

G14 (week 4, Tuesday)

Gender and Sexuality: Homosexuality, Heterosexuality, creation myths

HPAH5013/6013 – Gendered Lives in Ancient
Egypt

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Heritage

Additional readings

- ❑ Parkinson, R. (2008). Boasting about hardness: constructions of Middle Kingdom masculinity. In: Graves-Brown, C. (Ed.). *Sex and Gender in Ancient Egypt*. Swansea: Classical Press of Wales. pp. 115-142.
- ❑ Green, L. (2001) 'In Search of Ancient Egyptian Virgins: A Study in Comparative Values', *JSSEA* 28: **90-98**.
- ❑ Meskell, L. (2000) 'Re-em(bed)ding sex: domesticity, sexuality, and ritual in New Kingdom Egypt', in *Archaeologies of Sexuality*. (eds., Schmidt, R. A. and B. L. Voss), London, New York: Routledge: 253-262.
- ❑ Parkinson, R.B. (1995) "'Homosexual" Desire and Middle Kingdom Literature', *JEA* 81: **57–76**.
- ❑ Robins, G. (1988) 'Ancient Egyptian Sexuality', *DE* 11: **61-72**.



Attitudes of Egyptians to sex (Herodot)

The women urinate in a standing position, whereas the men sit down. They relieve themselves indoors and eat in the street, and they give as reason for this the fact that things unseemly should be performed in private, but things not unseemly should be done in the open. The Egyptians and those who have learnt it from them are the only ones to perform circumcision.

Circumcision



- Egyptian boys being circumcised from the tomb of the Vizier Ankhmahor Early Sixth Dynasty

Attitudes of Egyptians to sex

The women urinate in a standing position, whereas the men sit down. They relieve themselves indoors and eat in the street, and they give as reason for this the fact that things unseemly should be performed in private, but things not unseemly should be done in the open. The Egyptians and those who have learnt it from them are the only ones to perform circumcision. Every man has two garments, every woman just one. They are particularly careful always to wear clean linen. They circumcise for reasons of cleanliness more than seemliness. Their priests shave their bodies every second day, so that no lice nor any other pollution should contaminate them in the service of the god. . . . They wash with cold water twice during the day and twice during the night. (II. 35–7)¹

Attitudes of Egyptians to sex

- ❑ (nearly) all, Herodotus has to say about sexual matters!
- ❑ Does this mean, that sex took place indoors?
- ❑ Was it therefore unseemly?
- ❑ Or simply private?
- ❑ Other quote (II.64): *The Egyptians were the first to make it a matter of religious observance not to have intercourse with women in temples nor to enter a temple without washing after being with a woman.*

Attitudes of Egyptians to sex

- However, women and their sexuality have a place in religious rituals
- Diodorus (I.85):
 - *Putting on a state barge fitted out with a gilded cabin, they conduct it as a god to the sanctuary of Hephaestus at Memphis. During ... Forty days only women may look at it; these standing facing it, and pulling up their garments showing their genitals, but henceforth they are forever prevented from coming into the presence of this god.*



The goddess ***Isis-Aphrodite*** combined the ancient Egyptian deity with the Greek goddess of love in a form which became a popular throughout the ancient Mediterranean world.

Terracotta figurine, c. 100 BC.

University of Leipzig Museum

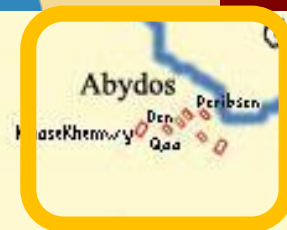
Attitudes of Egyptians to sex

- However, women and their sexuality have a place in religious rituals
 - See the (posthumous) conception of Horus

