

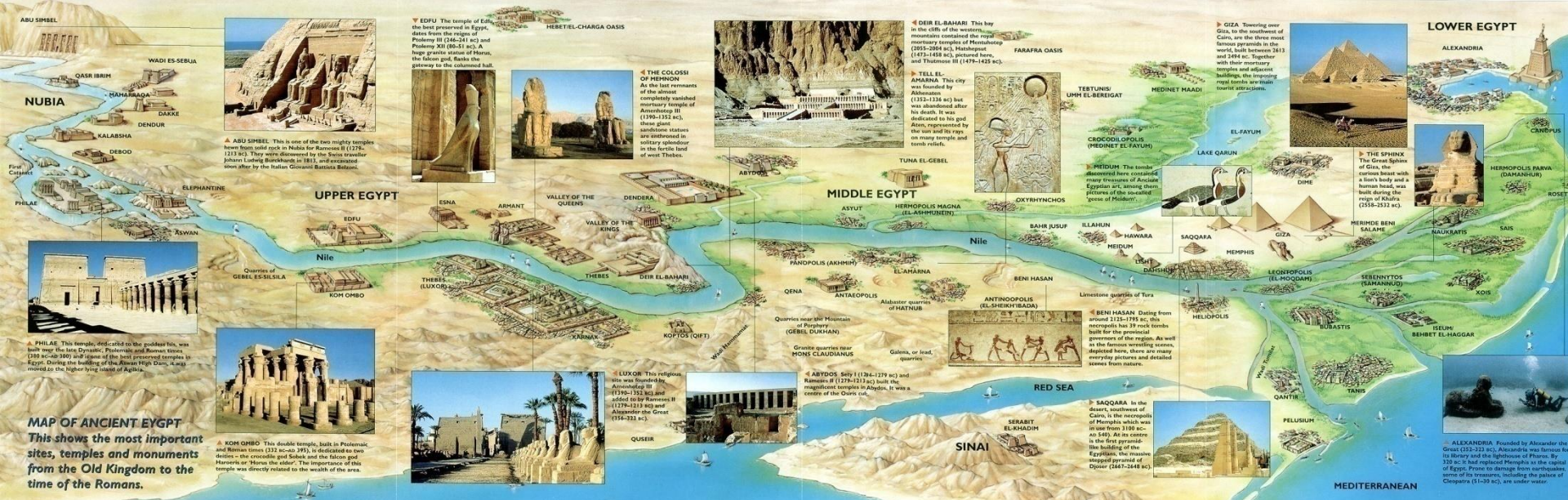
Humans and other animals: the shared Egyptian landscape

Wild creatures, pets, food, taboos

HPHP4016 Humans and other Animals

Dr Katharina Zinn

Ancient Egypt





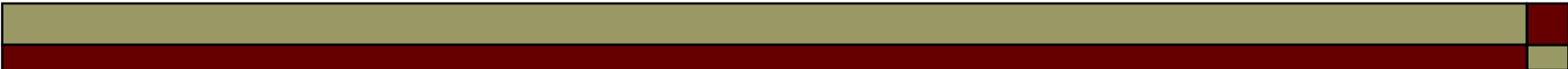
Nile and Desert



Geography and climate determine life



WILD CREATURES

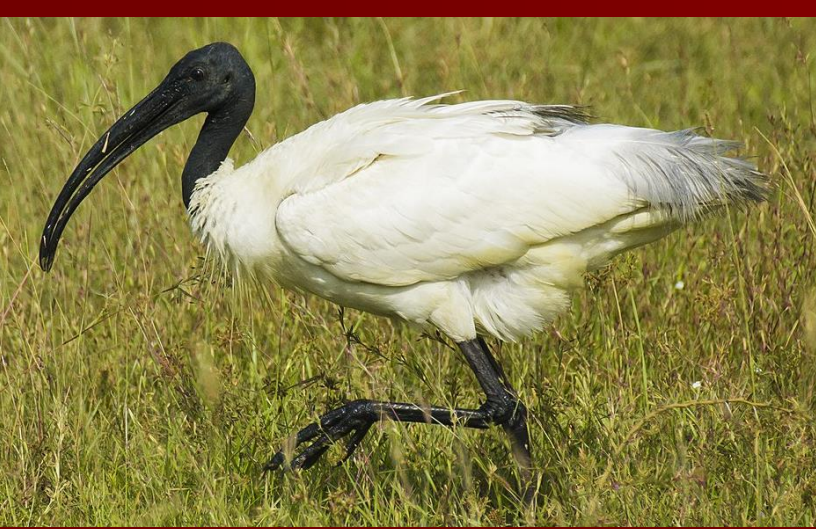


Which animals?

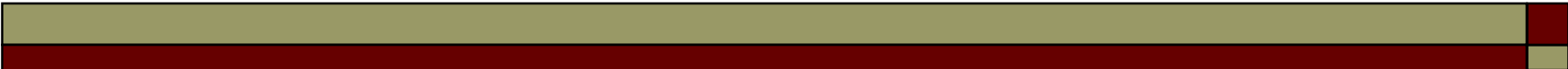
- Please type in the chat which animal(s) you are associating with Egypt – modern and ancient.











Which animals?

- ❑ Please type in the chat which animal(s) you are associating with Egypt – modern and ancient.
- ❑ Where do these animals live?

