

Session 5 – week 2, Mon

The rebirth of Kemet:

Ancient Maat as concept within
modern indigenous African
knowledge and religion

HPAN5046/6046 Religions in Africa

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and Heritage

Ancient Egypt and Black Africa

Early Contacts

- 1955 – west African scholar Marcel Diop argued vehemently that professional Egyptologists had been concealing for decades that ancient Egyptians were “Negroes” and their characteristic civilization was a “Negro” achievement – cannot be uphold in this way

Genom testing and ancestry

- Egypt = ideal region to study historical population dynamics due to geographic location + documented interactions in Africa, Asia and Europe
- 1st mill. BC = time of foreign domination → growing numbers of foreigners living within → contributing genetically to the local population
- Research on 90 mitochondrial genomes + genome-wide data sets from 3 individual Egyptian mummies – span around 1,300 years (NK to Roman Period): Egyptians shared more ancestry with Near Easterners than present-day Egyptians (received additional sub-Saharan admixture in recent times)
- = proof that Egyptian mummies are genetic source to study ancient human history

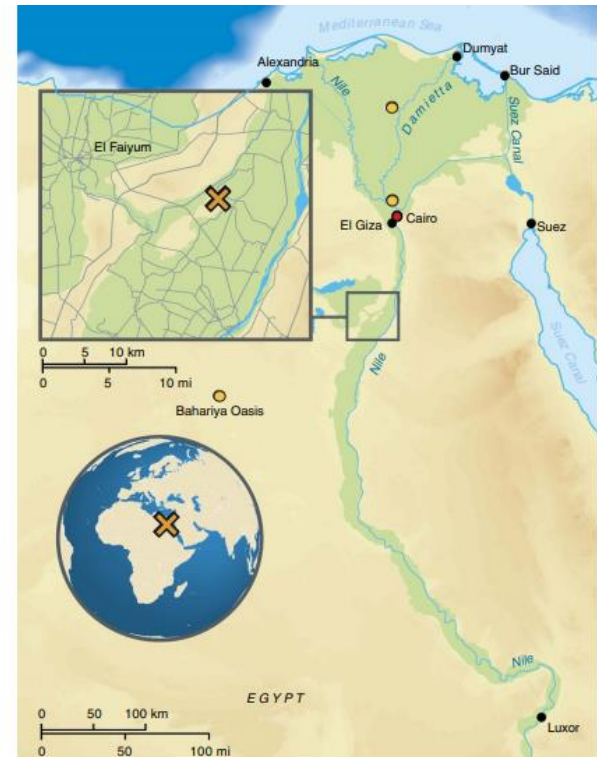


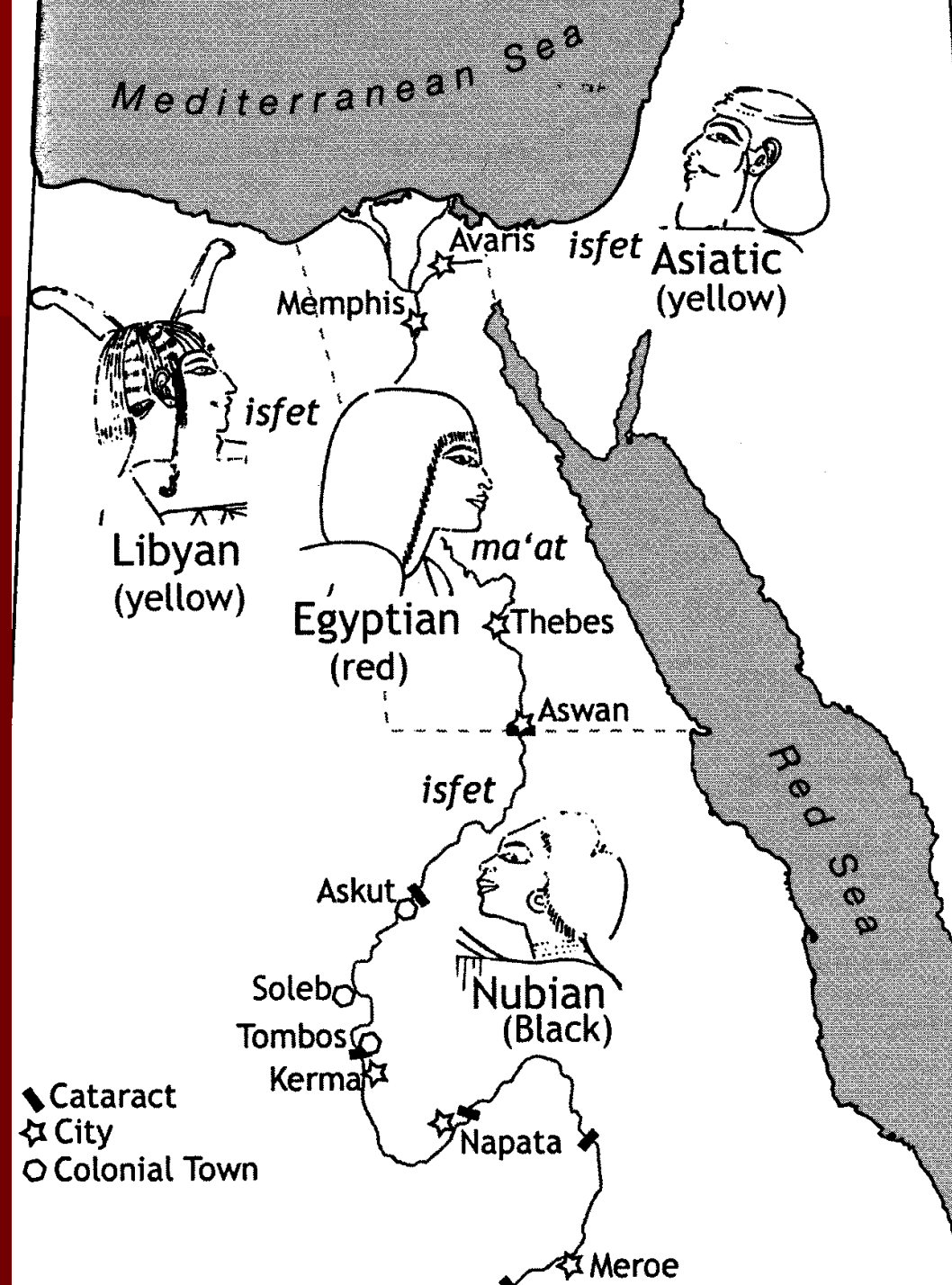
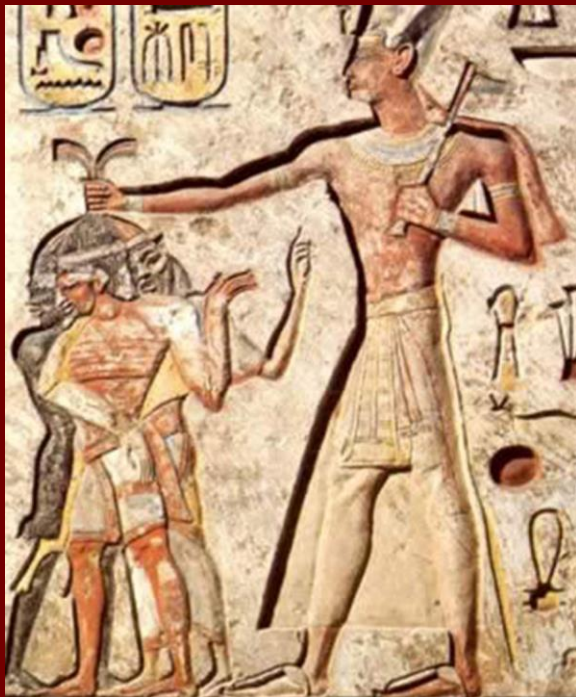
Figure 1 | Geographic context, of the samples used in this study. Map of Egypt depicting the location of the archaeological site Abusir-el Meleq (orange X) and the location of the modern Egyptian samples (orange circles) (design of the graphic by Annette Günzel).

Ancient Egypt and Black Africa

Early Contacts

- ❑ 1955 – west African scholar Marcel Diop argued vehemently that professional Egyptologists had been concealing for decades that ancient Egyptians were “Negroes” and their characteristic civilization was a “Negro” achievement – cannot be uphold in this way
- ❑ second part of Diop’s thesis – Egyptian civilization had been spread throughout Africa by emigrants from Egypt
 - Geographically ancient Egypt was an African country and her civilization was part of a mosaic of African cultures distributed over the face of that vast continent
 - serious contact between ancient Egypt and Black Africa