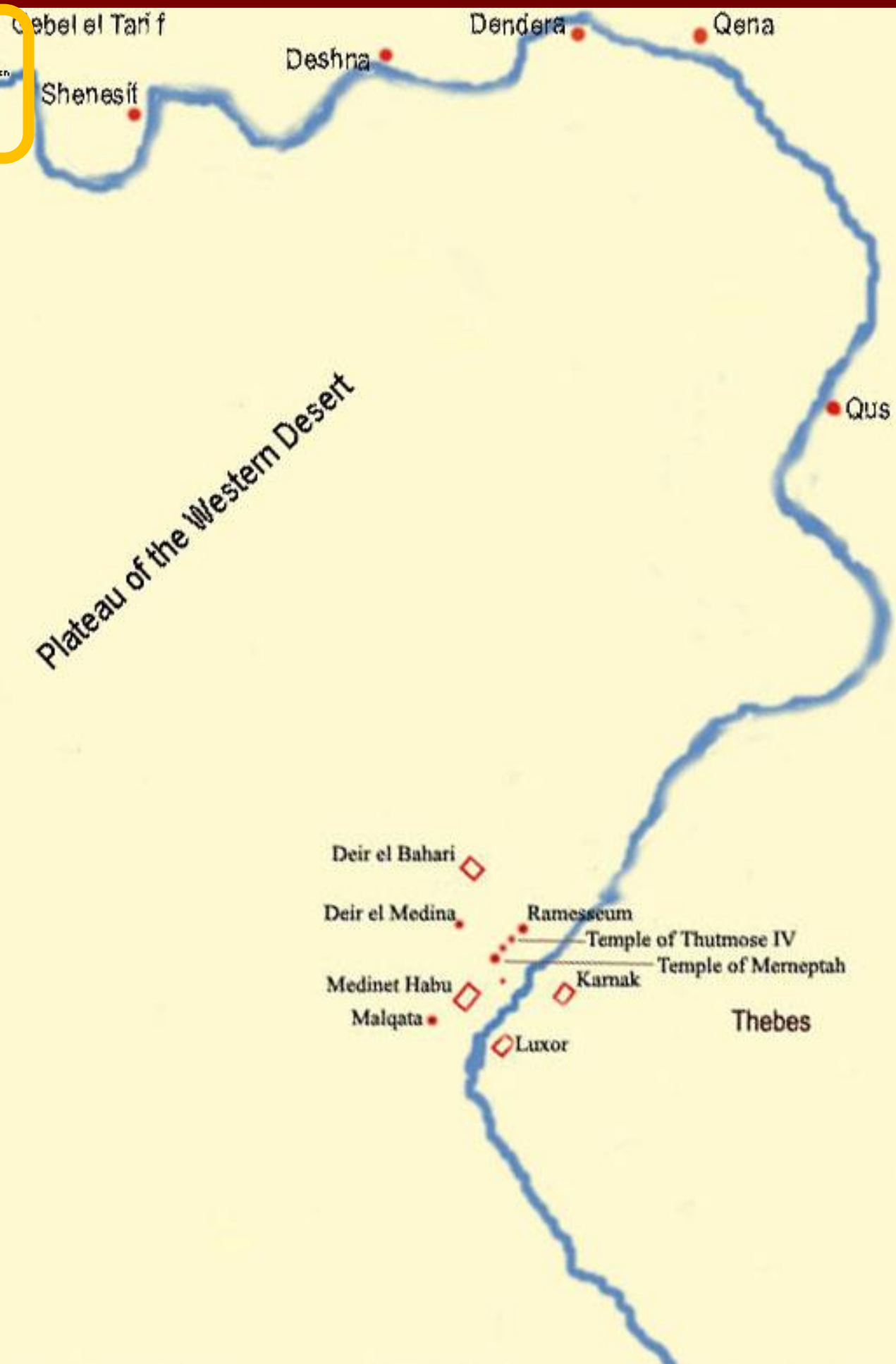
The conception of **Horus** by **Isis** in the form of a hawk flying above the deceased **Osiris**. Isis is attended by the birth goddess **Heket** in the form of a frog at the foot of the funerary bier. Roman Period.
Western roof chapel, temple of Hathor, Dendera.



