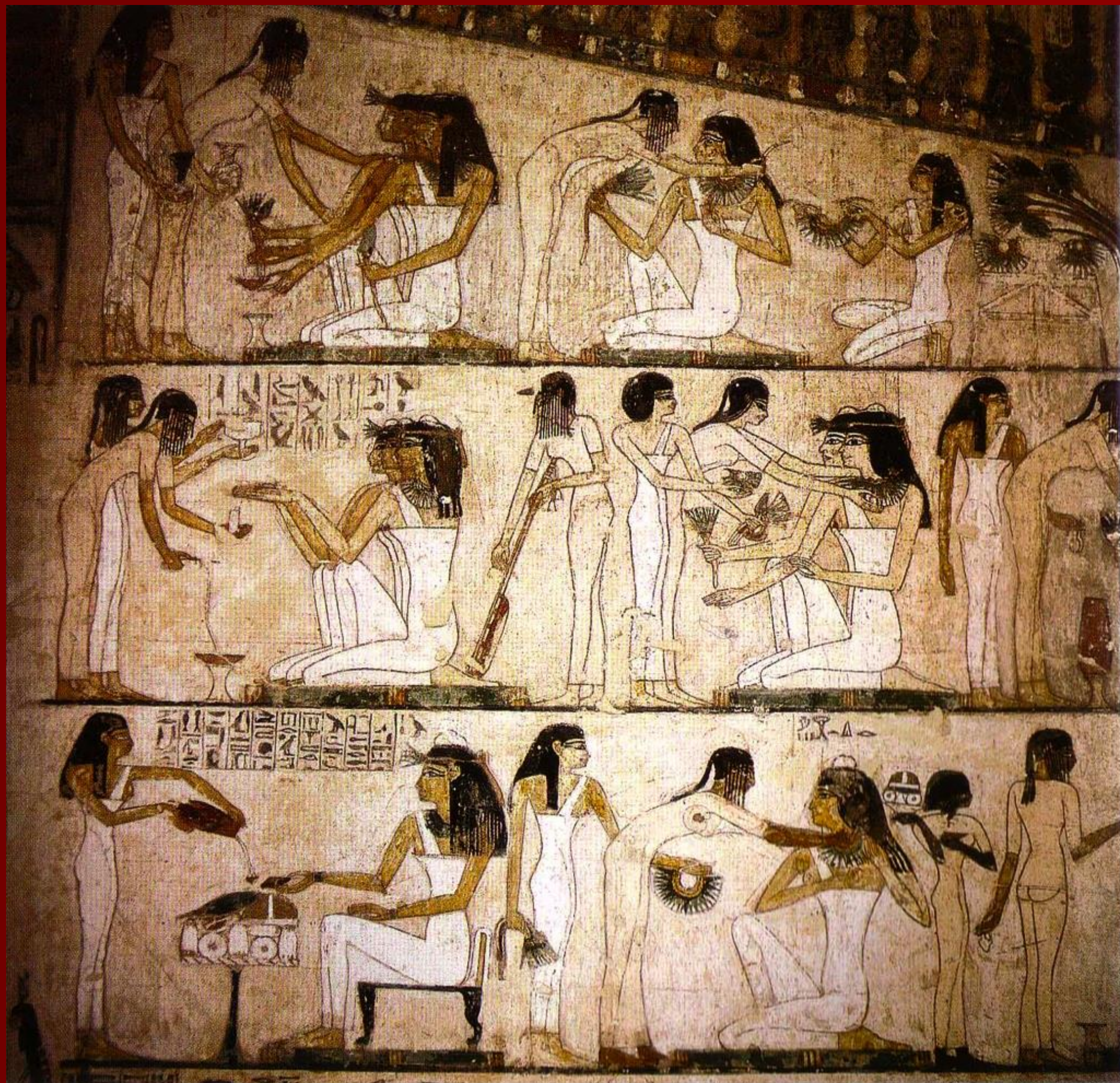
Tomb Chapel of Nebamun – BM EA37981





FEMININITY

- ❑ Distinctly feminine attributes are hard to pin down, as are the masculine, because each attribute (dress, makeup, jewellery, holding implements, position in scene) can be manifested in either sex
- ❑ attempt to categorize traits into strict categories of masculine and feminine = subject of philosophy, sociology, psychology and science for centuries
- ❑ unlikely to be resolved satisfactorily → diverse views, clues, and subsequent conclusions about the matter



