

Hieroglyphs 1

Introduction

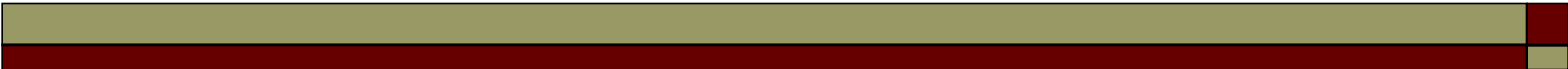
AHAR5004

Hieroglyphs, Text and Society

Dr. Katharina Zinn

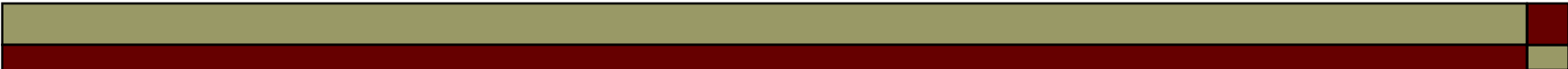


Week 7	H1: Literacy in ancient Egyptian Society
	H2: Introduction: one and more consonant signs, transliteration
	H3: Reading Directions
Week 8	H4: Calligraphy – how to write ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs
	H5: The Offering Formula
	H6: Exercise: What have we learnt so far? With in-class test!
Week 9	H7: Reading Merire
	H8: Excuse: Language system of Ancient Egypt, Other formulaic objects – funerary cones
	H9 And even more offering formulas and some grammar (word order) – with 15 minute test (unmarked): reading Offering Formulas
Week 10	H10 More Grammar – Nouns: roots, gender, number and Suffix pronouns
	H11 And even more Grammar – Nouns: connections and possessions
	H12 Exercise (done as test and then talked through in class) And even more Grammar – Nouns: connections and possessions
Week 11	H13 Our first sentences: more combinations of nouns and adjectives
	H14: Pre-exam test – unmarked: Reading, writing and translating hieroglyphs
	H15: Revision Session



Before we start:

- Define
 - What is literacy???
 - What is everyday life???
- Not easy, includes many layers, too contemporary biased
- To define “everyday life”, I also need to investigate abstract levels (society as a whole, elite culture etc.)



Assmann, Jan: *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*. New York:

Metropolitan Books, 2002. p. 9.

- We are what we remember, which is another way of saying that we are nothing other than the stories we can tell about ourselves and our past.

Ways of remembering: Orality

- The importance of the spoken word:
- *Every plant perishes, even as it exists – but not the spoken word.*
 - P Ramesseum 2 vso ii,5 (BM EA10755,2)



Ways of remembering: Literacy

- Words are given authority – writing:
- *His Majesty decreed that (it will be) put in writing on his tomb which is in the necropolis. His Majesty caused that there should [be made for him] an authorisation in respect of it, written beside the king himself on the stone-workshop of the palace, to write what was said in his tomb in the necropolis.*
 - Giza, tomb of Rower – G 5270 (5th dyn., Neferirkare)

Fluent borders between orality and literacy:

Orality of letters

- The nature of ancient Egyptian letters
 - Written as direct speech: sender *says* things, recipient *heard* their words
 - Way of communication: words are *send*, identical to polite oral behaviour
- *I say to Pre-Horakhty, when he rises and sets, “Make you healthy! Make you live! Make you youthful!”, every day.*
 - (Pap. Mallet, V 1-5)



Fluent borders between orality and literacy: **Orality of WRITTEN letters**

- Scribal training started with formulation of letters
 - Stays core exercise of scribal education
 - Stresses the importance of letters as primary skill



Fluent borders between orality and literacy:

Documented orality of letters

- ❑ Do letters allow assumptions on degrees of orality and literacy? How many sender / recipients were illiterate?
 - Were they dictated?
 - Were they self-dictated?
 - Were they read by the recipients themselves?
 - How many were read out to recipient?
- ❑ But the milieu in which letters were formulated were that of the scribal class AND families
- ❑ Would letters be a good genre to assess „**Literacy in ancient everyday life**“ ?

Presented orality and literacy of
letters – direct communication?



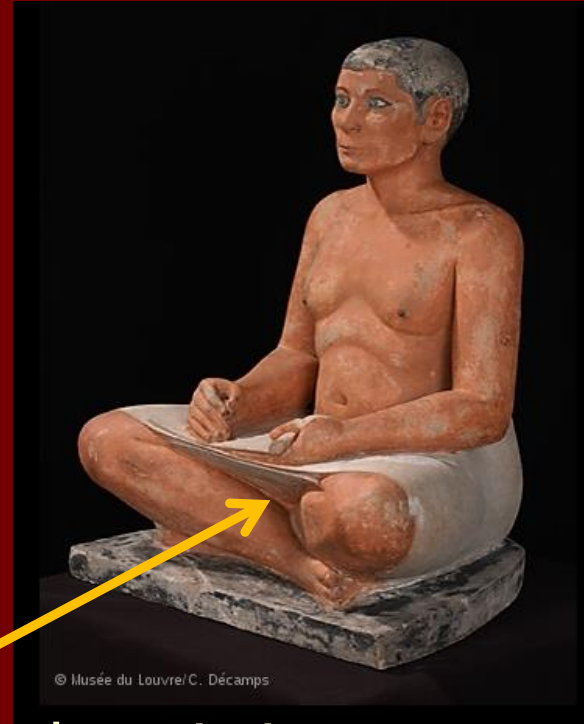
Seated Scribe
(Paris, Louvre E 3023)

Seated Scribe

(Paris, Louvre E 3023,
Old Kingdom, 4th Dynasty (?), c. 2620-2500 BC)



© Musée du Louvre/C. Décamps



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While the mimic suggests a **direct communication**, the scribe has papyrus on stretched skirt on which he **writes**

Seated Scribe

(Paris, Louvre E 3023,
Old Kingdom, 4th Dynasty (?), c. 2620-2500 BC)



© Musée du Louvre/C. Décamps



Would have held a reed to
write (TT69 Menna, New
Kingdom)

The “writing” scribe

(Paris, Louvre E 3023,
Old Kingdom, 4th Dynasty (?), c. 2620-2500 BC)



© Musée du Louvre/C. Décamps



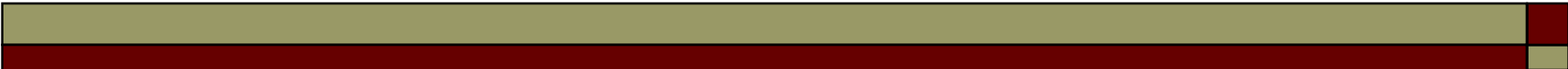
Would have held a reed to
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The “reading” scribe

Min-nakht

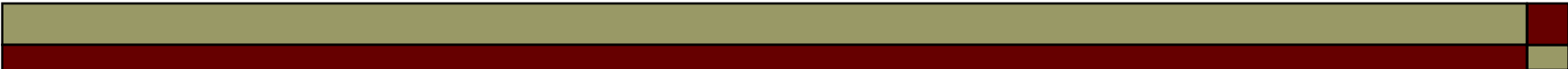
(Baltimore, Walters Museum 22.230)





The agency of writing and reading

- Agency revealed in written documents
 - Revealed through texts: information about life of this society
 - In modern societies, such information could be obtained differently (orally, observation)
- Agency to produce written documents
 - Development of writing systems → focus on cognitive / linguistic issues
 - Content of the written word on artefacts
 - Production of inscribed object
- Agency of writing itself
 - Agency of the writer and the written word itself – extension of communication beyond time-space constraints of orality