PUAM

Slate palette
(fish) and
mace-heads





Tomb Hierakonpolis 100



Paris, Louvre 290

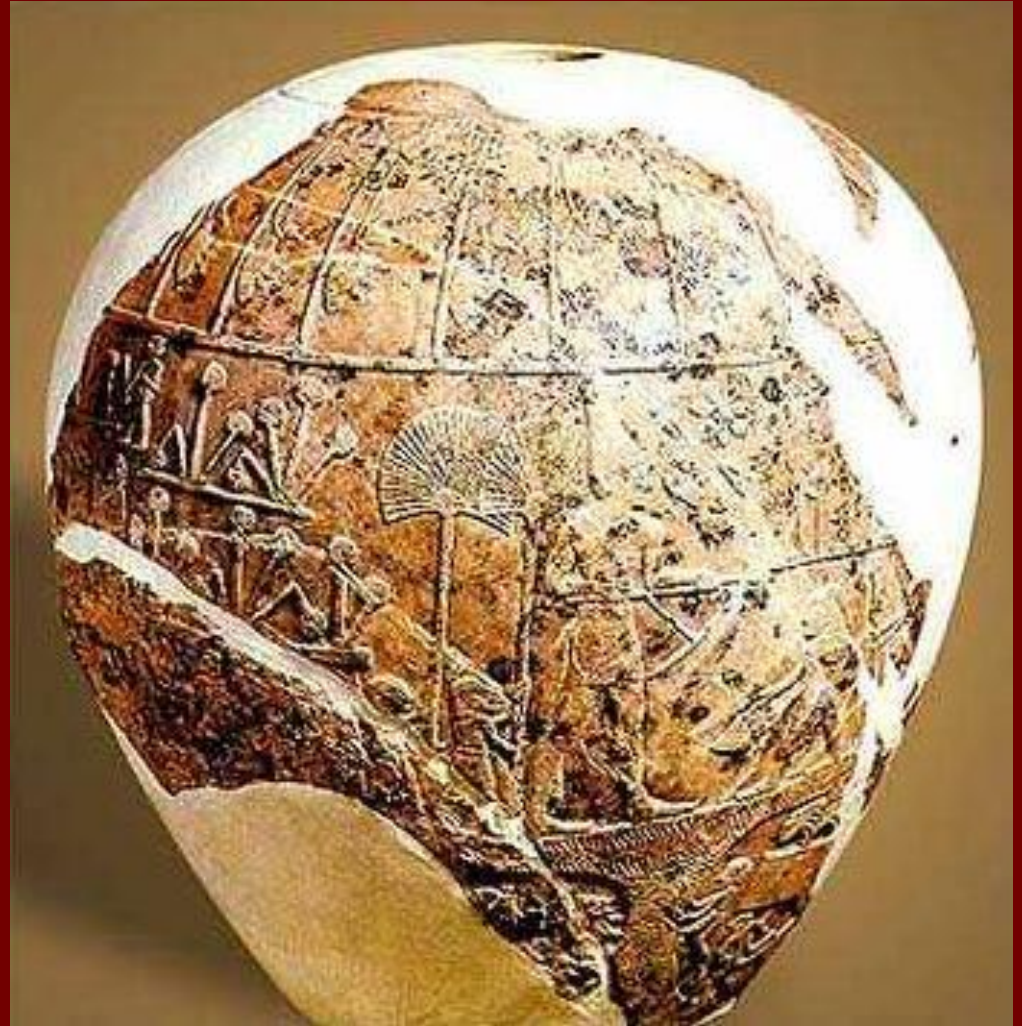
Limestone

Upper part stela, king
Wadj (dyn. 1)

One of a pair, set up
on east side of kings
tomb (offering place)



Performing rituals: King Scorpion (Ashmolean Macehead)



PETS

Pets at home and temples – what is a pet?

- ❑ domesticated dogs and cats to baboons, monkeys, fish, gazelles, birds (especially falcons), lions, mongoose, and hippos
- ❑ Crocodiles kept as sacred animals in the temples of the god Sobek
- ❑ domesticated animals of high value – just as popular and deeply loved as pets are in the present day



UC14318
(Koptos,
First
Intermediate
Period)