Decorum – depictions of women

- ❑ Temple: women may sing and dance for cult of gods/goddesses, but not recorded making offerings (except highest ritual positions) → men do not appear in offerings until 13th dyn. either
- ❑ Family chapel: women generally secondary to a man (husband or son) → except chapels of king's daughters at Gizeh

Decorum – the role of women

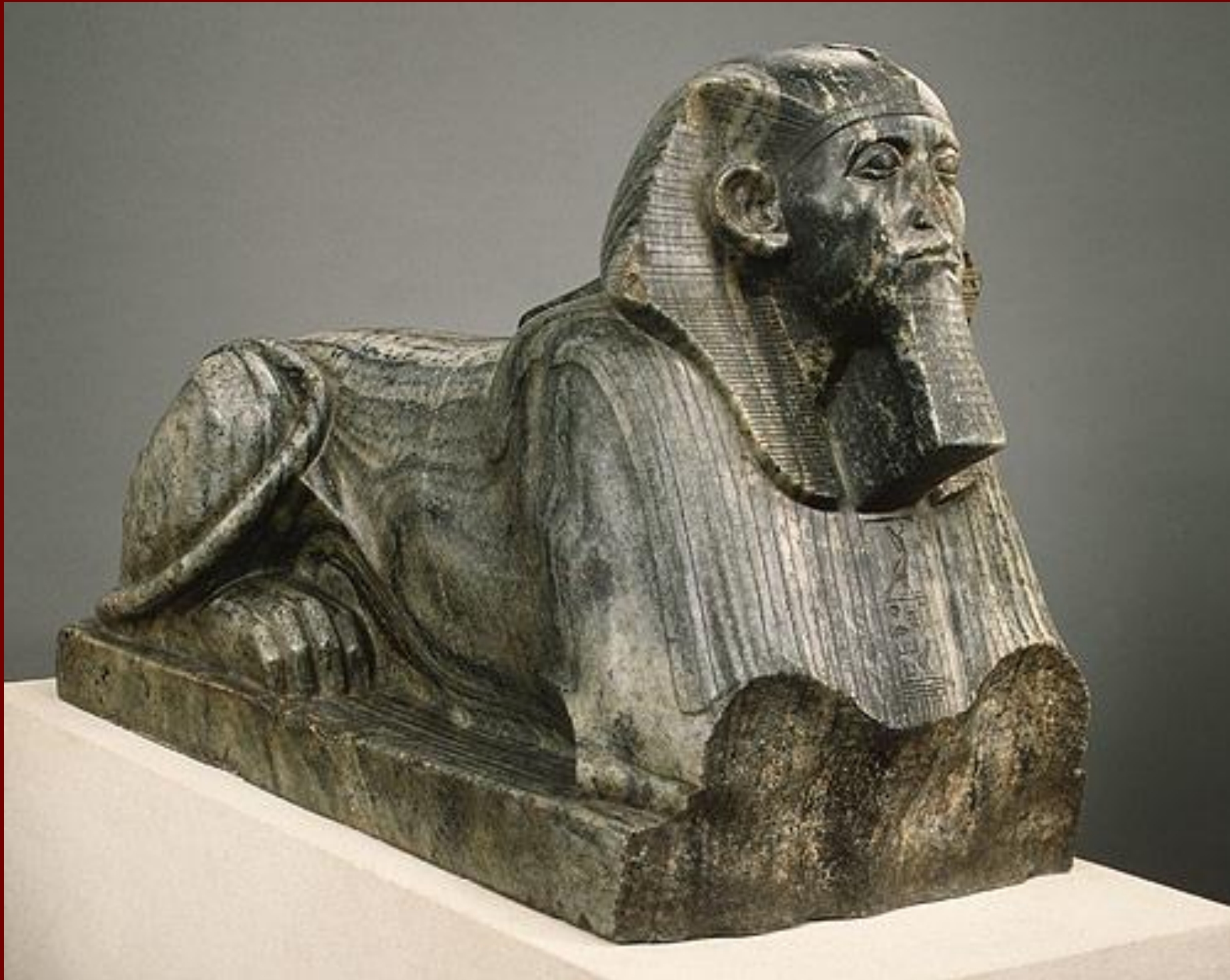
- three historical periods in which women enjoy a higher profile in the surviving record in art and architecture:
- OK – women held administrative positions (also in sphere of estates of mothers/wives of kings as manager for a group of women → female physician Peseshet, served in the estate of a king's mother.
- early 18th Dynasty women appear more prominent on chapel monuments (offering and dedicating monuments)
- late 20th 21st + early 22nd dyn. women in formal record in more active roles: hold titles otherwise attested for men (Neskhons, governor of Kush), funerary monuments become free of male kin
 - reflect the political power of ethnic groups from the Western Desert ('Libyan' domination of Egypt) in this time

