

Unit 9 – Models

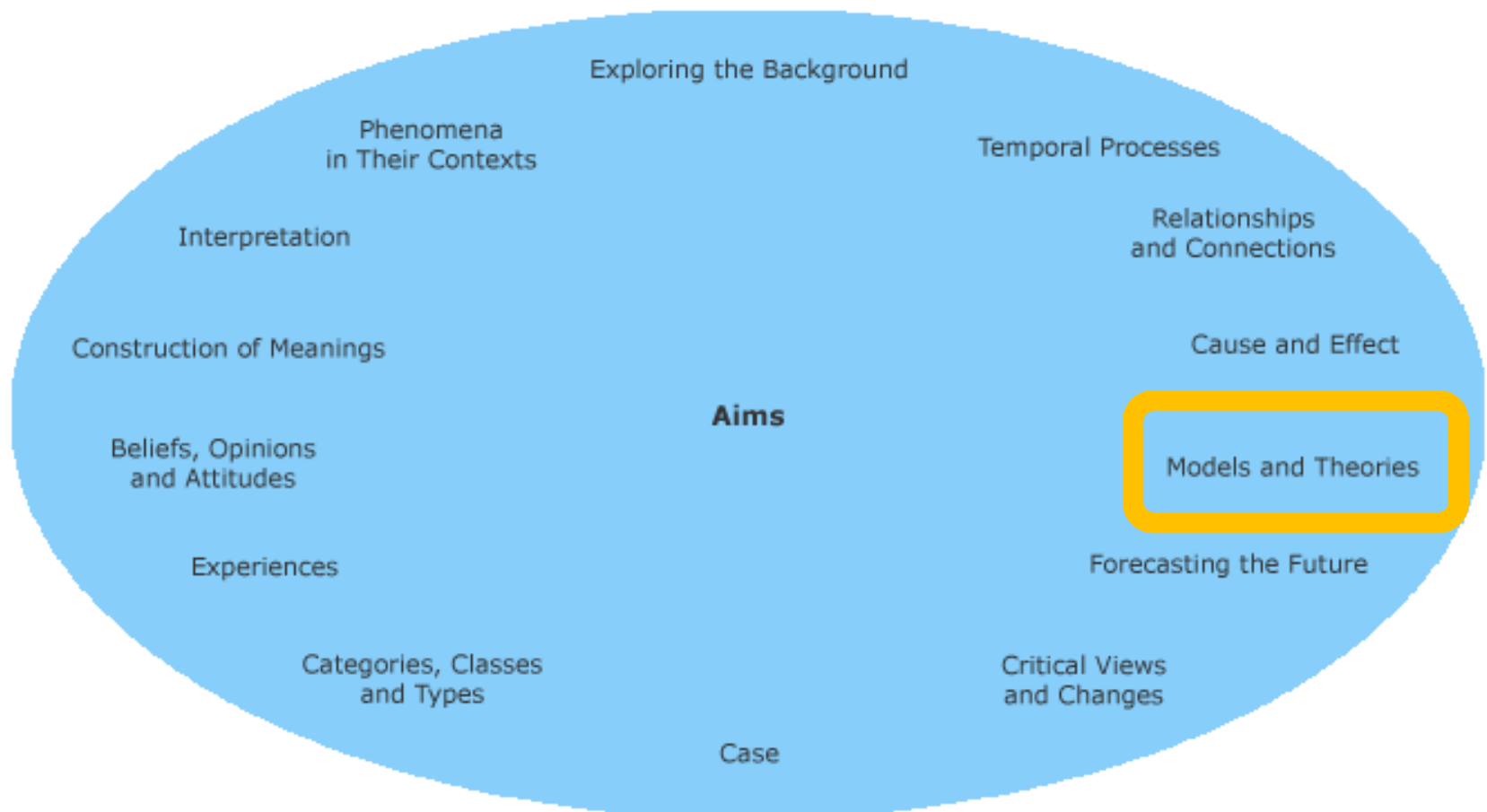
Religion of past civilisations

HPAH7011: Culture, Theory and Methodology
for the Study of the Ancient World

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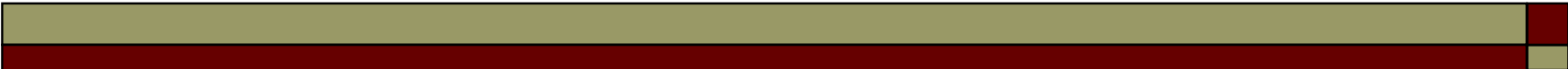
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When starting with your research project...



Theorising religion in the past: Theoretical models

- ❑ Humanities: researchers often form a theoretical model, concept hierarchy or theoretical point of view on the researched phenomena
- ❑ Formation of a theory or a model may be based on criticism or development of existing theories or models
- ❑ Often realisation / observation – theoretical models, concepts or points of view on the chosen subject matter do not exist OR existing models are not applicable



Religion in the past

- focus on the social and cultural context within which religion functions
- That also includes
 - exploration of various social locations in which real people in antiquity practiced or interacted with their religious traditions
 - domestic cult
 - food production and consumption
 - temple worship
 - funerary practices/monuments
 - development of social networks
 - military cult
 - ancient medicine
 - etc.