UC14318



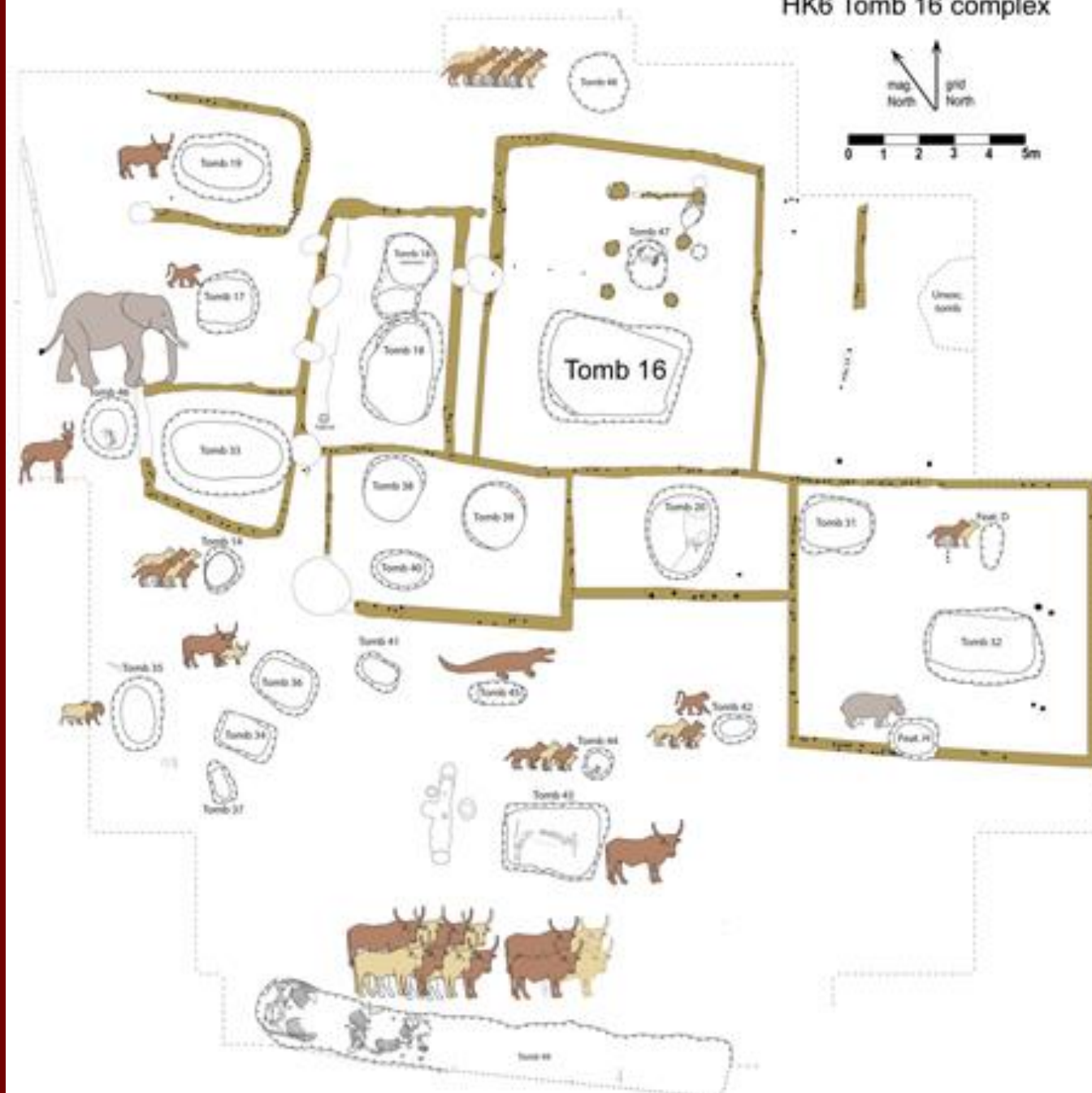
TT56 Userhat



Working relationship

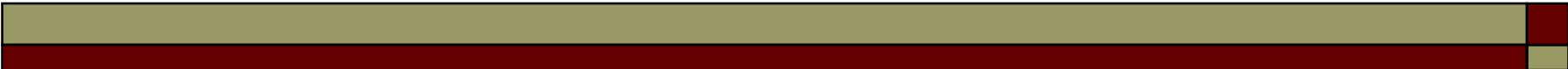


HK6 Tomb 16 complex