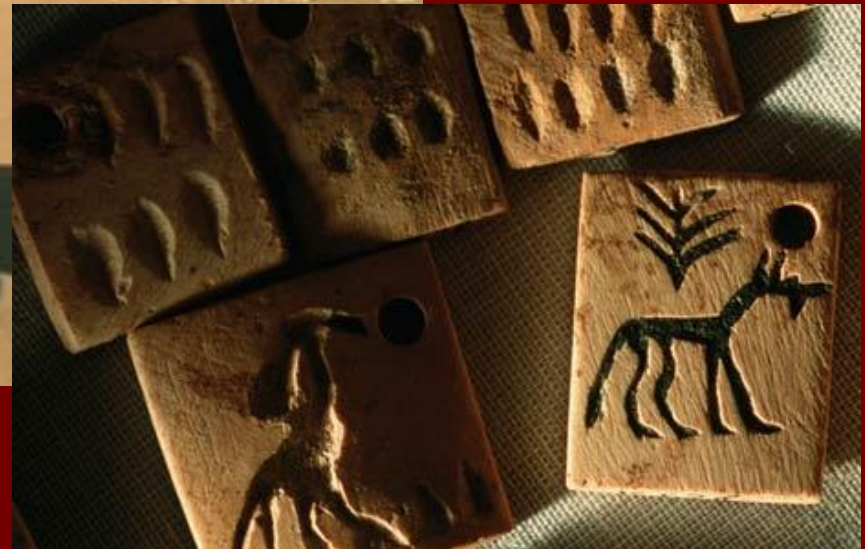
The agency of writing and reading

- Agency to produce written documents
 - Development of writing systems

- Writing and literacy as communication across boundaries
 - Space
 - Time
 - AND for AE: communication over the boundary between life and death – mediating the relationship between the living and their ancestors

- AE: beginning of writing well evidenced in connection with mortuary practices

Early writing: The important tomb Uj in Abydos





Defining early Egyptian writing

- ❑ Writing in AE starts relative late compared with other already developed markers of a complex society
- ❑ Very short inscriptions (“principle of scarcity” – J. Baines)
- ❑ Fluid boundaries between art and writing – encoding meaning, but also specific words?
 - What is iconography?
 - What is word?
 - Do we need to differentiate?
- ❑ Different corpus of signs to later periods → meaning open for debate

MMA 1.4.93

Private stela

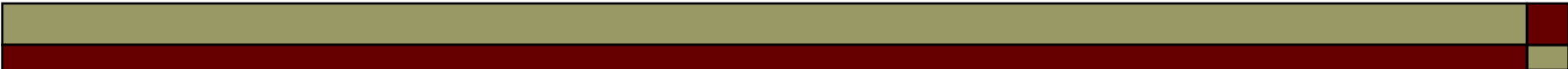
Senba

Abydos,

King Djer

→ Marking
subsidiary graves
around the royal
tomb –
“personified”

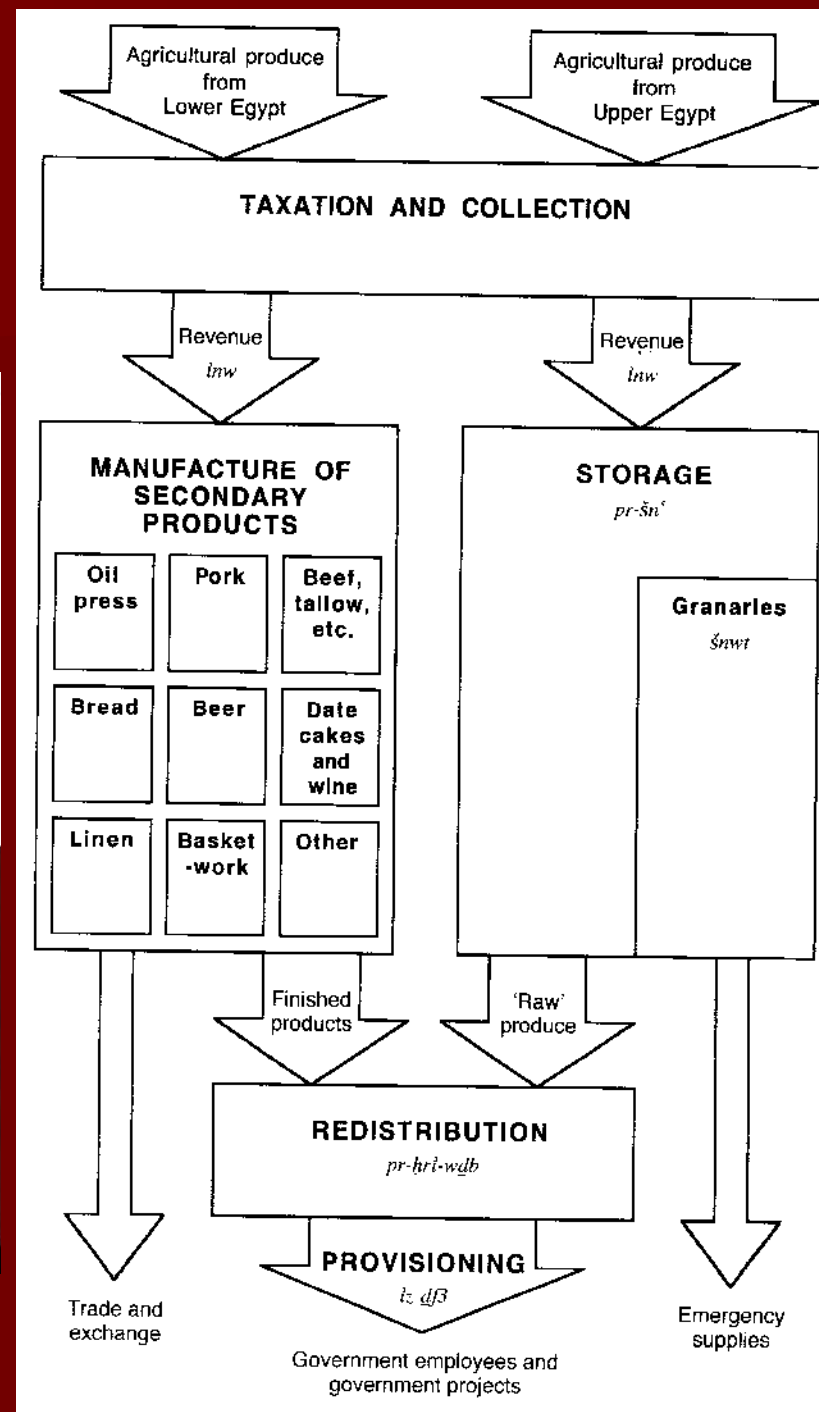
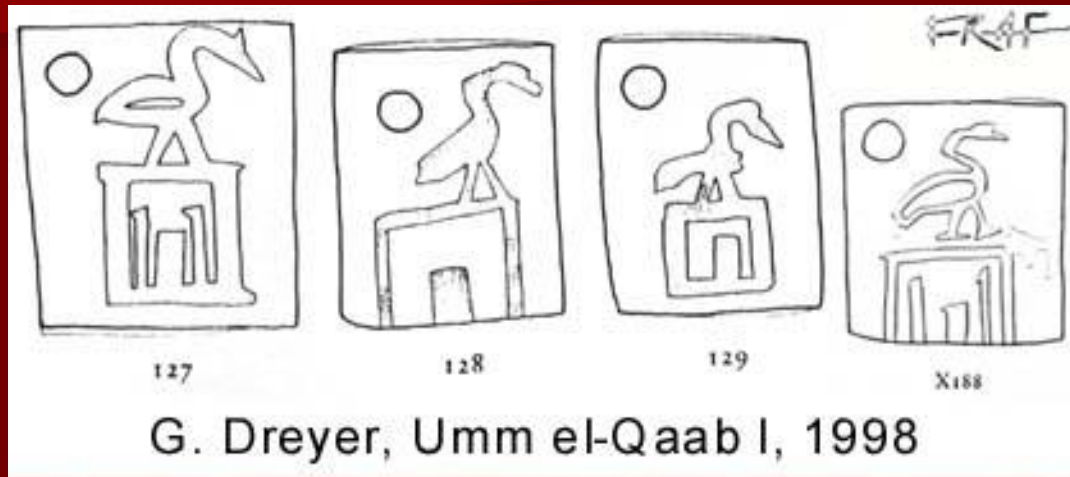