Mediterranean Sea

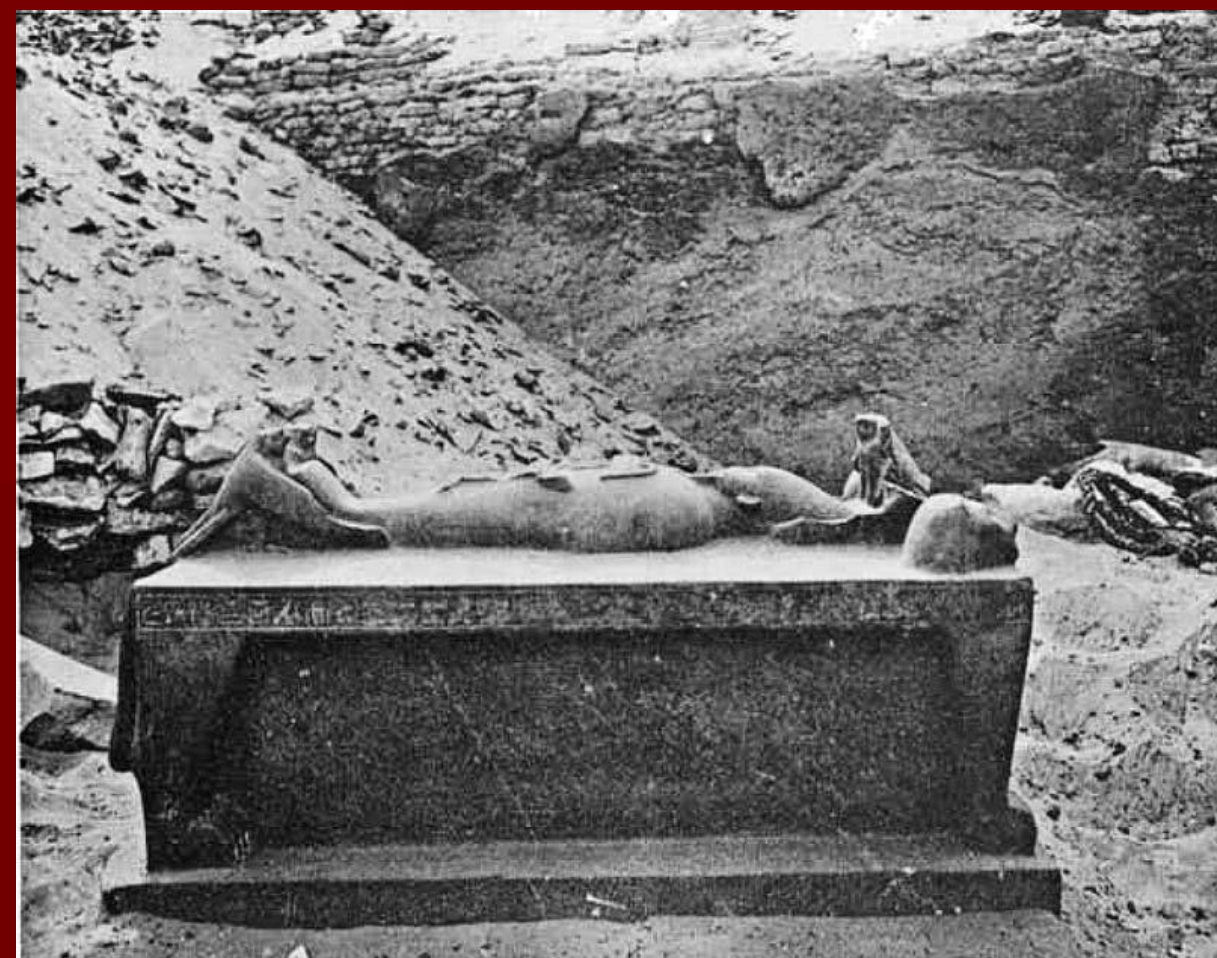