Characteristics of images of women in general

- ❑ not shown with rolls of fat (which indicate bureaucracy)
- ❑ generally lighter in colour (if upper class) and shape
- ❑ physical strength not emphasised
- ❑ costume clingy emphasising “erogenous” zones (though also to be seen as non-erogenous, but highlighting fertility – in regard to individual and ancestral line)

Masculinity:

Sphinx of Senwosret III (MMA 17.9.2)



MASCULINITY

- ❑ Concepts of masculinity in the western world (first half of the twentieth century) = often rigid and inextricably associated with images of industrialization, military power and conventional social gender roles
- ❑ Janet Saltzman Chafetz (1974, 35-36) describes seven areas of traditional masculinity in Western culture:
 1. Physical--virile, athletic, strong, brave (unconcerned about appearance and aging)
 2. Functional--breadwinner, provider
 3. Sexual--sexually aggressive, experienced. Single status acceptable



MASCULINITY

4. Emotional--unemotional, stoic;
5. Intellectual--logical, intellectual, rational, objective, practical,
6. Interpersonal--leader, dominating; disciplinarian; independent, individualistic (applies to western societies);
7. Other Personal Characteristics--success-oriented, ambitious; proud, egotistical (applies to some societies): moral, trustworthy; decisive, competitive, uninhibited, adventurous.

TT96 Sennefer ("Tomb of the Vines")

Notice as many iconographic details as possible

(DECODE!)





Other Artistic Rules

□ Gender:

- Women – lighter skin tone with both feet together
- Men – darker skin tone with left foot stepped forward

□ Roles and Gestures: Each figure = specific role

- role determined by what they were wearing, what they were doing, their position and posture, the other figures around them, and specific gestures
 - cross-legged seated figure is a scribe
 - person with an open hand in front of their face is in mourning.



NUDITY / Nakedness

- ❑ Often discussed when focusing on gender problematic – very modern / western approach
- ❑ Modern bias – careful to not to apply to past
- ❑ *Naked* = unclothed bodies
- ❑ *Nude* = symbolic ‘transcendent’ forms
- ❑ many cultures show a close interrelationship between shame and nakedness (though the reason for this is unclear)



NUDITY / Nakedness

- ❑ **NAKED in AE: practical & functional**
- ❑ women grinding flour, men on skiffs (if low class)
- ❑ female & male musicians
- ❑ dancers, wrestlers, entertainers
- ❑ the damned
- ❑ enemies
- ❑ mourning women
- ❑ young children

Aspects of representations - sexuality

- Gestures may or may not be sexual:
 - kiss
 - holding hands
 - touching a familiar person
- VERY subtle representation of attraction / sexuality in official art



Clearly sexed bodies in binary codes?!?!?! ---

- ❑ bodies identified in archaeology as male or female
- ❑ Here cultural selection restricts range to two options in such identifications
- ❑ different human societies categorise individuals according to reproductive role (individual role in the reproduction and therefore survival of the society)
- ❑ But is this really correct?