Hierakonpolis
(Nekhen)
predynastic
and early
dynastic elite
cemetery

FOOD

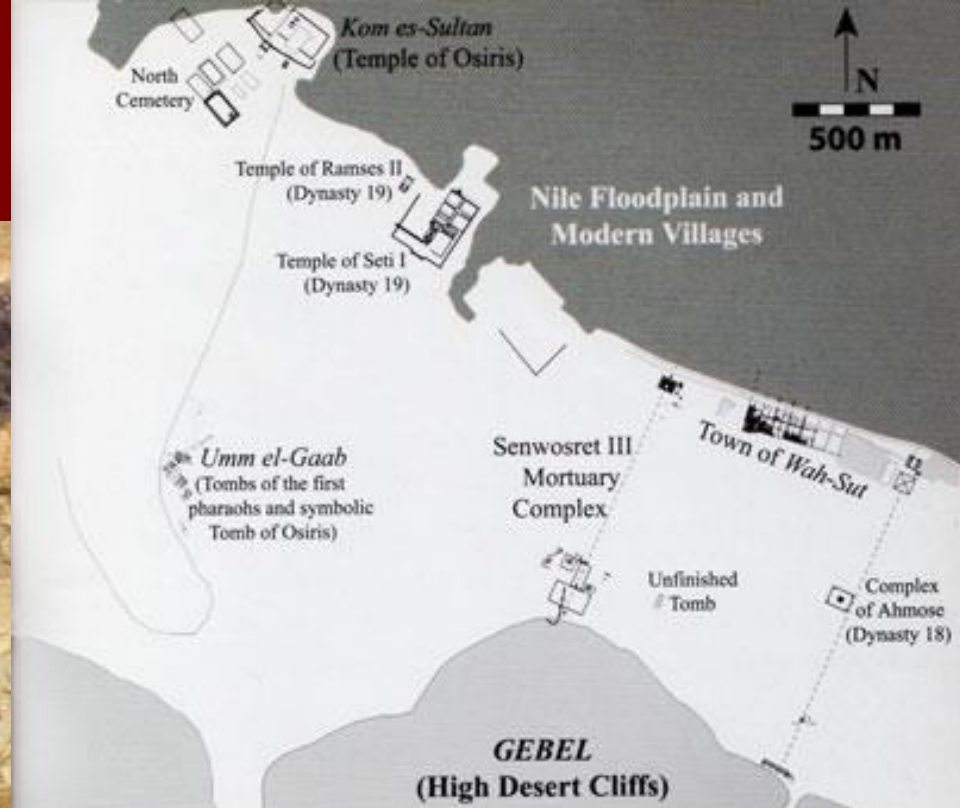
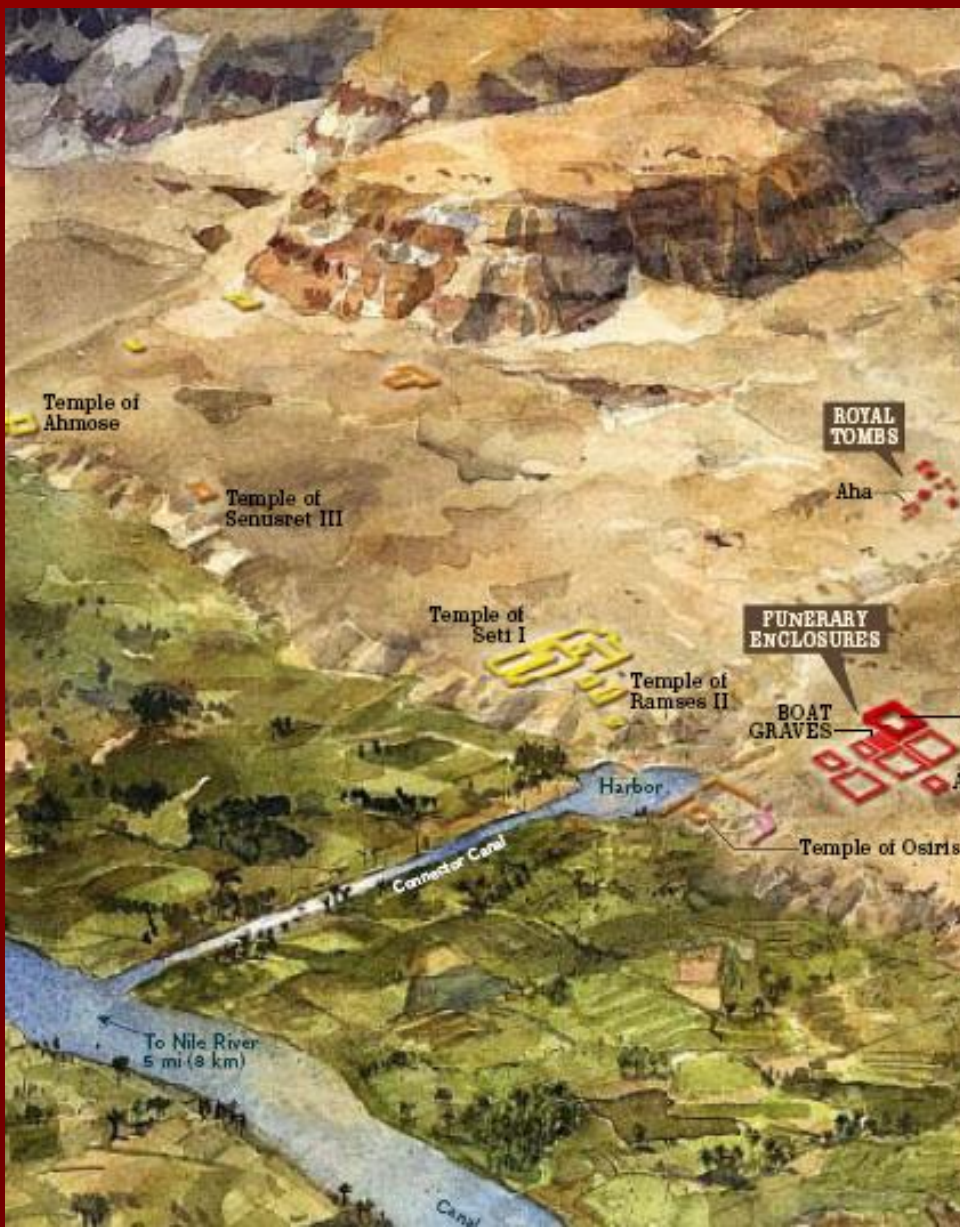