Early writing

- ❑ As expression of relationships between king and those close to him (court, family, high officials) during life and beyond death
- ❑ Establishing authority in this life
- ❑ Writing displays prestige

The Establishment of Authority



Early writing

- As expression of relationships between king and those close to him (court, family, high officials) during life and beyond death
 - Monumental display
- Establishing authority in this life
- And beyond death as continuation of personhood and social relationship

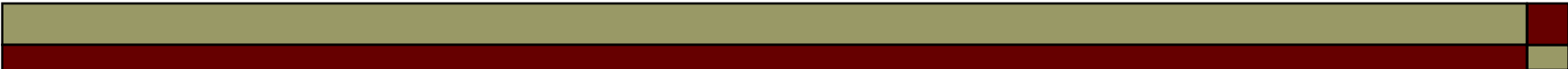
The Theory:

THINKING ABOUT LITERACY AND THE MATERIALITY OF WRITING



Literacy

- Often defined as
 - Focus on *reading* and *writing* (in more linguistically motivated studies)
 - Activity / ability of societies that practice writing (archaeology...) → position within culture
 - Production → revealing an intimate process (fingerprint, ductus, ...)
 - Usage (reading / writing) → stimulus to change? (J. Baines)
 - BUT: degrees of literacy; including illiterate users who consumed written texts through oral performance, sensory experiences, ... → anthropology of the past



Evidencing literacy

- Individual literacy

Specific literacy – the individual ability to read and write

- ❑ Who could read and write?
- ❑ During most periods: not more than 1% of the population were literate
 - population rose from one million (Old Kingdom) to 4.5 million (Graeco-Roman period: Greeks as literate majority) → estimated literates 10,000-50,000 (might be too high)
- ❑ rate of literacy, volume and range of written material tended to advance without steady increment
- ❑ Literacy likely declined between New Kingdom and Graeco-Roman period
- ❑ After: rising again in different circumstances

Specific literacy – the individual ability to read and write

- Several levels of literacy possible:
 - Reading (various degrees of competence)
 - Reading and the physical ability to write
 - Reading and narrow composing ability (accounting)
 - Reading and the full ability to compose texts
 - carving of signs with limited reading ability (relief sculptors)
- Likely to be rare:
 - literate people who did not use their skills
 - barely literate scribes (could not perform administrative functions)
- no evidence of scribes with careers separate from office

Specific literacy – the individual ability to read and write

- Writing
 - Administrative device
 - Element of (monumental) art
- Could be practiced by crafts men with limited or no literacy, controlled by a literate person



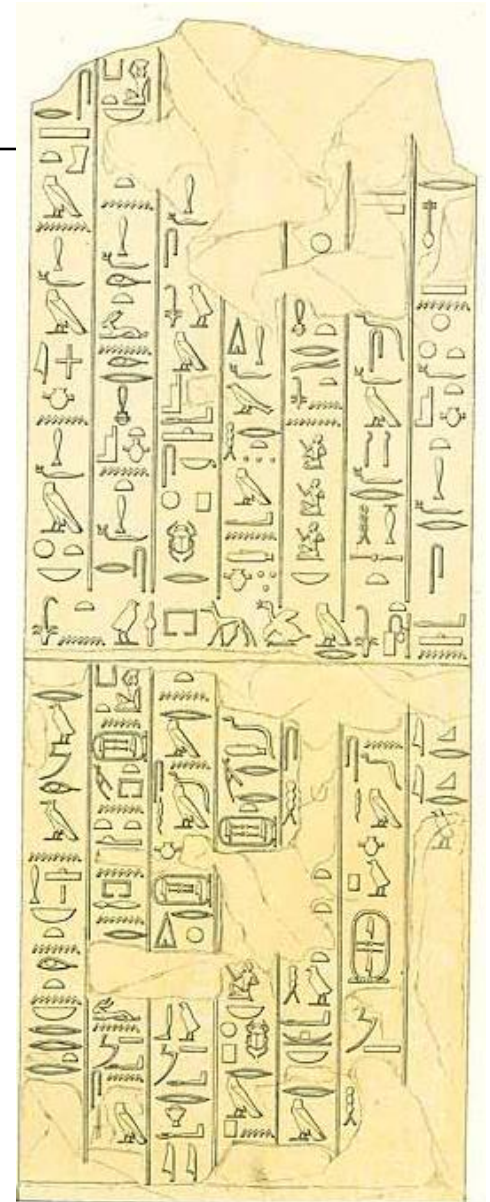
Specific literacy – the individual ability to read and write

□ The royal literacy

- Tomb of Sennedjemib (5th dyn.), Giza, mastaba G 2370

- **Pharaoh Djedkare Isesi** wrote two letters to Sennedjemib Intj (vezir) *with his own two fingers* (i.e. by his own hand)

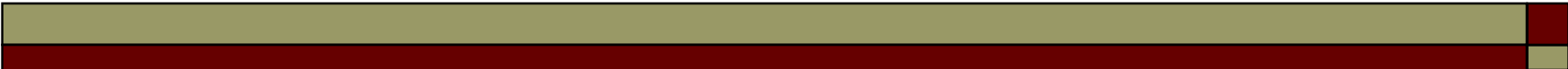
- Also: ink tray with his name
→ Petrie. 1927 LVI, 9



Specific literacy – the individual ability to read and write

- Title *scribe* indicates high status and being literate
- Often seen synonymously with high culture
- Carrying the scribal palette is a sign of membership to elite
 - 3rd dyn, Hesire





Scribal education (Papyrus Sallier II, column XI, lines 1-4)

Satire of Trade (Instruction of Dua-Khety)

Look - Abundance is on the path of the god and Abundance is written on his shoulder on the day of his birth.

*He reaches the palace portal,
and that court of officials is the one allotting people to him.*

***Look, no scribe will ever be lacking in food
or the things of the House of the King, may he live, prosper and be well!***

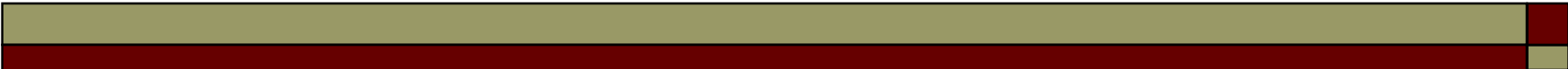
***Meskhenet is the prosperity of the scribe,
the one placed before the court of officials.***

[...]

*See what I have set out before you,
and for the children of your children.*

Privately owned book collections

- ❑ Existed (S. Quirke, E. Blumenthal), but less literary than magical / professional
 - Ramesseum library (found with professional equipment)
 - Berlin library (4 literary papyri, might not be connected)
 - Collection Deir el-Medine
- ❑ Evidenced in literature:
 - Pap. Westcar – magician Djedi asked the king that one may call his children to bring his books
- ❑ Evidenced in art / material culture:
 - Stela Jk1 (MK, Leiden V68) – servant carries bookchest and papyrus roll of the owner, singer Jk1