Sakkara: Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep's Mastaba



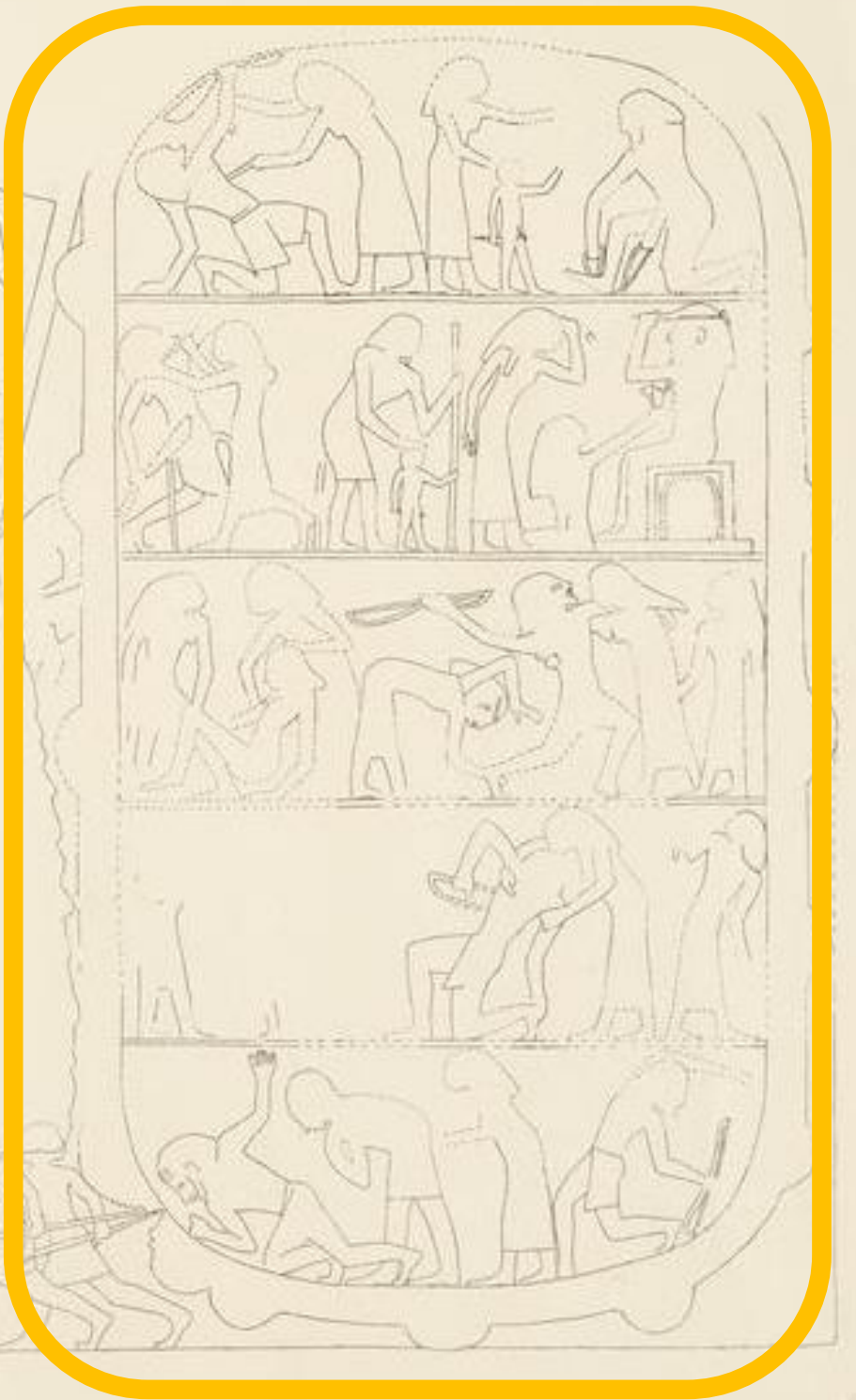
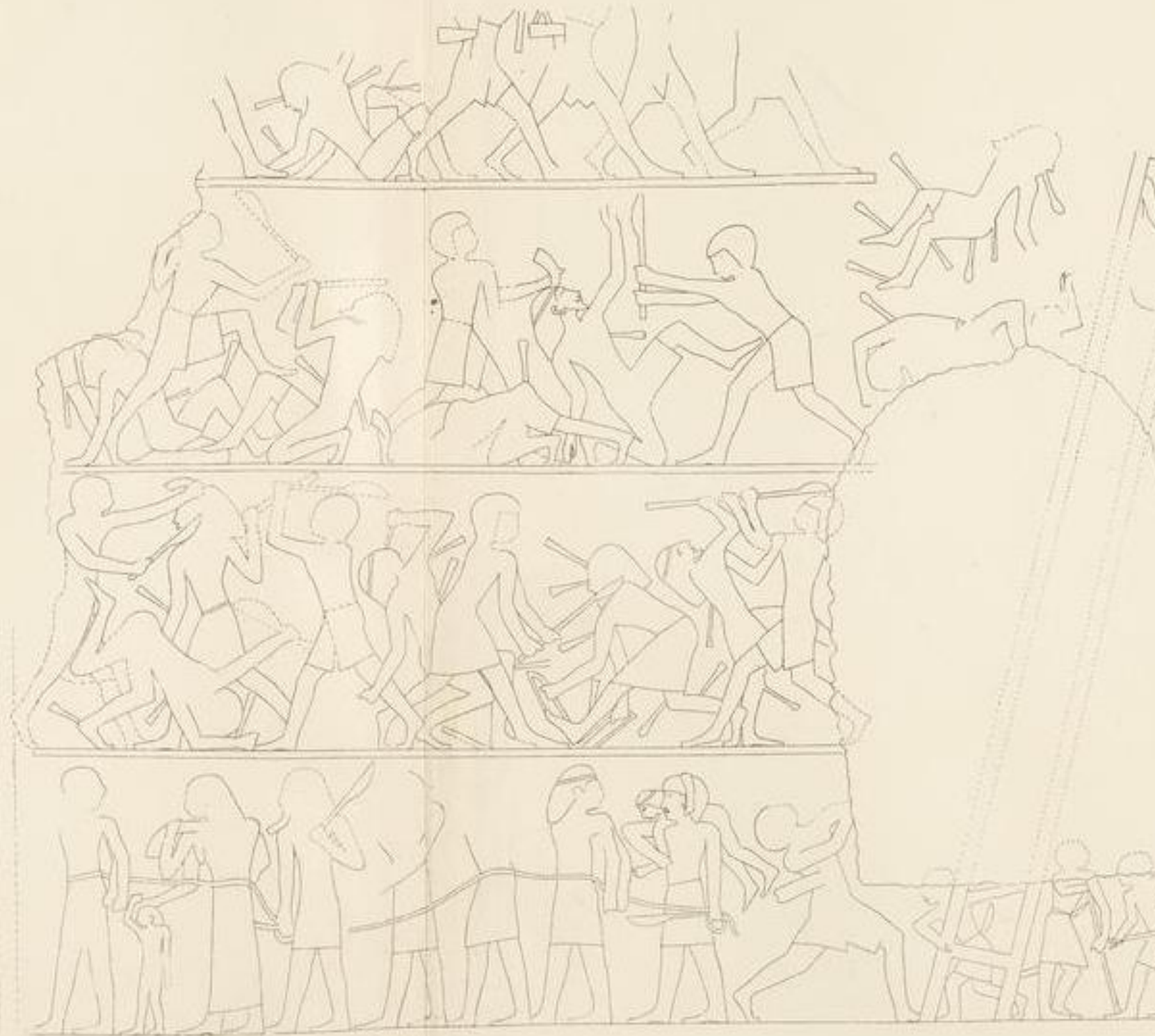
□ Niankhkhnum's wife – Khentikawes

- couple appears with three sons named Hem-re, Qed-unas and Khnumhezewef, and three daughters, Hemet-re, Khewiten-re and Nebet
- at least one grandson is attested, Irin-akheta, the son of Hem-re and his wife, Tjeset.

□ Khnumhotep's wife – Khenut

professions

- Examples OK
 - Military service (Deshasheh – 4th dyn. Women stabbing enemies)



professions

- Examples OK
 - Military service (Deshasheh – 4th dyn. Women stabbing enemies)
- Examples MK
 - Hairdresser and barbers
 - Barbers often male
 - Hairdressers both sexes – hairdresser had higher social standing

D11 Tomb Queen Nofru hairstresser Inu