Animals as food source

- See your reading about animal husbandry

Abydos (3500 BC – 500AD) –





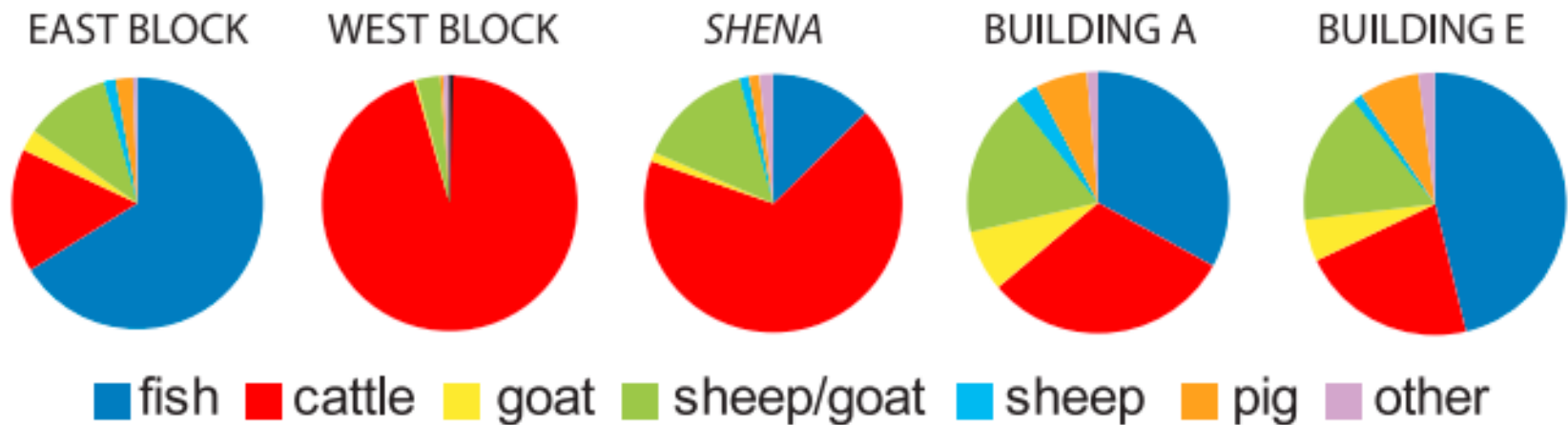
ANCIENT ABYDOS

- ◊ 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.

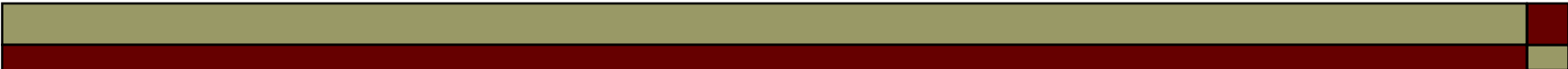
Scale varies in this perspective.
Distance from royal tombs
to funerary enclosures is
1.2 miles (1.9 kilometers).

Animals as food source

- See your reading about animal husbandry
- Known from bone surveys / research
 - Example Abydos (Wah-sut, Middle Kingdom)

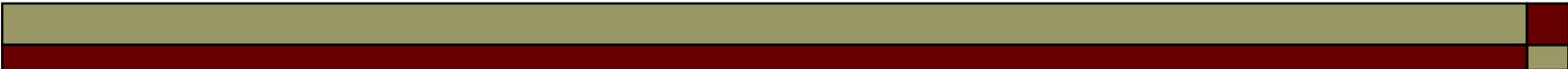


Distribution of fragments from major food animals: East Block (n = 397); West Block (n = 410); Shena (n = 610); Building A (n = 2504); and Building E (n = 1669).



Leftovers at refuse pits / areas / deposits

- ❑ from food-processing activities – including butchering, preparing, consuming food
 - Clues about cuisine / dietary preferences
 - Food procurement
 - use of animals to produce wool, hides, and bone tools
 - animals provide traction for pulling vehicles and plows
- ❑ food is both imbued with social meanings and regulated by status, taboos, and/or rituals



Animals as food source (Abydos)

- intense breeding, processing, and consuming of cattle (as shown elsewhere in North Africa)
 - Texts (including New Kingdom economic price lists) show cattle as most valued providers of meat
 - Cuts of beef on offering lists / offering tables

“human” care for gods: rituals and cult

- Offering of a butchered cattle , water and incense. (Temple of Medinet Habu, 13th cent. B.C.)