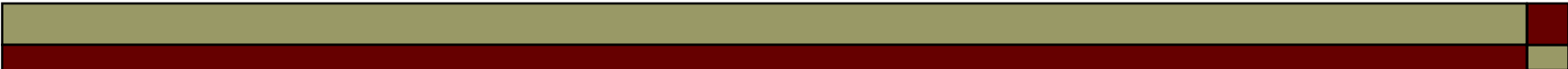
What is a methodology in religious studies? (in general)

- interpretive models on which the analysis of religious phenomena and resources are discussed
- Methodologies provide a lens of analysis from which to view the field of religious studies – three common one:
 - Philosophy of Religion (Phenomenology)
 - study of religious communities (Functionalism)
 - study of all aspects of the beliefs, practices, and experiences of the followers of a particular religion (Lived Religion)
- many subsets within these fields and other methodologies in combination to study a particular faith



Religious studies and the past

- ❑ religious studies inherently engaged in the study of the religious life of other people
- ❑ DISCUSS what are the difficulties with this in the past
- ❑ → use the FORUM of this week for this



Religious studies and the past

- ❑ religious studies inherently engaged in the study of the religious life of other people
- ❑ by focussing on studies of architecture or texts, organizations, rituals → always engagement with the people who have and do express their religious lives using these texts, actions and artifacts
- ❑ THEREFORE - as researchers, we gather, analyse, organize, interpret, translate, re-present and communicate information about religions
- ❑ = several overlapping conversations (actual, assumed, implied or imagined) with different “authors” / audiences past and present



Religion:

- What is religion?
 - the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods
 - BUT controversial subject in religious studies with scholars failing to agree
- What was religion in the past?
 - Even more difficult
 - Modern interpretation only limited in their application
 - Only able to be tackled if other phenomena are taken into consideration

What is the religious model in Ancient Egypt?

- And... in no particular order

- Religion
- Magic
- Gods
- Myth/Mythology
- Ritual
- Theology
- Cult
- Priests
- Temples/Chapels, Shrines/Sacred Landscapes
- **All dependent on time, culture, place**

- 
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- **All dependent on time, culture, place**
 - Therefore
 - E. Teeter. 2011. Religion and Ritual in AE
 - → first chapter: The Egyptian Mind

CAREFUL

- modern mind acts depending on our theological understanding, not depending the original civilisation
 - magic often seen as opposite to religion or, at best, early stage of religion → describing actions or knowledge relating to the supernatural or the demonic, but not the divine
 - BUT: ancient Egyptians: never perceived magic as “black art” or “sorcery,” in conflict with “white” or “pure” religion – magic as a tool
- Depending on specifics of discipline – f.i. Egyptology: took long before acceptance interdependence of religion, magic, and sciences (medicine)

Case Study

SACRED LANDSCAPES

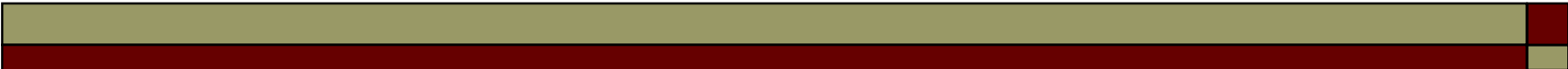


Natural Landscape – Ritual Landscape – Sacred Landscape

- Landscape has a neutral, binary relationship between people and nature
- Space =
 - Medium for human activity
 - Outcome of human activity
- Creates specific places → which do NOT exist apart from that activity

Landscape – Ritual(istic) landscape

- Actively inhabited space → formed!
- → especially landscape as arena for ritual or ceremonial activity
- As such = ideational or conceptual
 - Sacred landscape
 - With notion as a stage, repeatedly (re-) constructed by the people inhabit the landscape
→ convey their intentions and meanings



How did the ancient civilisations deal with religious landscapes?