Evidencing literacy

- Individual literacy
- Collective literacy

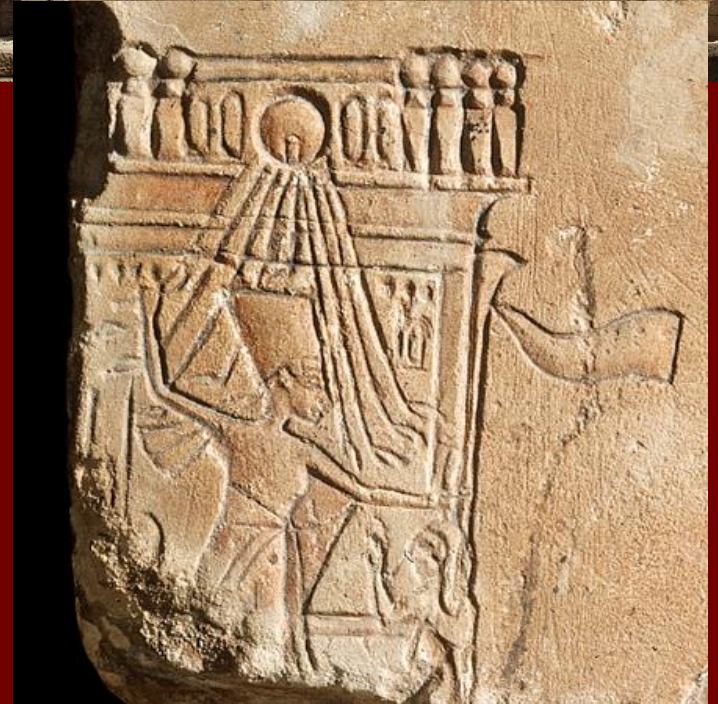
Orality and Literacy as tools to express shared historical / cultural memories

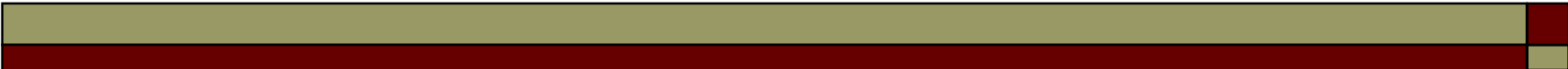
- ❑ Creating shared identity
- ❑ Creating cultural memory:
 - Re-usable texts, images, rituals (specific to particular timeframes in particular cultures) → the canonical text
 - carry society's self-understanding
 - Stabilises culture
- ❑ Orality: performed myths
- ❑ (iconographic) Literacy: media (text and image) continuously shapes interest in “history” and renews identity
 - Creates a collective literacy beyond the practiced individual literacy in the sense of being able to read and write
 - Connecting high and low culture (all levels of elite, whole society)
 - ❑ Literal elite encodes information
 - ❑ Also supplied decoding tools for non-elites

Case study: Smiting of the Enemy



Enemy

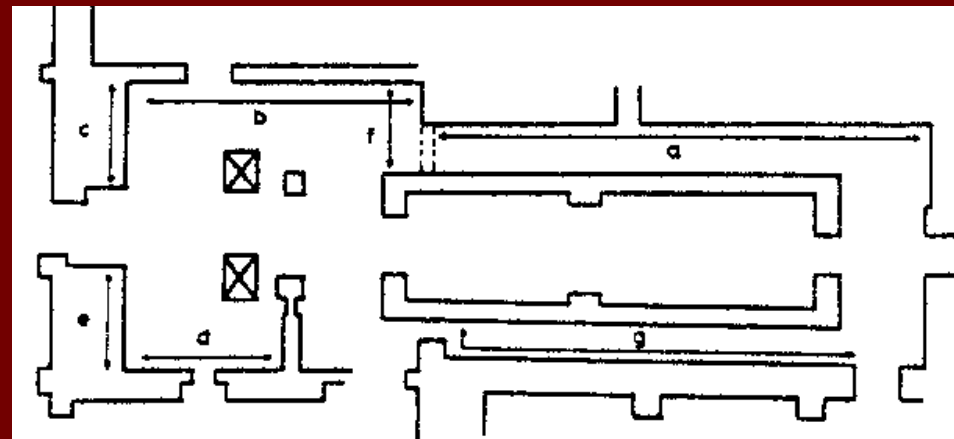
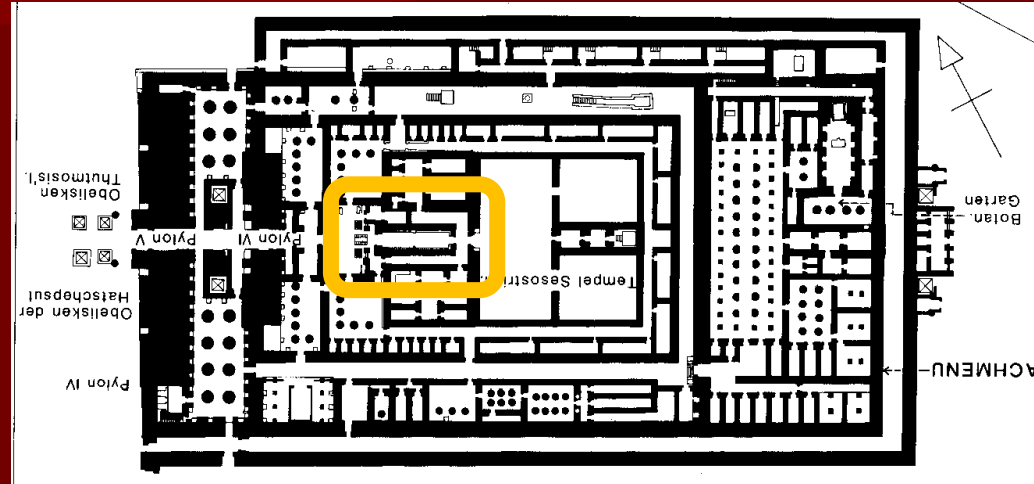
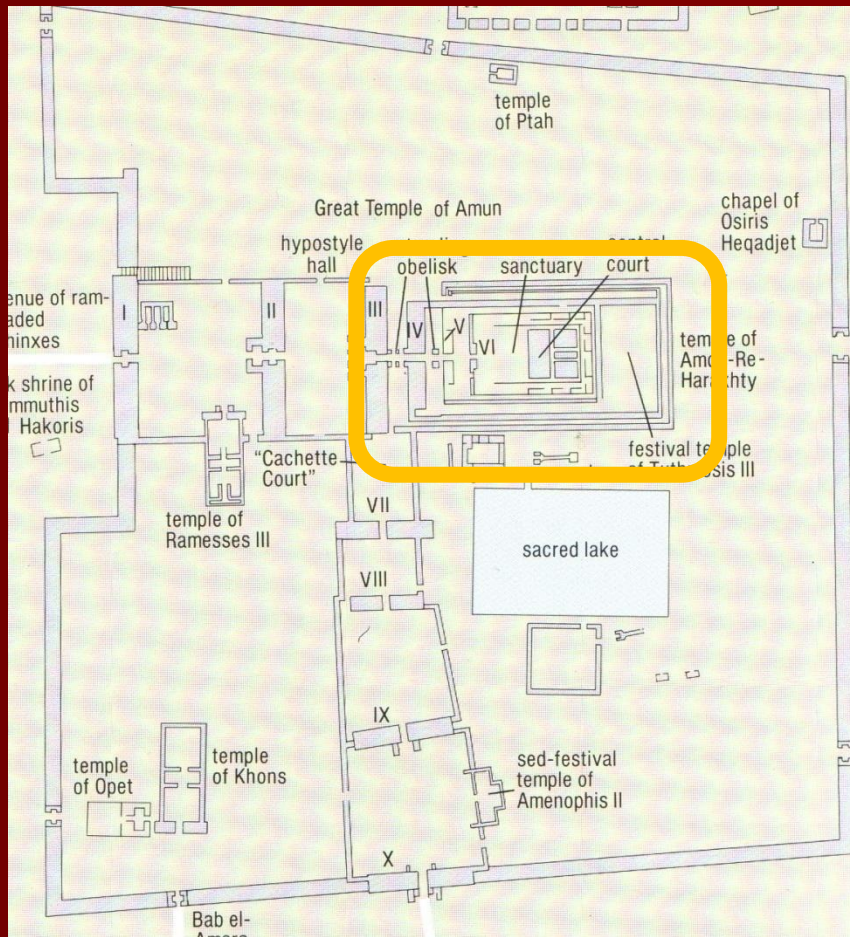