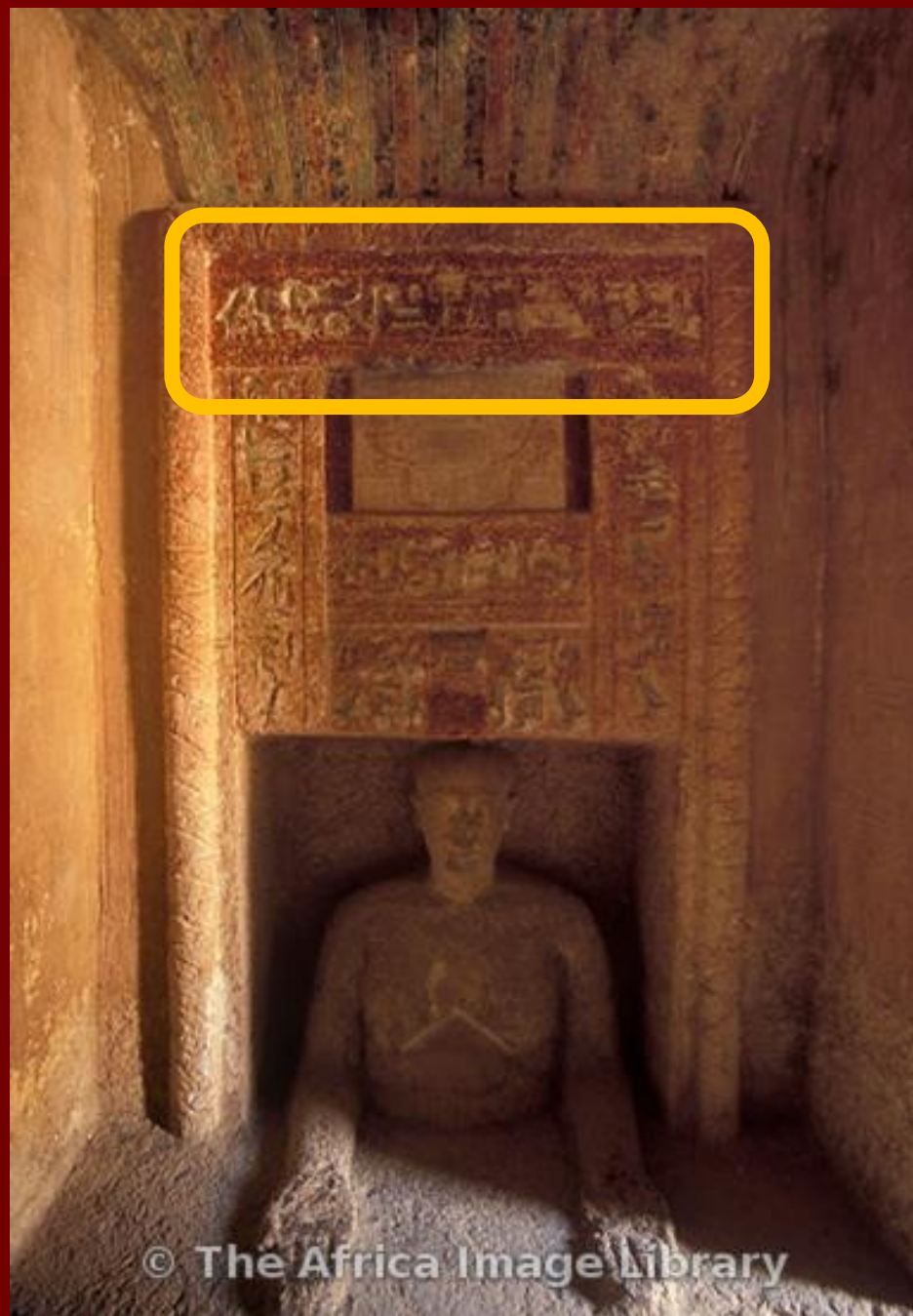
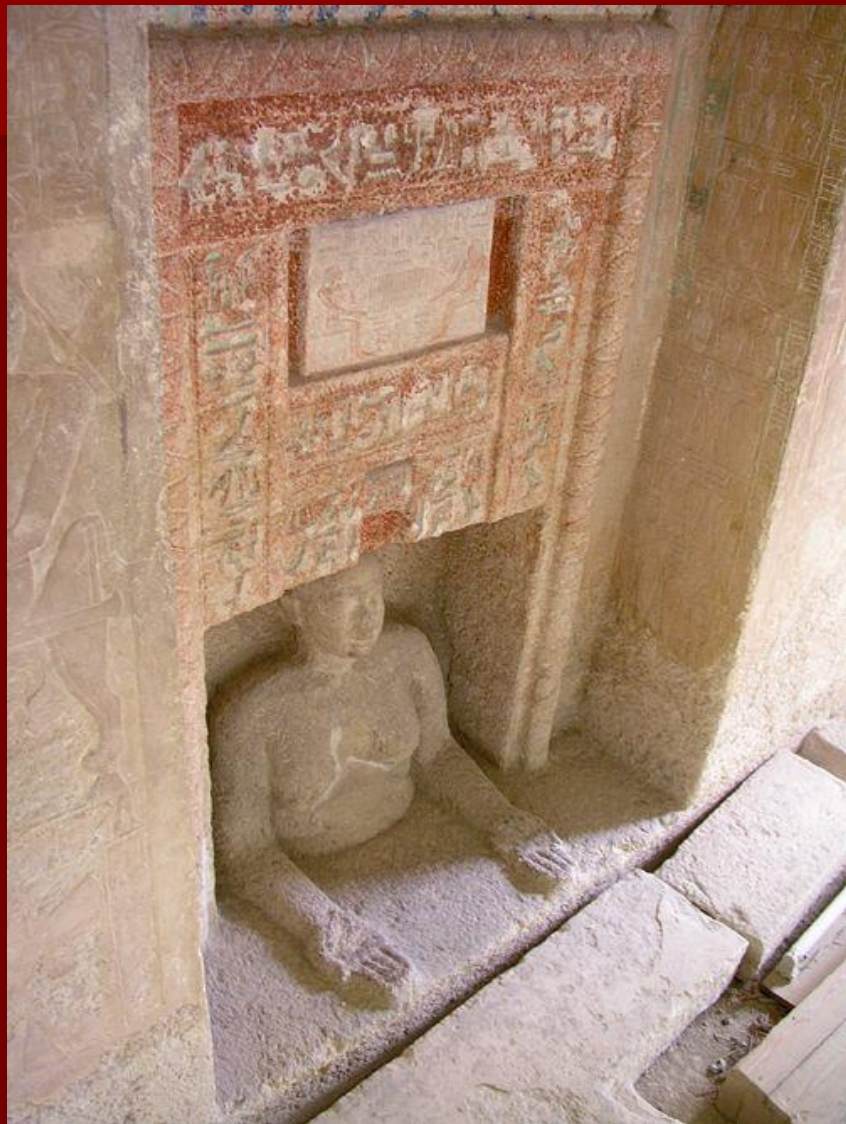


Offering Formula



An offering given by the king (to) Osiris, the lord of Busiris, the great god, the lord of Abydos." "That he may give a voice-offering of bread, beer, oxen, birds, alabaster, clothing, and every good and pure thing upon which a god lives." "For the ka of the revered Senwosret, True of Voice."