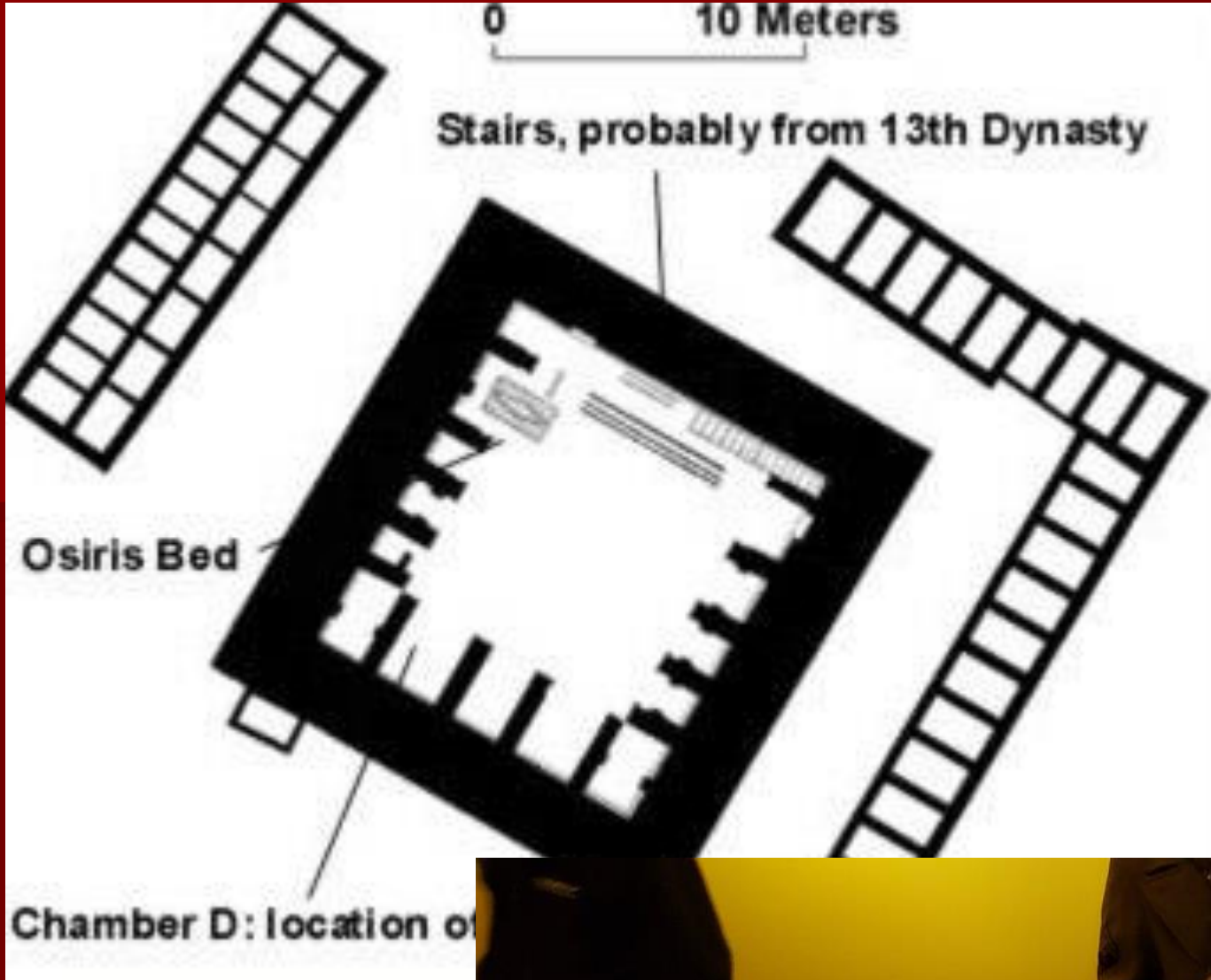