Shared historical memories

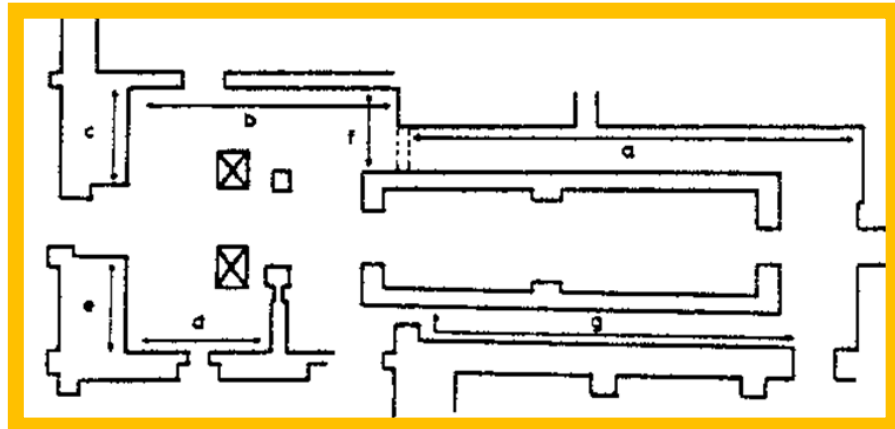
- Materialise knowledge about important events
 - Jan Assmann: the temple as book
- Who is the audience? Who will read the information?
 - Directed towards the gods, performed by the king
 - FOR ALL members of the society
 - Performed, acted and substitutional literacy

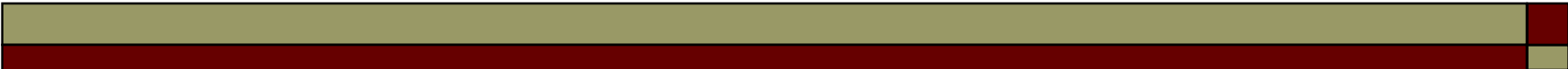
Karnak: Hall of Annals (record of Battle of Megiddo)



Account of the Battle of Megiddo

- Now, all that his majesty did to this city, to that wretched foe and his wretched army, was recorded on each day by its the day's name. Then it was recorded / stored upon a roll of leather in the temple of Amon this day.
- *jw=sn smn ḥr ʿr.t n.t ḥw.t-nṯr n.t Jmn m hrw pn*





Narrative literature and its intersection between orality and literacy

- ❑ From appearance in MK as reaction to need of court in re-unified Egypt
- ❑ Expanded written corpus in NK – popular text types
- ❑ Graeco-Roman Period: increasing exclusive role of priesthood in production of written literature
- ❑ → over time influence of oral traditions onto written texts increased: interaction between realms of elite and popular storytelling

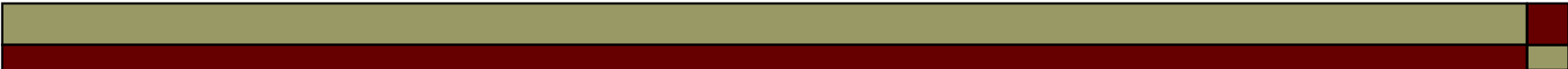


Orality in narrative texts: Blurring the lines...

- ❑ Already to be seen in Pyramid Texts – stem from oral narratives → “special language” for cognitive flow
- ❑ Written literature of elite was NOT composed orally, BUT designed for oral / aural performance – “to be heard”
 - Additive style
 - Patterned rhythm
 - Parallel phrasing etc.
- ❑ Expressions of emotions (especially in demotic literature)

Orality in narrative texts

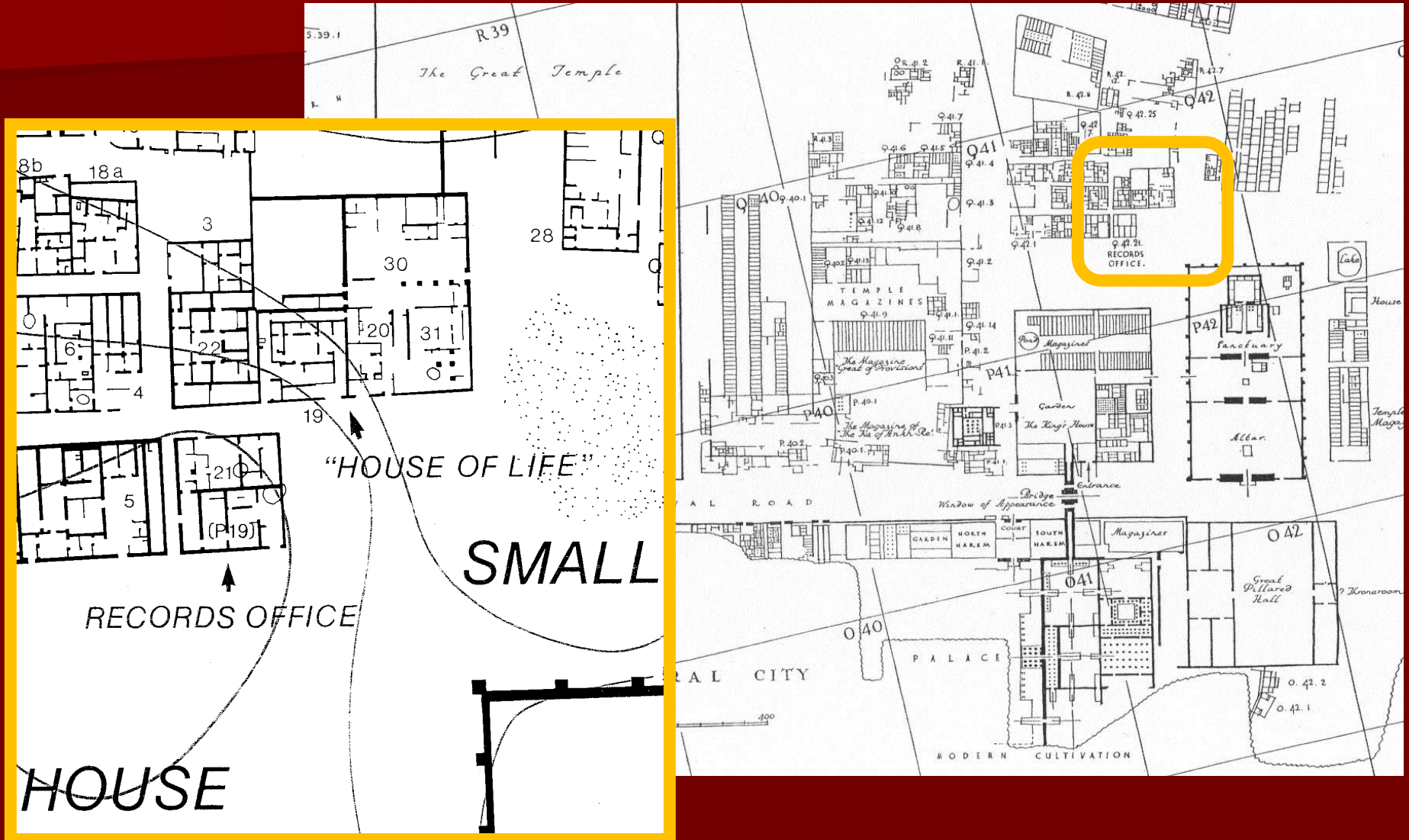
- ❑ To make written text accessible / functional to wider audience
- ❑ Extension of the audience, they are made literate
- ❑ Creation of cultural texts (Jan Assmann)
- ❑ Cultural memory shaped by written narratives
→ placed literate elite in special position, but connection to orators serving largely illiterate communities (villages)