G7102: Idu



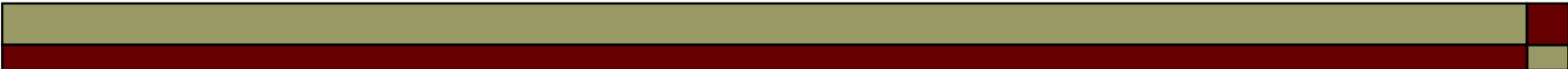
Animals as food source (Abydos)

- intense breeding, processing, and consuming of cattle (as shown elsewhere in North Africa)
 - Texts (including New Kingdom economic price lists) show cattle as most valued providers of meat
 - Cuts of beef on offering lists / offering tables
 - seal impression temple “Overseer of Cattle Stalls, Ameny” → importance of cattle breeding.



Animals as food source (Abydos)

- Sheep and goats (Egyptian “little cattle”) also very important: meat offerings, hair, hides, dairy products
 - sheep and goat bones notoriously difficult to distinguish (particularly when butchered, cooked, and exposed to soil)
 - Abydos: 3 goat bones for every sheep bone (here more common against rest of Egypt), suggesting that goats were much more common here than at most Egyptian sites where sheep predominate.
 - Maybe related to high amount of cattle at South Abydos: sheep competing with cattle for floodplain grazing area, goats could have subsisted on poor-quality vegetation along the desert edge



Animals, food and status at Wah-sut

- ❑ complex sequence of occupation + disturbed archaeological record → difficult to detail who ate what
- ❑ Deposits inside / around the Mayor's House
 - large amounts of cattle remains (redistributed temple offerings as mayor was high priest)
 - large quantities of sheep and goats, pigs
 - Much catfish – consumed by lower-ranking administrative or granary staff
- ❑ Other elite households: fewer cattle, more sheep, goats, pigs, fish (less frequent → fewer attendants?)
- ❑ strong correlation between socioeconomic status and diet also elsewhere in town

Hunting (Medinet Habu)



Fowling (Nebamun, fowling in the marshes, British Museum)