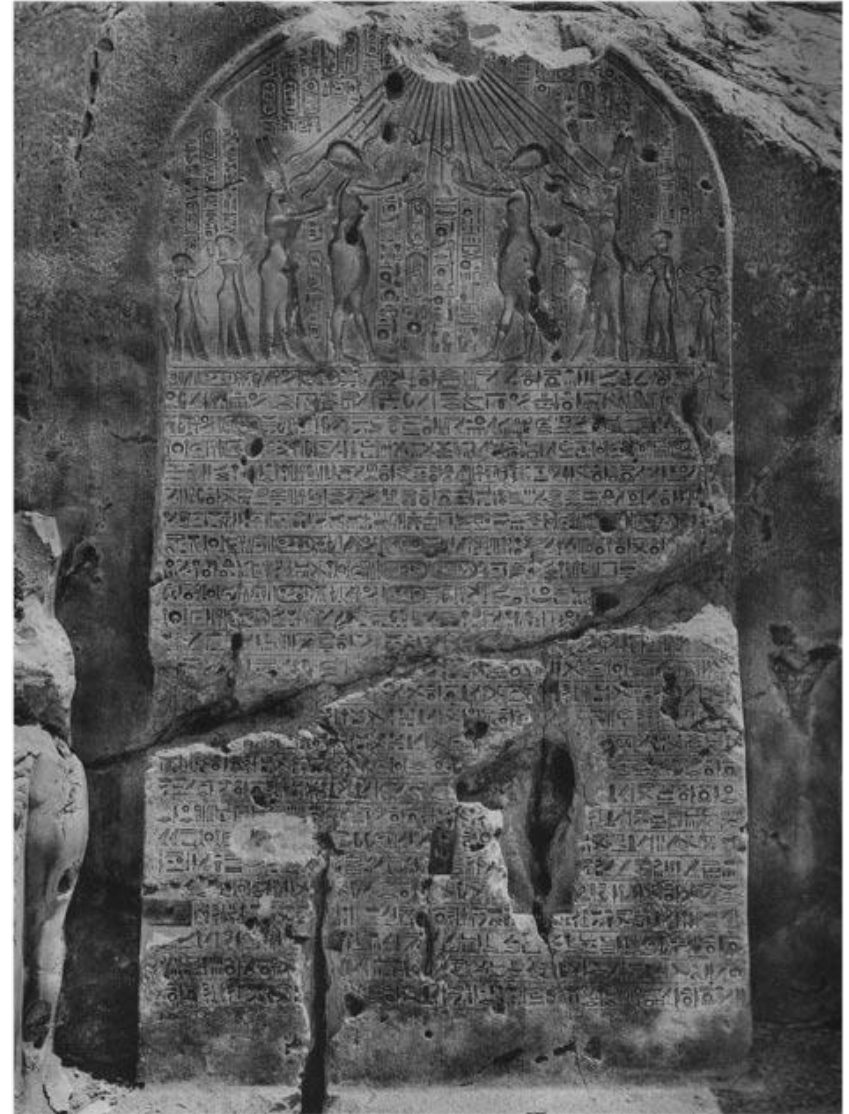
- ❑ Formalised approach?
- ❑ Deviation from the template?
- ❑ Shared approaches between cultures?
- ❑ Let's have a look at ancient Egypt...

Case 1: Amarna (ca. 1300BC) – CREATION



The Boundary Stelae

- The establishment of the city of Akhet-Aten (Amarna) as an act of creation
- 15 rock-cut stela recording proclamations made by Akhenaten, RY 5 (M,X), 6, and 8
- Text describes the “discovery” of the *akhet* of the Aten