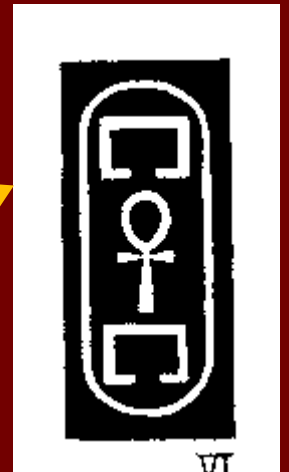
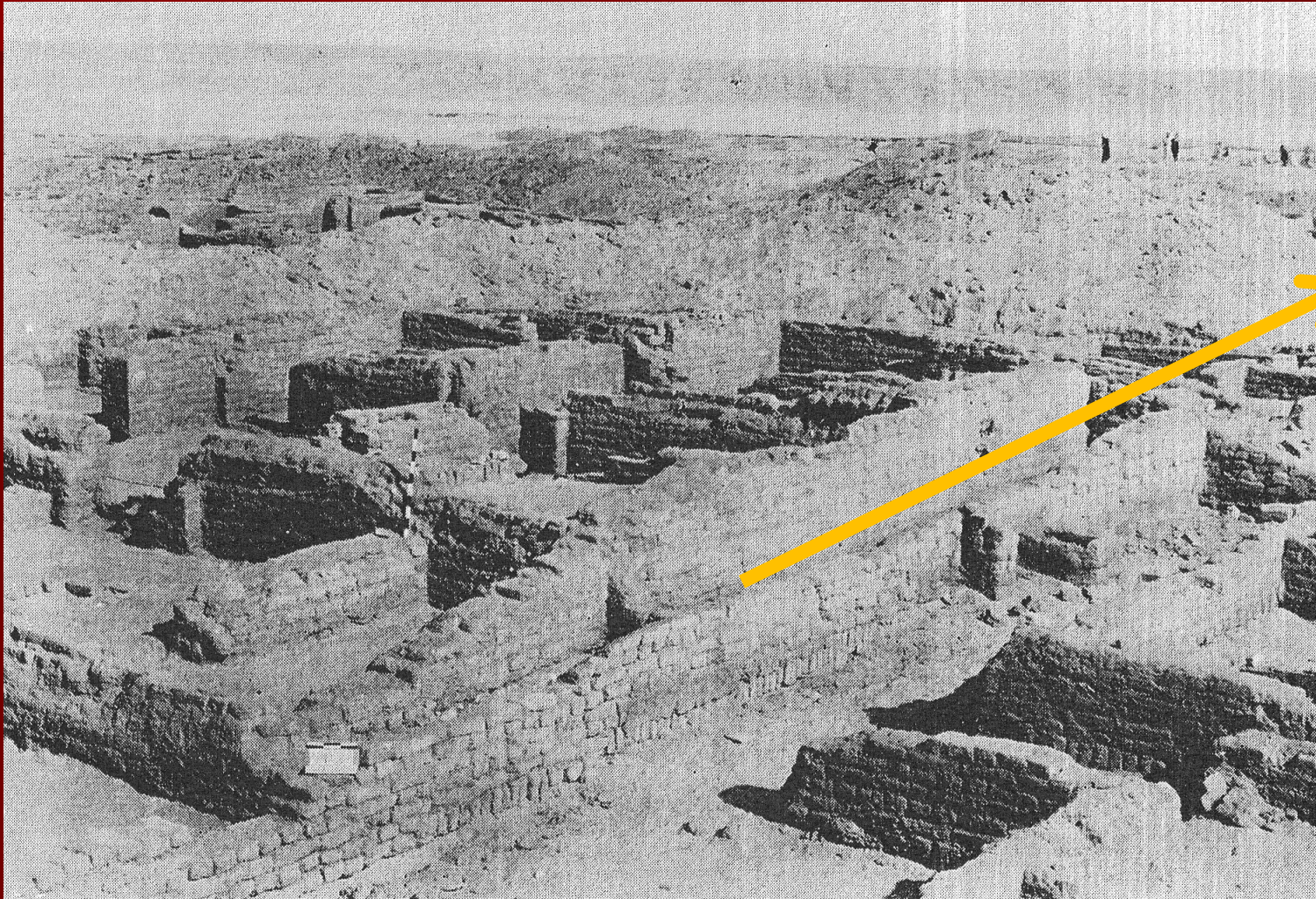
Evidencing literacy

- Individual literacy
- Collective literacy
- Institutionalised literacy – book collections
 - Archives
 - Libraries

Amarna: Central City

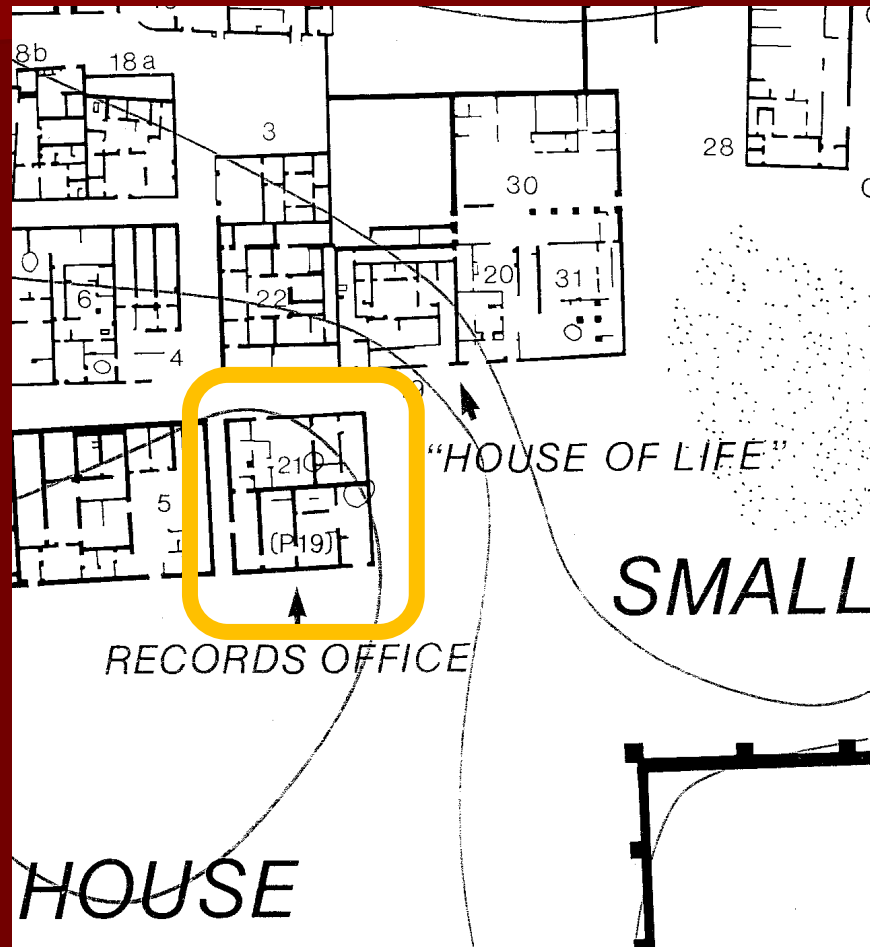


Amarna: House of Life (*pr-^ḥnh*)



Amarna: Records Office

t3 s.t (n3.w)š^c.(w)t pr-3



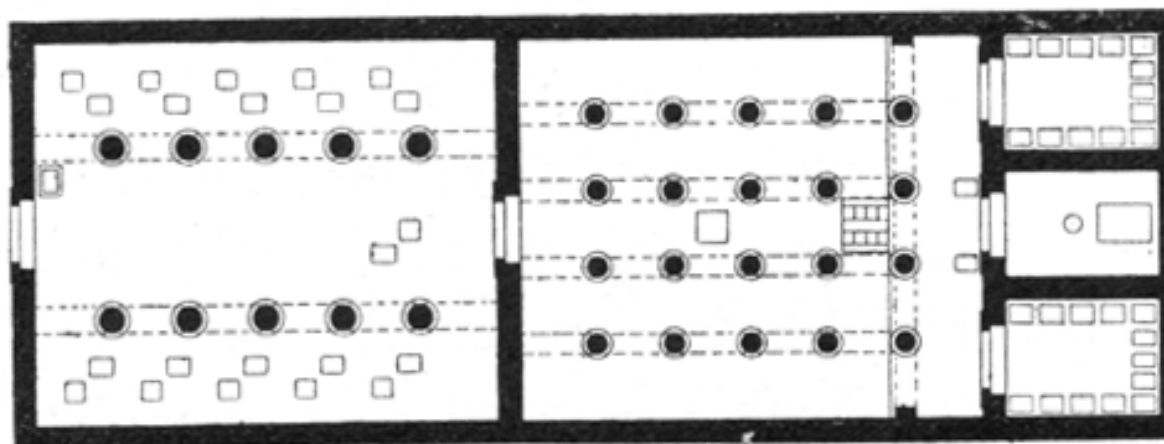
Archive in TT23:

zh š^c.t nswt t^cy with s.t zh.w



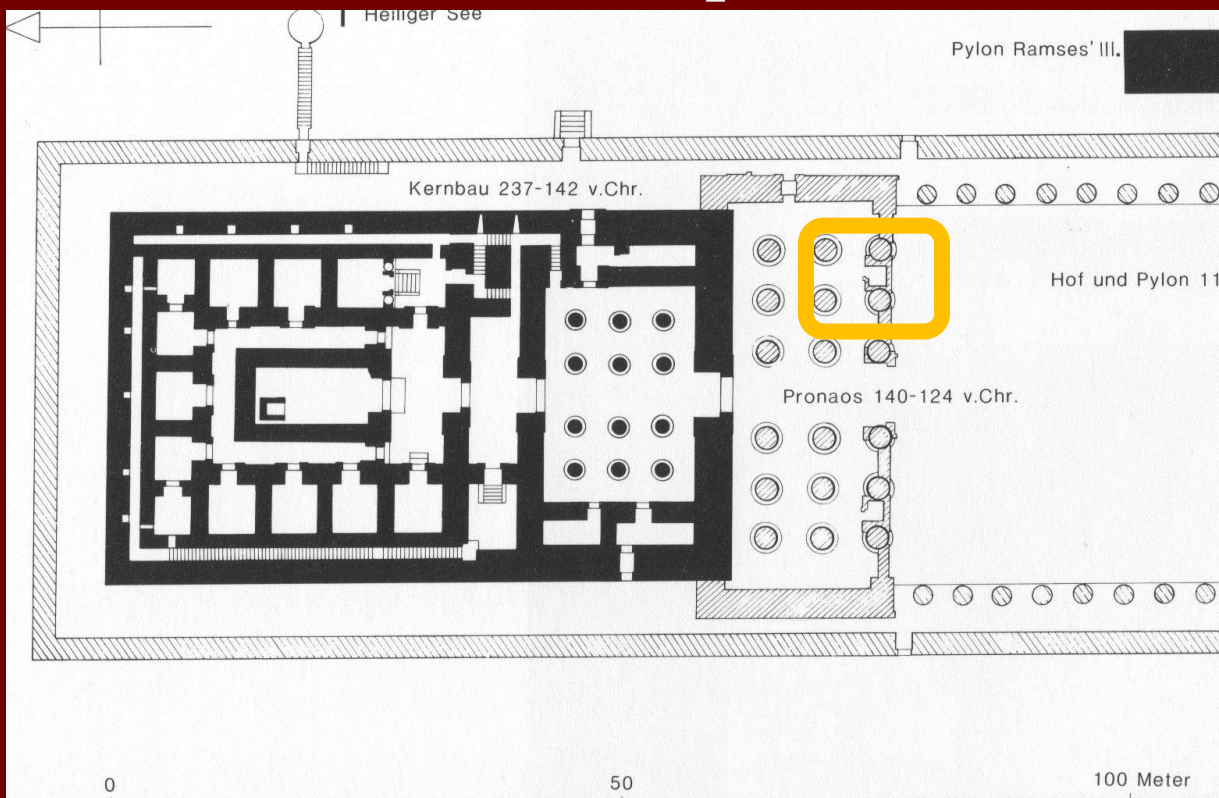


		Trans- versal hall	Archiv 1 (S. F. ZH. W)
Bureau consisting of one nave with two aisles, separated by 2 rows of 5 columns each	Hypostyle (4 rows with 4 columns each and upward ramp towards the rear part of the building)	with statues of baboons	Thoth- sanctuary
		as god Thoth (raised)	Archiv 2 (S. F. ZH. W)



Edfu: Library (*pr-md3.t*)

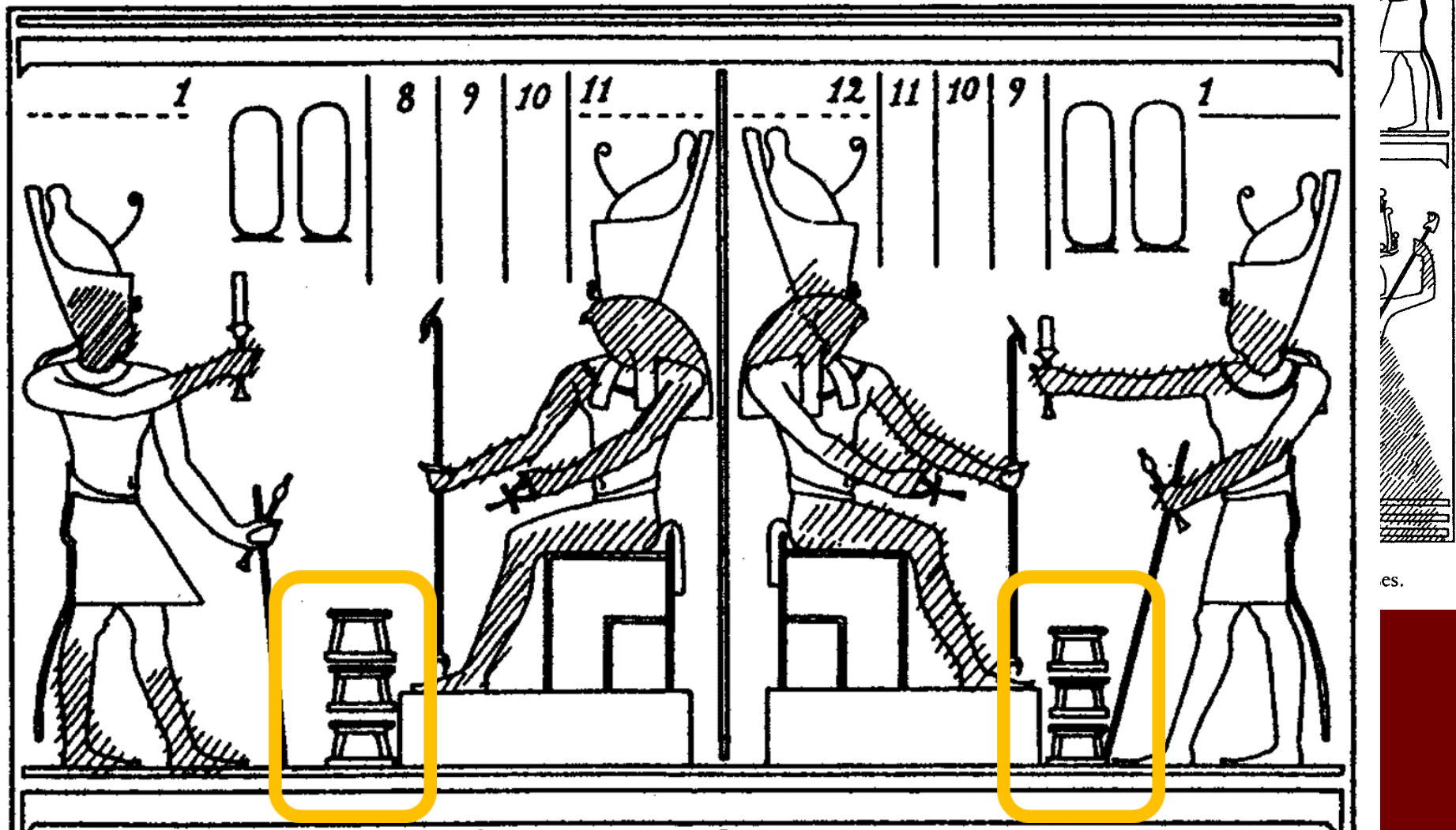
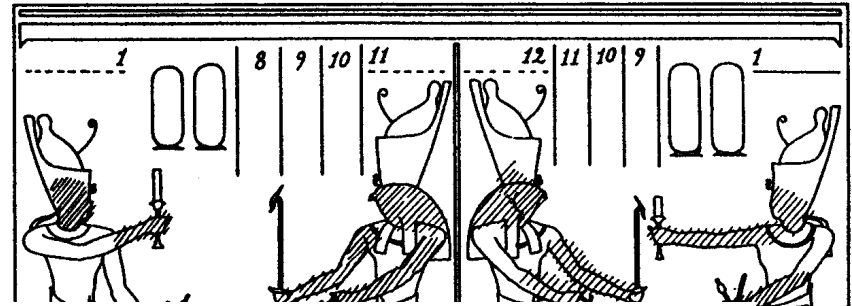
pr-md3.t





Niche in the library

Edfu: Southwall in *pr-md3.t*



es.