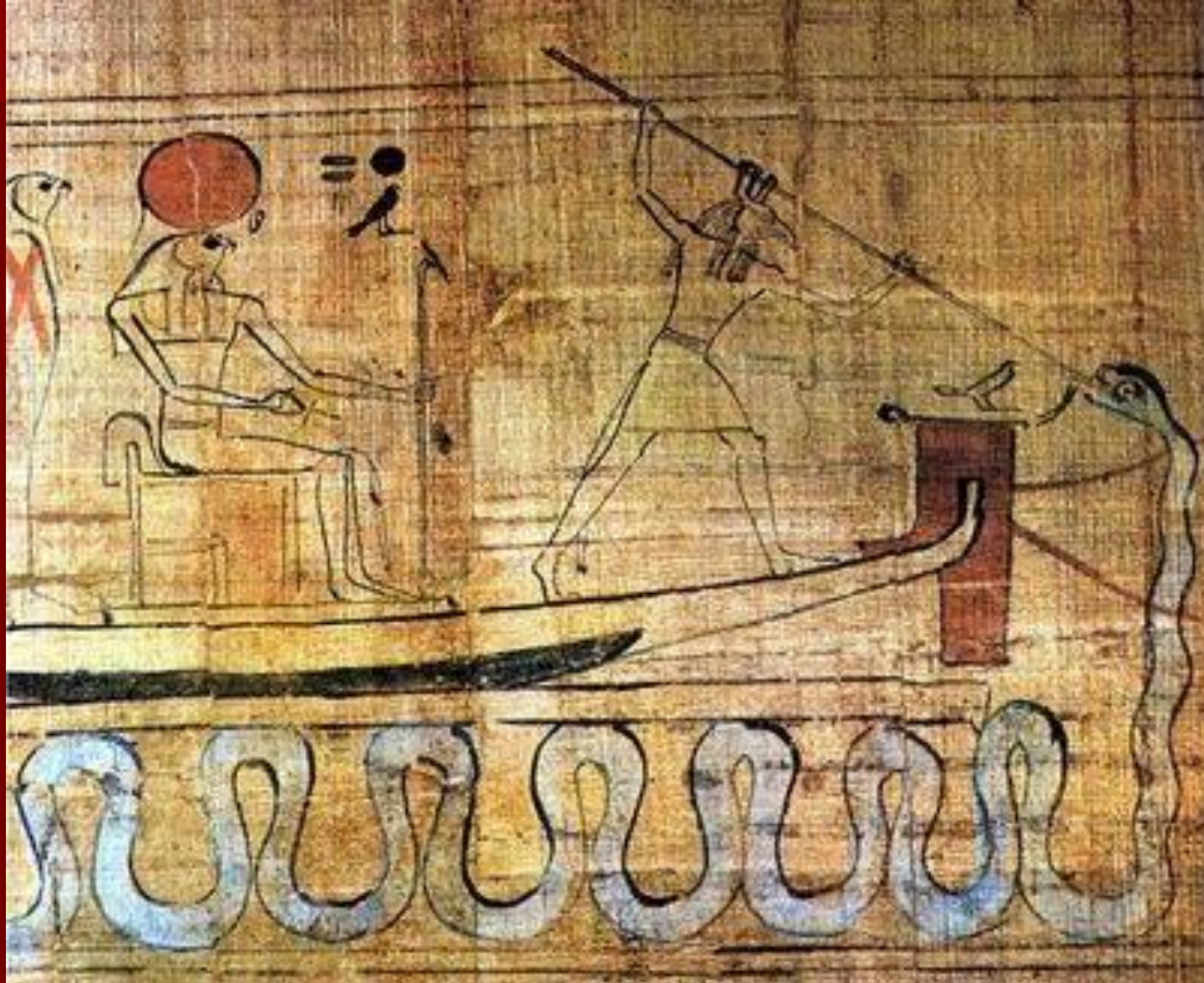


Reflected as religious battle – Horus is fighting Seth (Edfu)



Protagonists can change – good / evil not so clearly defined

What do you see?



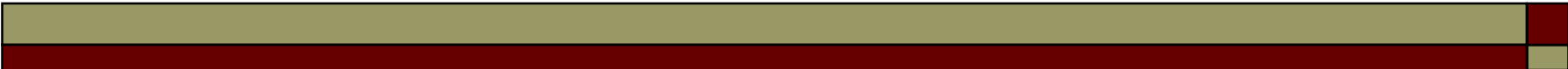
Reflected as religious battle – Horus is spearing the enemy (human)



“human” care for gods: rituals and cult

- Offering of an animal, of water and incense. (Temple of Medinet Habu, 13th cent. B.C.)





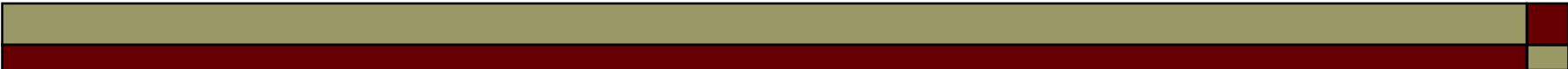
Animals as food source

- ❑ See your reading about animal husbandry
- ❑ Known from bone surveys / research
- ❑ Different survey results from towns and temple complexes → very clear in Abydos (Wah-Sut)

TABOOS

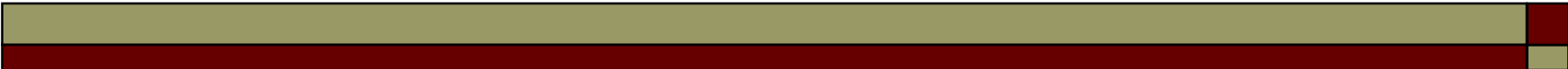
Taboo - bwt

- Egyptian words with a sign which is not read, but outlines the category / meaning of the word – the determinative
- most common determinative of "bwt" is fish: referring to dirt, impurity, bad things and evil actions or the bird of wretch things or behaviors



Foodstuff Taboos ??? PIGS

- ❑ herded, raised and occasionally eaten – especially from New Kingdom onwards
- ❑ sacred animal of god Set
- ❑ Seemingly taboo - considerations of health (offensive habits or smells and transmit diseases, Ikram 2001, 47)
- ❑ Herodotus: "The Egyptians never touched pigs or ate them, since they were identified with Set. An Egyptian, who accidentally touched a pig, would have to plunge into the Nile for purification."
- ❑ Underclass food??? those who kept pigs formed some kind of underclass, who could only marry the daughters of other swineherds (Shaw And Nicholson 1997, 33).
- ❑ No pigs in artistic monumental record
- ❑ lack of swine in offering lists



Pigs – loved / hated?

- ❑ 5th century BCE – Herodotus comments on Egyptian prohibition against swine
- ❑ But presence of pig remains in the town of Abydos → we need to question the extent of food prohibitions
- ❑ Same with some fish species as “poor people Food”, but found near /in temples

Town of Lahun (Middle Kingdom) – mud pig UCL 7186



Foodstuff Taboos ??? FISH

- ❑ Usually special position in Egypt: sacred, part of food
- ❑ But also scorned, prohibited to consume
- ❑ Nile, the marshy Delta, the Red Sea and Mediterranean coast rich in fish → substitute for more costly meat for the poor people
- ❑ Deir el-Medina: king employed fishermen to provide some of the rations for the royal tomb-workers, fish bones discovered around the workers tombs, who built pyramids at Giza
- ❑ later temples texts: fish was a taboo diet → local prohibitions six kinds of fish taboos (Danneskiold 1988, 18)
 - Esna, the Nile perch (Lates) taboo diet as identified with goddess Neith, who turned herself oneto navigate to the primeval ocean Nun
 - Mendes: *Lepidotus* fish taboo diet as associated with goddess Hat-Mehit; "the chief of fishes"