Theological motivations for choosing the site of a new capital - Amarna

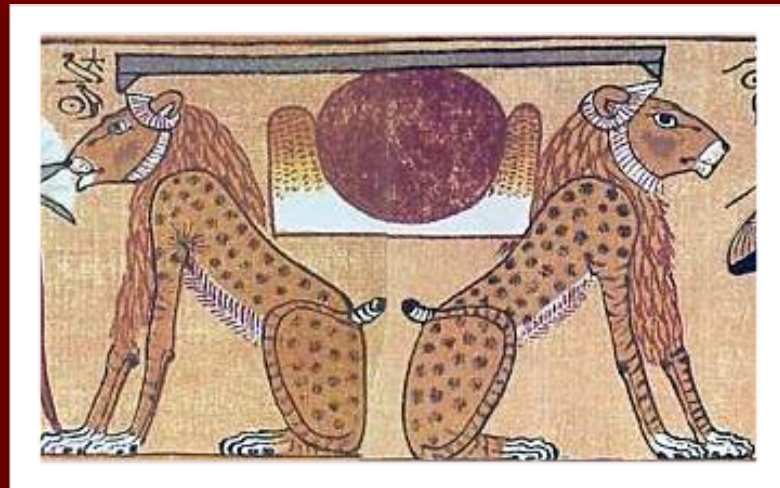


- Topography

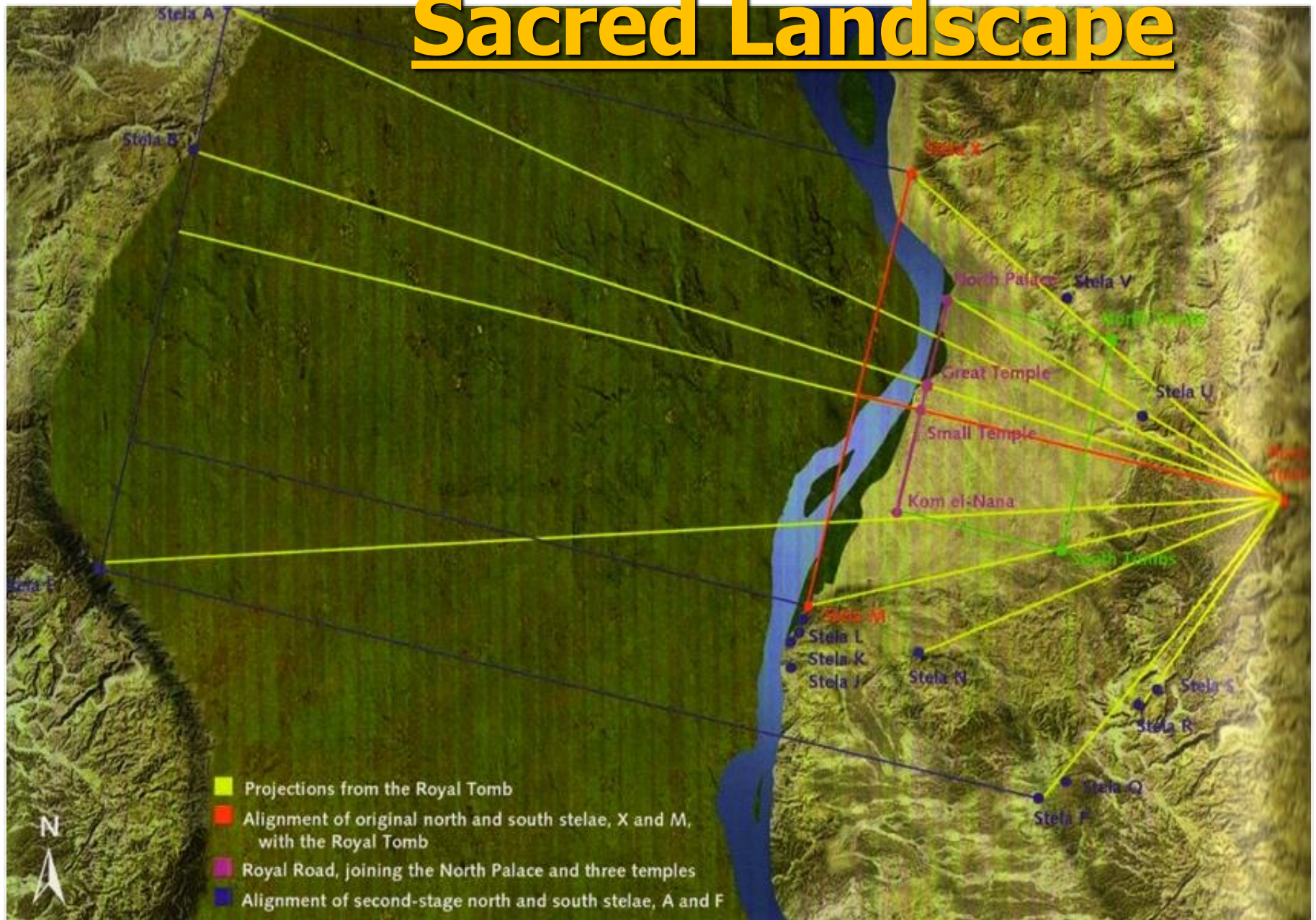
- large, flat area in the desert; plenty of room to build
- close to Nile and farming

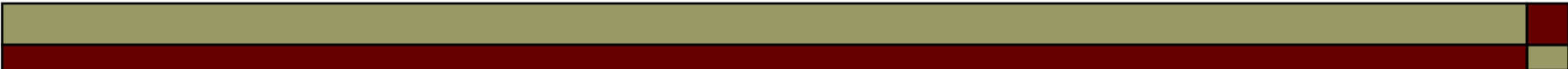


- Solar symbolism:
Akhet-Aten =
“Horizon of the Solar Disk” → establish the new god



Sacred Landscape





The Boundary Stela Proclamation

- ❑ At Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make the House of Aten for the Aten, my father.
- ❑ At Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make the Mansion of Aten for the Aten, my father.
- ❑ At Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make the sunshade of the [Great Royal] Consort [Nefernefruaten Nefertiti] for the Aten, my father.
- ❑ In the “Island of Aten, whose jubilees are distinguished” at Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make the “House of Rejoicing” for the Aten, my father.
- ❑ In the “Island of Aten, whose jubilees are distinguished” at Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make the “House of Rejoicing in [Akhet]-Aten” for the Aten, my father. [. . .]
- ❑ (And) at Akhet-Aten in this place shall I make for myself the residence of Pharaoh (and) I shall make the residence of the Great Royal Consort.

Case 2: Abydos (3500

BC – 500AD) –

CONSERVATION





WESTERN DESERT

Temple of
Senusret III

ROYAL
TOMBS

Aha

PUNERARY
ENCLOSURES

BOAT
GRAVES

Khasekhemwy
(Shunet el-Zebib)

Aha

Temple of
Seti I

Temple of
Ramses II

Harbor

Connector Canal

Temple of Osiris

To Nile River
5 mi (8 km)