Edfu: Frieze in the *pr-md3.t*

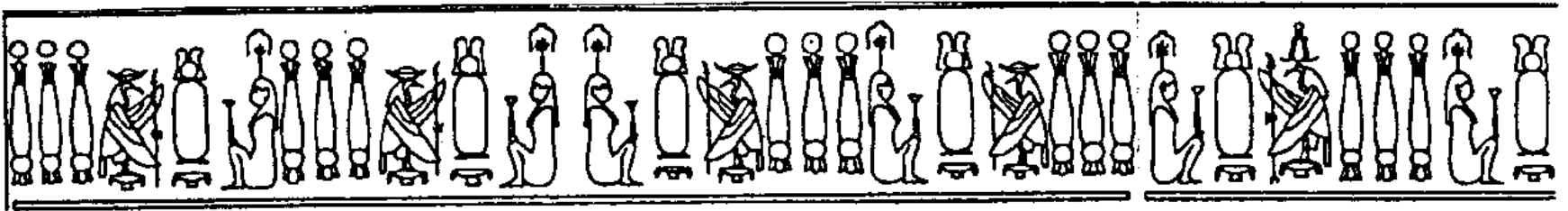
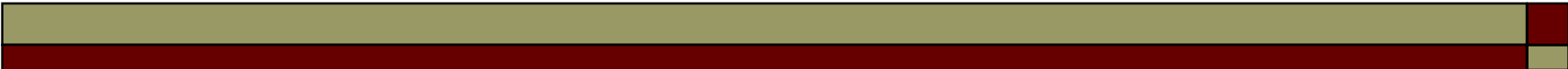


Abb. 2: Edfou IX, Pl. LXXXII.

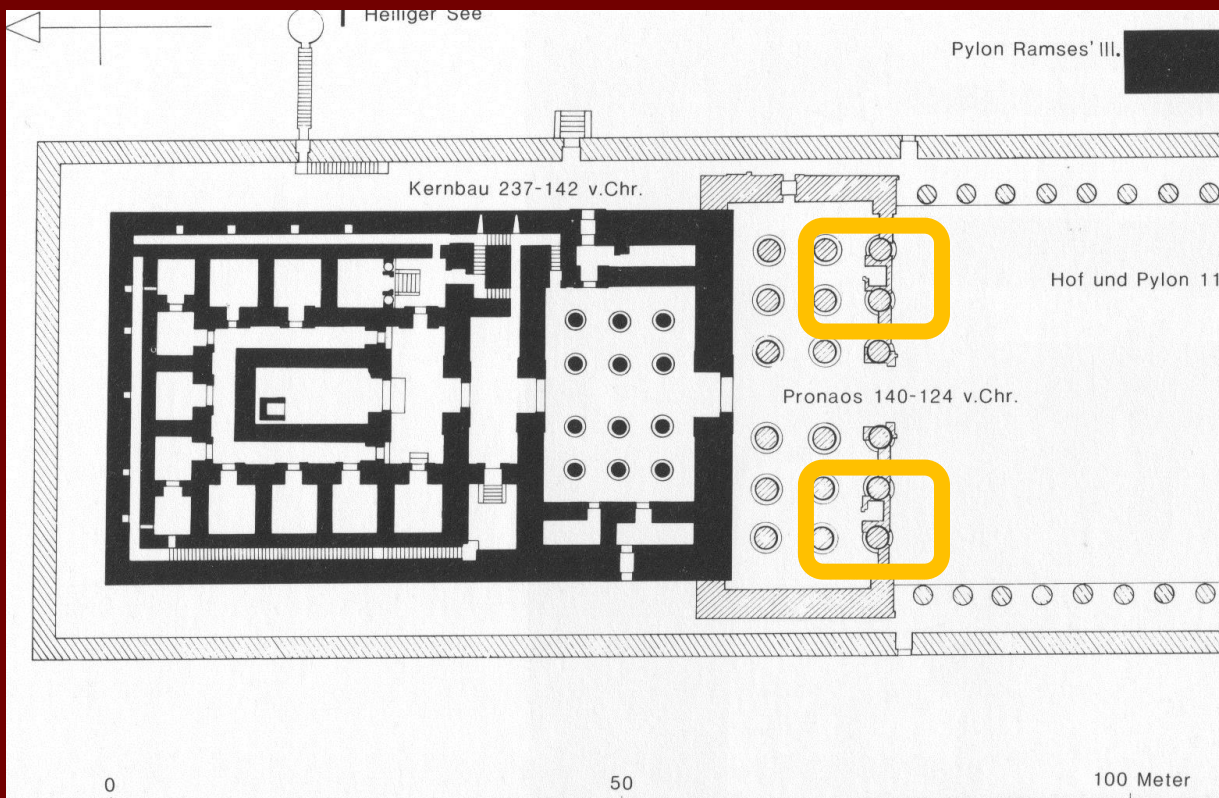


Fluent borders between orality and literacy: **Documented orality of institutionalised literacy**

- ❑ Architectural situation reveals the connection of literacy and orality
- ❑ Performing rituals
- ❑ Reciting written texts for illiterate to enable their literacy – mediated literacy

Edfu: Library (*pr-md3.t*)

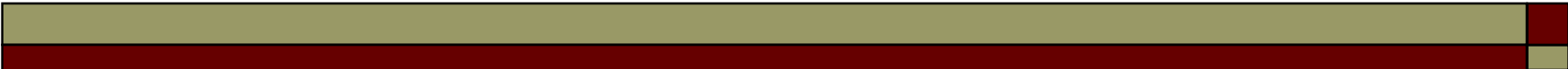
pr-md3.t



pr-dw3.t

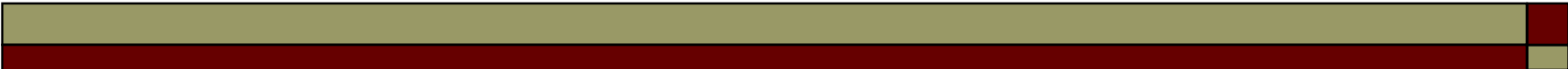
Edfu Per - Dwat (Morning House)





Fluent borders between orality and literacy: **Documented orality of institutionalised literacy**

- Architectural situation reveals the connection of literacy and orality
- Performing rituals – an organigramm
 - Cleaning / dressing in the *Morning House*
 - “picking up” necessary ritualistic **scripts** in the *House of Books*
 - Proceeding towards the sanctuary while **reciting sacred spells / texts**



Summary

- ❑ Literacy and Orality are intertwined
- ❑ Literacy should not be seen too simplistic as the ability to read and write by individuals and their respective status in the society following their practiced literacy
- ❑ Literacy has an overarching component – enable the culture as a whole to deal with texts, documents, information to build up a social and cultural memory as well as shared cultural identity
- ❑ As such elite culture literacy is working for and in the everyday life for all members of the society, either consciously or subconsciously