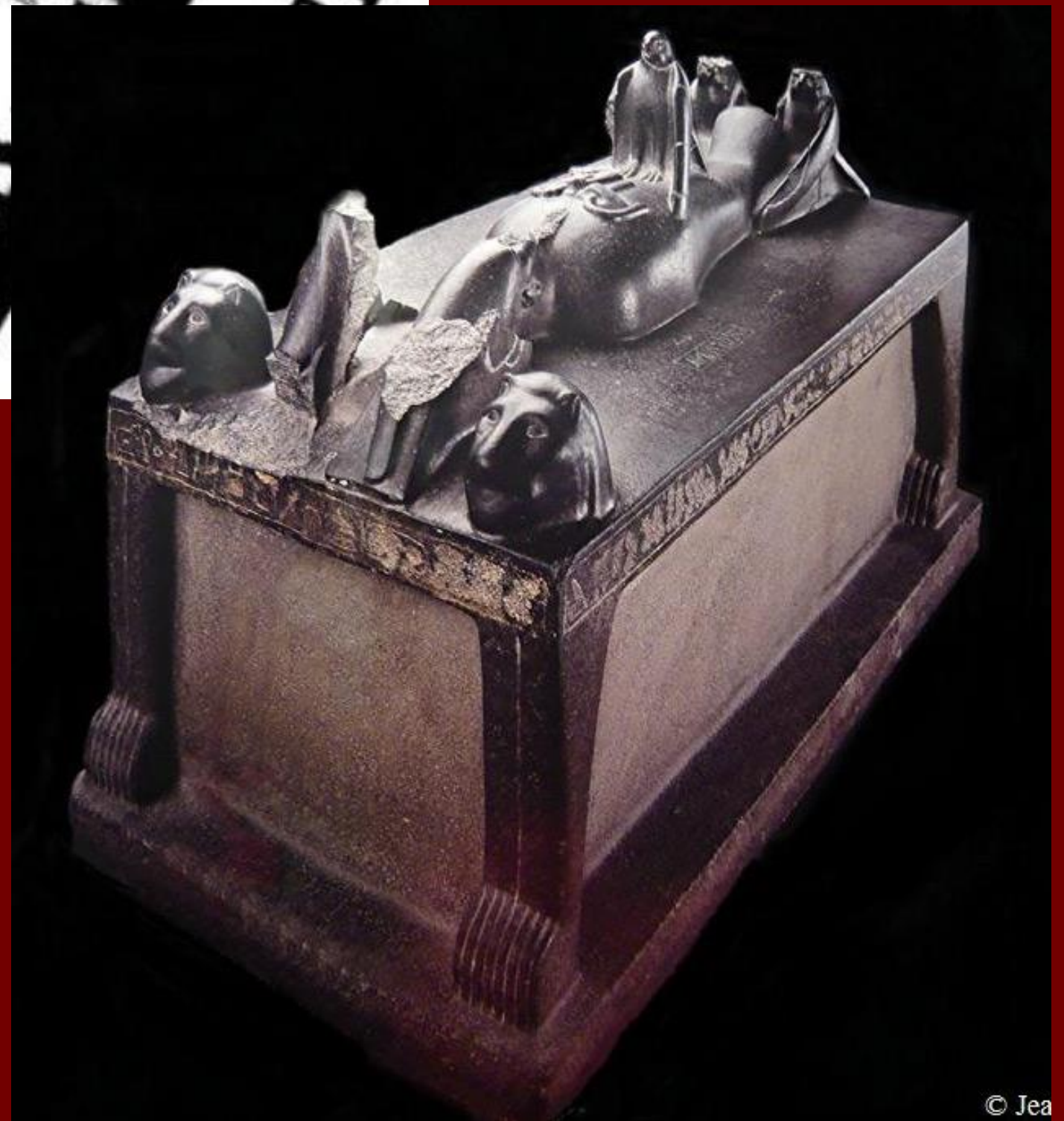