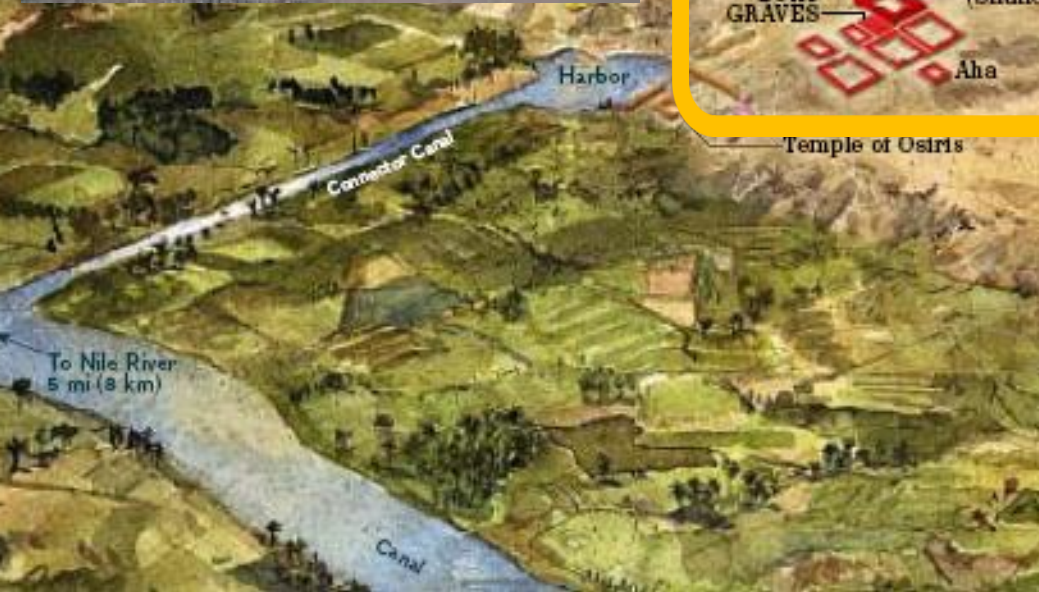
Canal

ANCIENT ABYDOS

- Early Dynastic
(1st-3rd dynasties)
ca 2950-2575 B.C.
- Middle Kingdom
(11th-13th dynasties)
ca 1975-1640 B.C.
- New Kingdom
(18th-20th dynasties)
ca 1539-1075 B.C.
- Late Period
(25th-31st dynasties)
ca 715-332 B.C.

Scale varies in this perspective.
Distance from royal tombs
to funerary enclosures is
1.2 miles (1.9 kilometers).

ART BY RICHARD SCHLESCHT
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAY 8