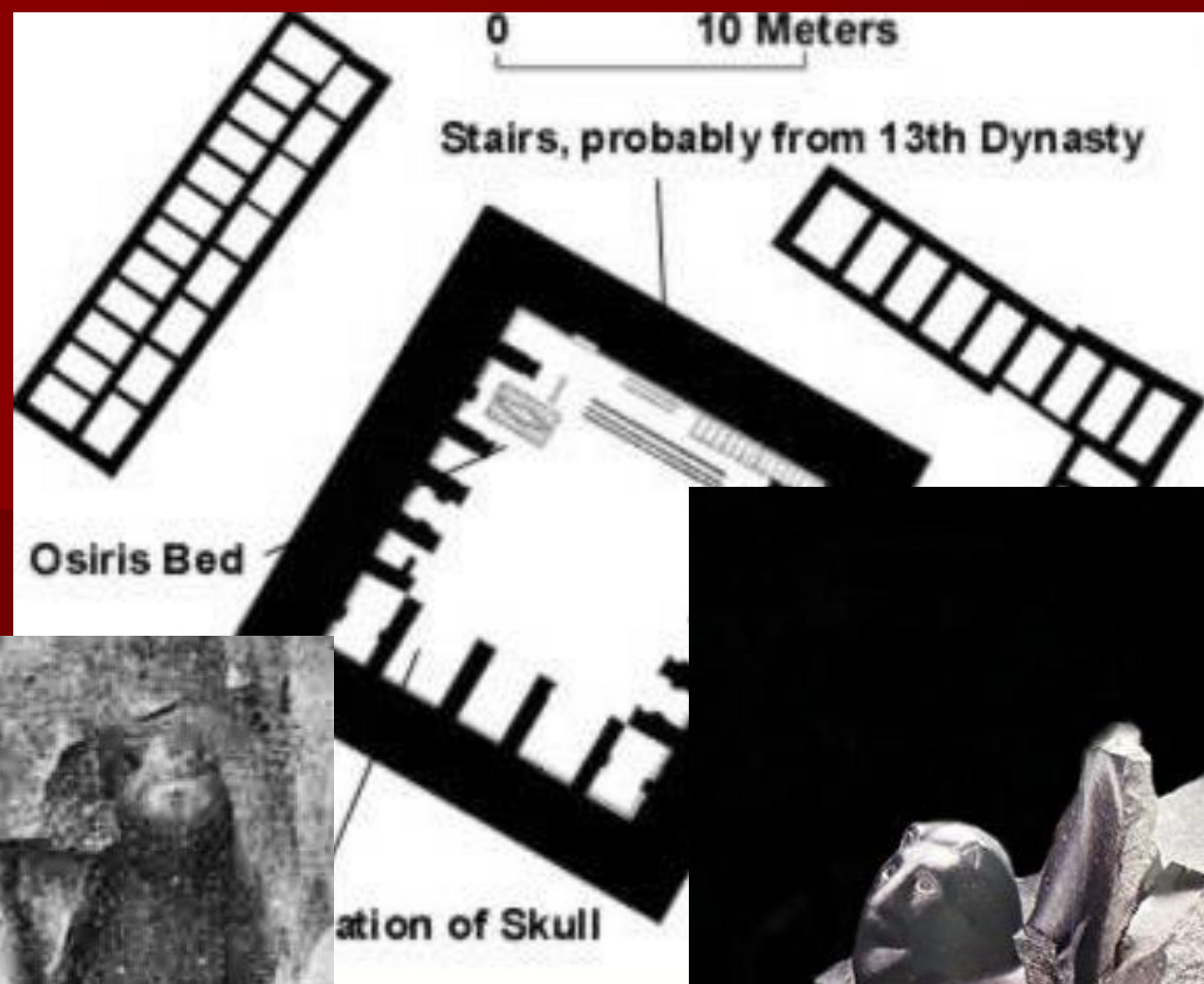
Plateau of the Western Desert



Djer







Attitudes of Egyptians to sex

- However, women and their sexuality seems to play in religious rituals
 - See the (posthumous) conception of Horus
 - → where is the difference between sexuality and fertility?
 - – is there one?
 - – could or should we differentiate?

EGYPTIAN TERRACOTTA PHALLIC FIGURES GRAECO-ROMAN PERIOD



Figure 1 [Papyrus British Museum 10018](#). The God is doing masturbation with his mouth (reproduced from Hussein^{[3](#)}).

Fertility figurines (Fitzwilliam)



MMA
10.130.2883

Female figurine
Naqada II



Ramesseum Statuette



Ostrakon, irregularly shaped, the sketch is damaged. To the left are two men, wearing short wigs, embracing each other. To the right is a sun disc with an uraeus surrounding it. Further to the right is a falcon wearing the double crown, the lower part of the bird is missing. Limestone.

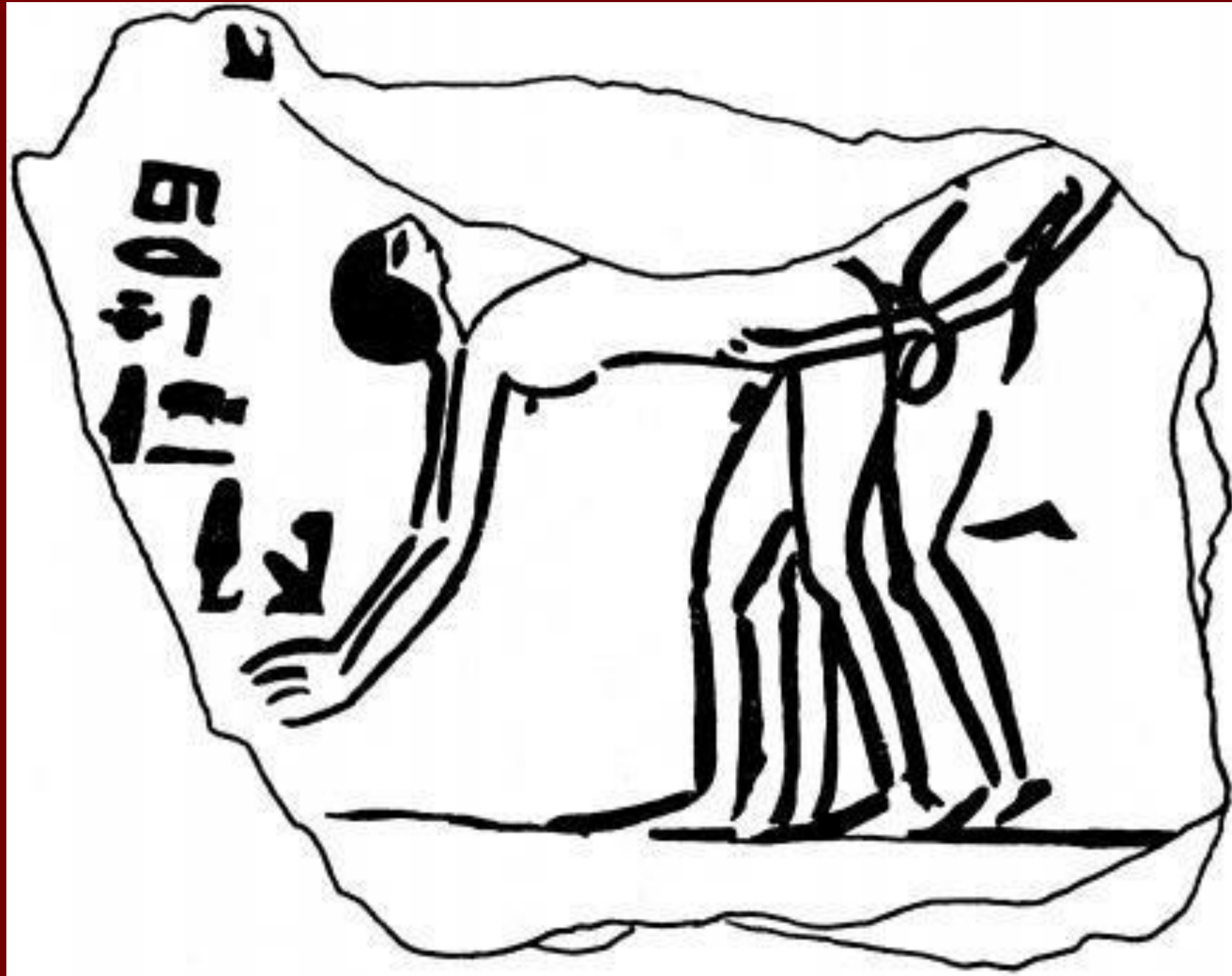


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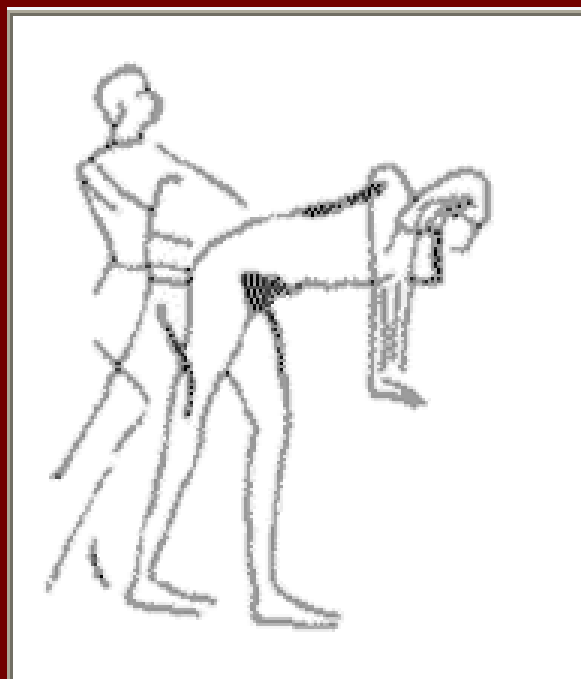


2

Ostracon no. 50714 in the British Museum.