Umm el-Qaab

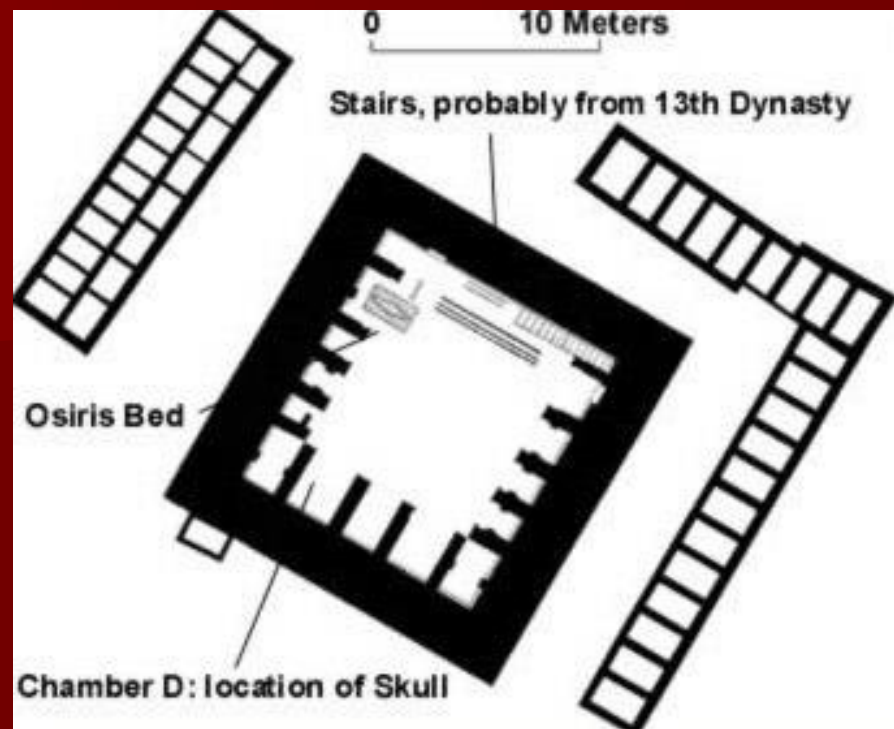


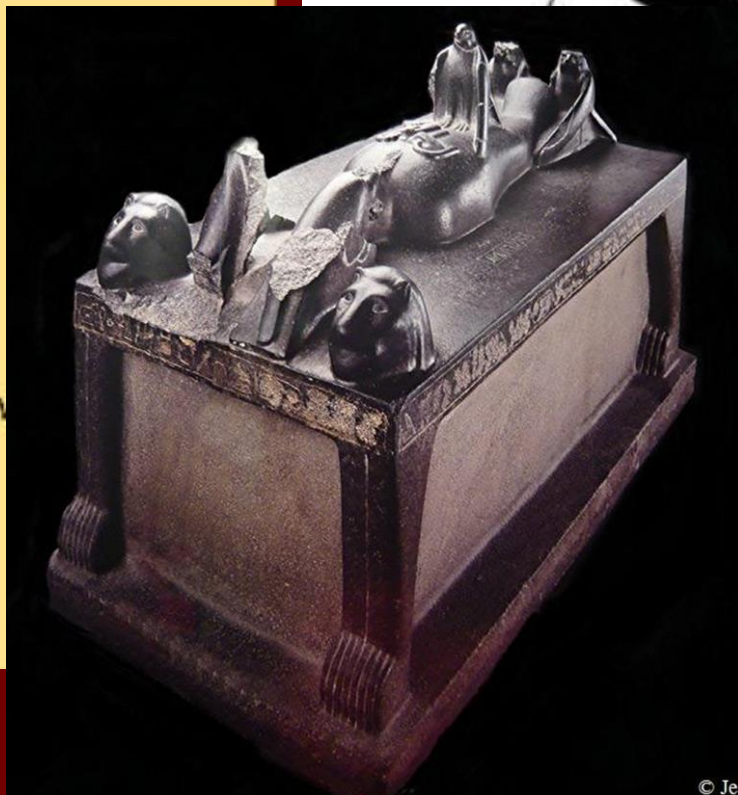
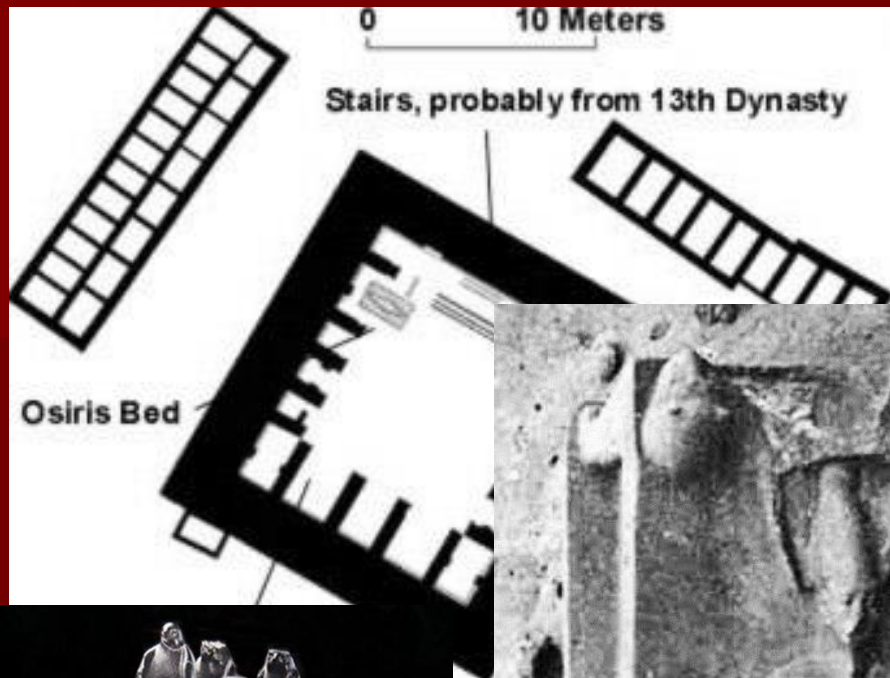
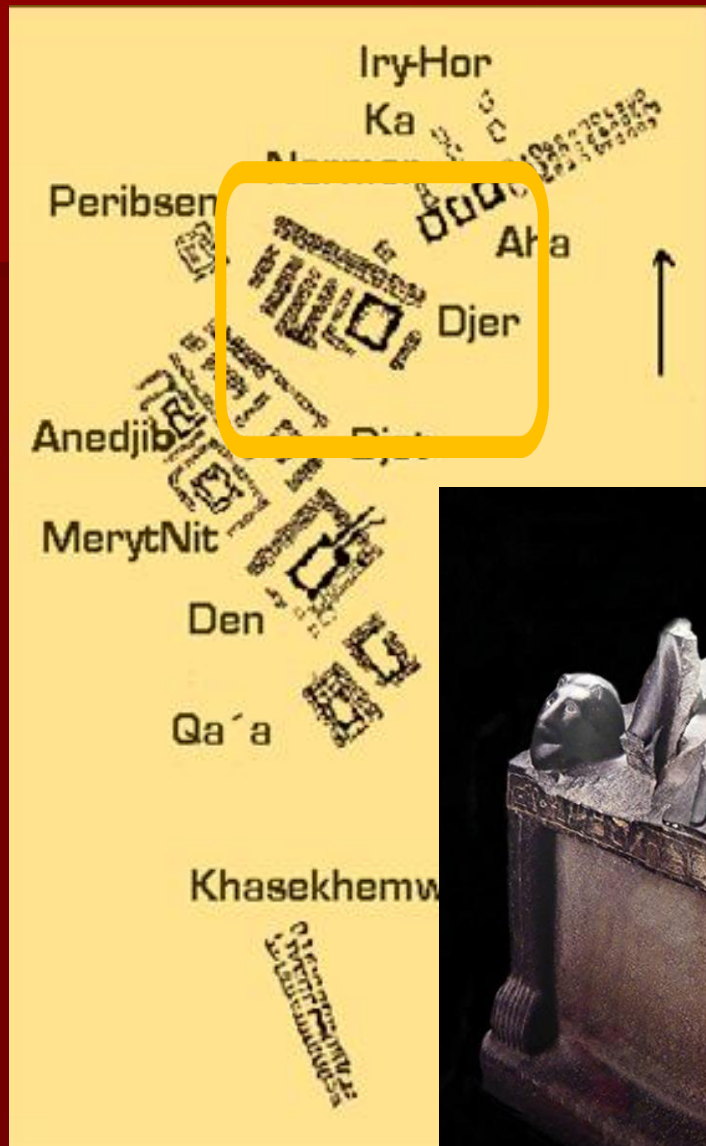
- 'Mother of Pots'
- excavated by Petrie (late 19th and early 20th c.)
- 2 cemeteries
- **U**: Predynastic, many tombs and offering pits
- **B**: royal burial place Early Dynastic Period, → large funerary structures, some with satellite burials for servants

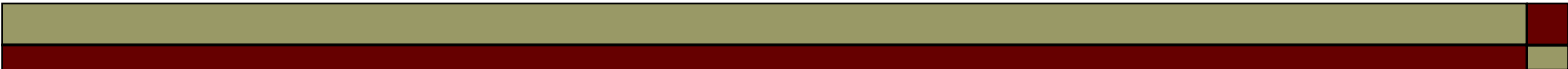
Umm el-Qaab and South Hill

- Mounds of sherds: cups, bowls, pottery smashed or deposited as offerings for Osiris
- MK: pilgrimage center – priests proclaimed tomb of Djer (1st dyn.) as the burial place of Osiris, god of the dead
- → annual festival honoring the death and resurrection of Osiris



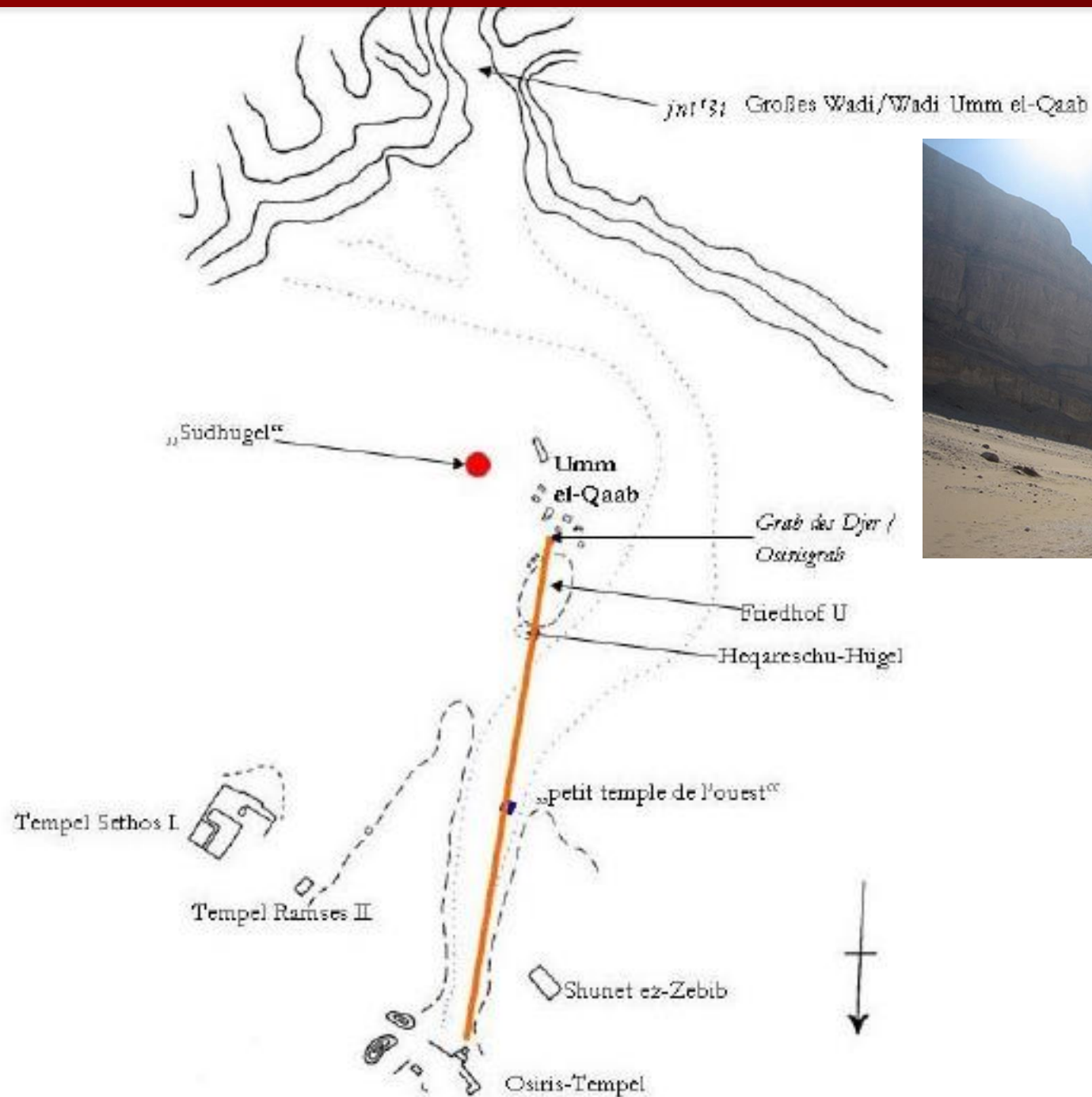






The Cult of Osiris at Abydos

- ❑ major festival from Middle Kingdom onwards, centred around burial and rejuvenation of Osiris and for all the blessed dead
- ❑ Celebrated as boat procession – cult-statue sitting in a ritual boat carried by priests, went in procession from temple to his supposed tomb at Umm el-Qa'ab ('mother of pots')
- ❑ two fundamental components
 - public section: divine image passed through cemetery
 - private section: in desert –secret rites concerning the mysteries and passion of Osiris were performed



Assumed
processional
route in
Abydos

Abydos Stelae BM EA 567 (12th dyn.)



lengthy adoration
caption before
the figure of the
Amenemhet

Abydos stela BM EA 581: from offering chapel of Inyotef, 12th dyn.



- Kissing the ground of Khentamentiu, seeing the beauty of Wep-wawut, by the Chamberlain Intef; he says:
- As to this shrine, I made (it) in the desert of Abydos, this island to which one clings, walls designed by the All-Lord, seat hallowed since the time of Osiris.

Participation in processions

reviving the sacred landscape

- People wished to see cult image of the gods, often referred to as their *splendour*
- procession crossed the terrace before descending into a wadi (*the sacred land*)
- god then proceeded out into the desert on the *god's boat-journey*  *ḥt nfr* to *Poker*  *ptk* where divine mysteries and rites were performed
- Deceased wished to participate in them
 - directly - through *seeing*, *adoring*, *kissing the ground*, or *giving praise* to the god
 - having offerings made to the deceased a such times

Ritual journey to Abydos as fictional and real pilgrimage



**facsimile
painting by
Charles K.
Wilkinson from
tomb of Païry
(TT 139) at
Thebes, 18th dyn.**

**Relief from tomb of
vizier Nespeqashuty
(Deir el-Bahri), LP
(Psamtik I) (dead
vizier + wife KetjKetj)**



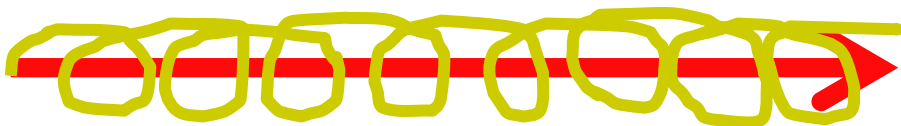
Comparison: sacred sites as dwellings

Abydos

- Creation: in mythic time (ritualistic place of predynastic kings)
- Existence: recreated over 3500 years as sacred, ritualistic, spiritual, royal and funerary landscape → innovatively conserved, dwelling
- Time relevance: incorporated in and applied to cyclical time

Amarna

- Creation: as expression of a planned theology of the light in 18th dyn.
- Existence: as *social construct* (sacred and royal, but NOT spiritual) only, not a lived landscape (re-creation via activity is missing)
- Time relevance: single act of creation, fully connected with the name of Akhenaten as part of the divine triad



Definition of LANDSCAPE:

- Clearly defined – intentionally designed and created
- Associative cultural: outstanding geographical landscapes receive symbolic meaning and evolve into sacred places
- Organically evolved: either socio-economic, religious or administrative; in response with natural environment
- Memory
- Identity

Amarna	Abydos
✓	✓
✓ Created	✓
	✓ Conserved
Suppressed	Lived
Attempted to apply	applied

Re-interpretation / extension of sacred landscapes

- ❑ landscape is NOT static, not permanent
- ❑ Adapted to additional needs which can be incorporated into the original driver to establish this site → sacred spaces as dwellings (Ingold)
- ❑ Application of second layers of identity beyond the original territorial organisation → creates an extended territorial organisation

Sacred Landscapes: keeping the spirit alive?

- Sacred landscapes needs more than only to be created (socially constructed)
- → cyclically (ritually) renewed → (re-) constructed via activity and communication with the site
 - Recreated via ritual activity
 - Lived in/with, also spiritually
 - Communicated with
- Constant giving of meaning

Sacred Landscapes: keeping the spirit alive?

- Constant giving of meaning
- Space has to be reflected, stored and remembered in *cultural memory* of a civilization (following Jan Assmann's approach)
 - For ancient Egypt: transferred in cyclical time stream of renewal/regeneration
- What we today should call *heritage* → but: Did the ancient Egyptian have an awareness of “heritage”?