Graffito Deir el Bahari: maybe Hatshepsut and Senenmut

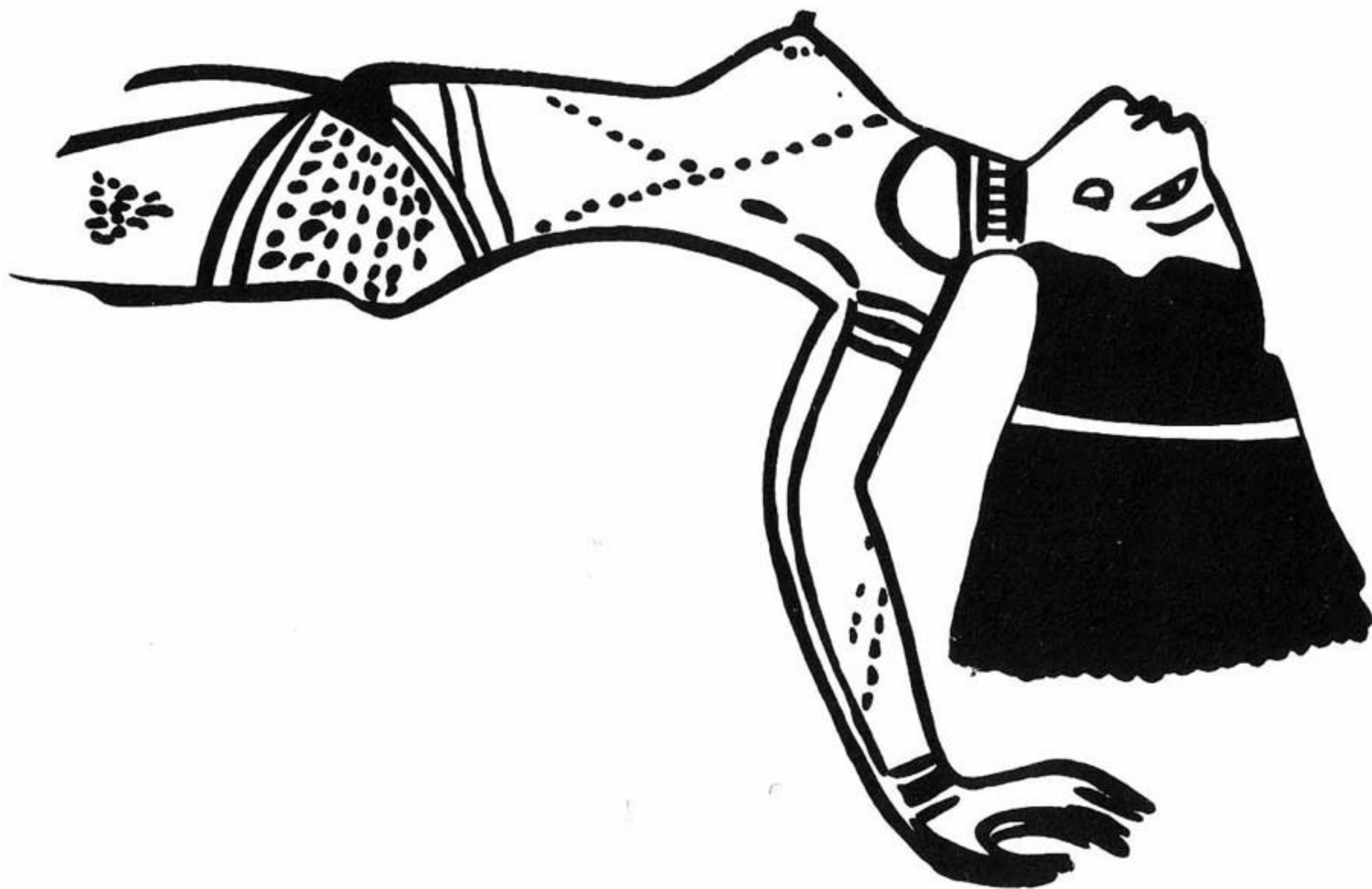


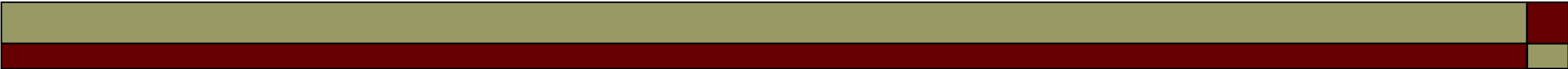
Attitudes of Egyptians to sex

□ Diodorus (I.85):

- *Putting on a state barge fitted out with a gilded cabin, they conduct it as a god to the sanctuary of Hephaestus at Memphis. During ... Forty days only women may look at it; these standing facing it, and pulling up their garments showing their genitals, but henceforth they are forever prevented from coming into the presence of this god.*

□ Is this a case of allowed “prostitution” and as such evidence for general prostitution?





Attitudes of Egyptians to sex

- Is this a case of allowed “prostitution” and as such evidence for general prostitution?

King Rhampsinitus bade his daughter to sit in a certain room and receive all alike who came; before she had intercourse with any, she should compel him to tell her what was the cleverest trick and the greatest crime of his life. (II. 121)





The erotic Turin Papyrus 55001

- ❑ Publication in 1973: J. Omlin, *Der Papyrus 55001 und seine Satirisch-Erotischen Zeichnungen und Inschriften*, Turin
- ❑ Dieter Kessler in 1988 – connects it with the Egyptian phrase – *spending/investing a beautiful day*
- ❑ Brawanski, A.; Fischer-Elfert, H.-W. 2012. Der „erotische“ Abschnitt des Turiner Papyrus 55001: Ein Lehrstück für das männliche Ego? in: *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 41(2012), 67-97. → teaching for the male ego?!
- ❑ Janak, J.; Navratilova, H. 2008. People vs. P. Turin 55001. In: Graves-Brown, C. (ed.). 2008. *Sex and Gender in Ancient Egypt*. Swansea: Classical Pr. of Wales, 63-70.





II

II

I



VI



V



IV



IX



VIII

VII