Ethnicity and culture

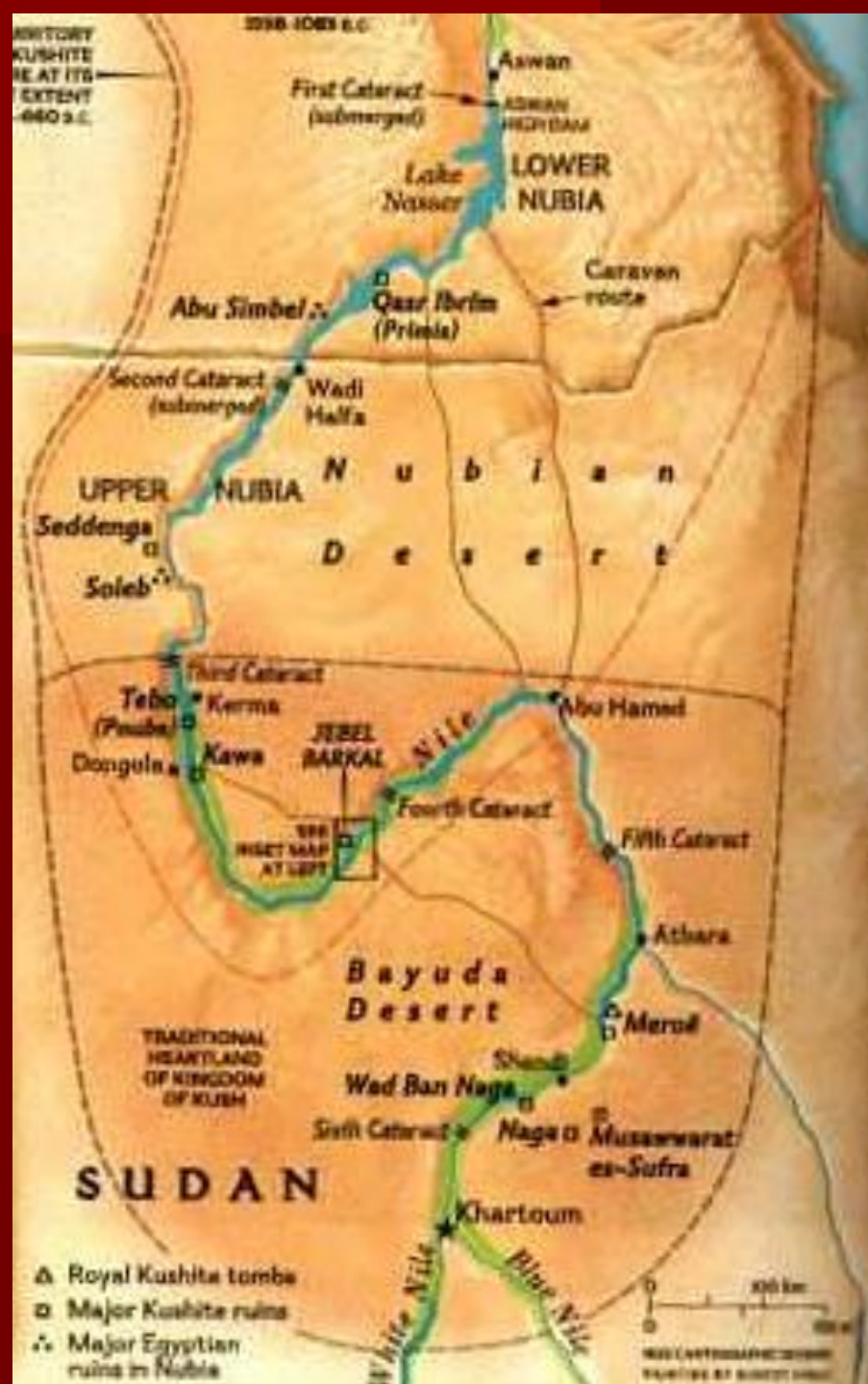


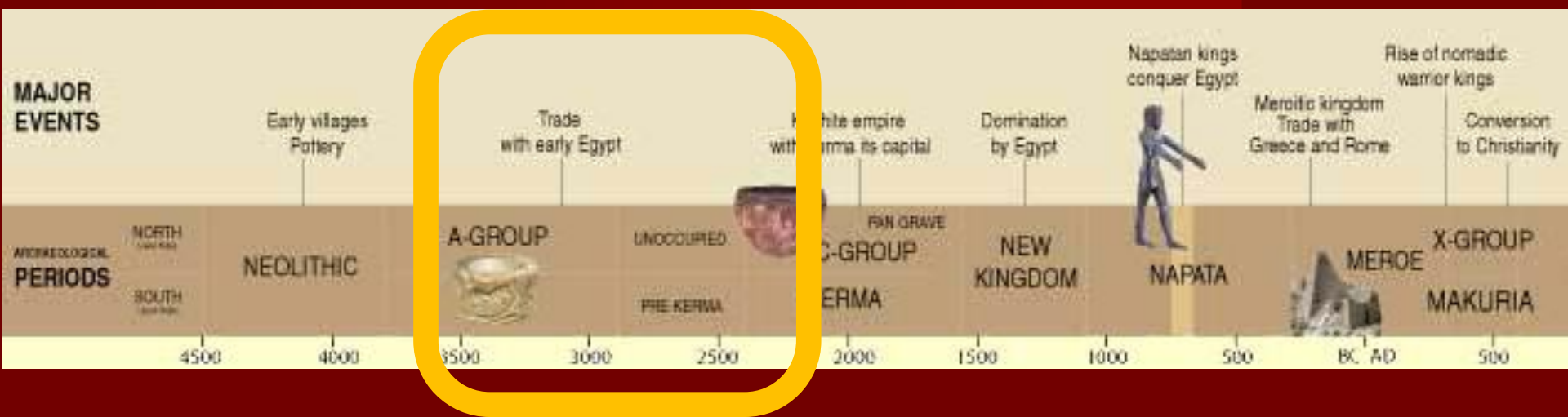
Foreigners from mortuary temple Ramesses III at Medinet Habu



As seen in Rekhmire:



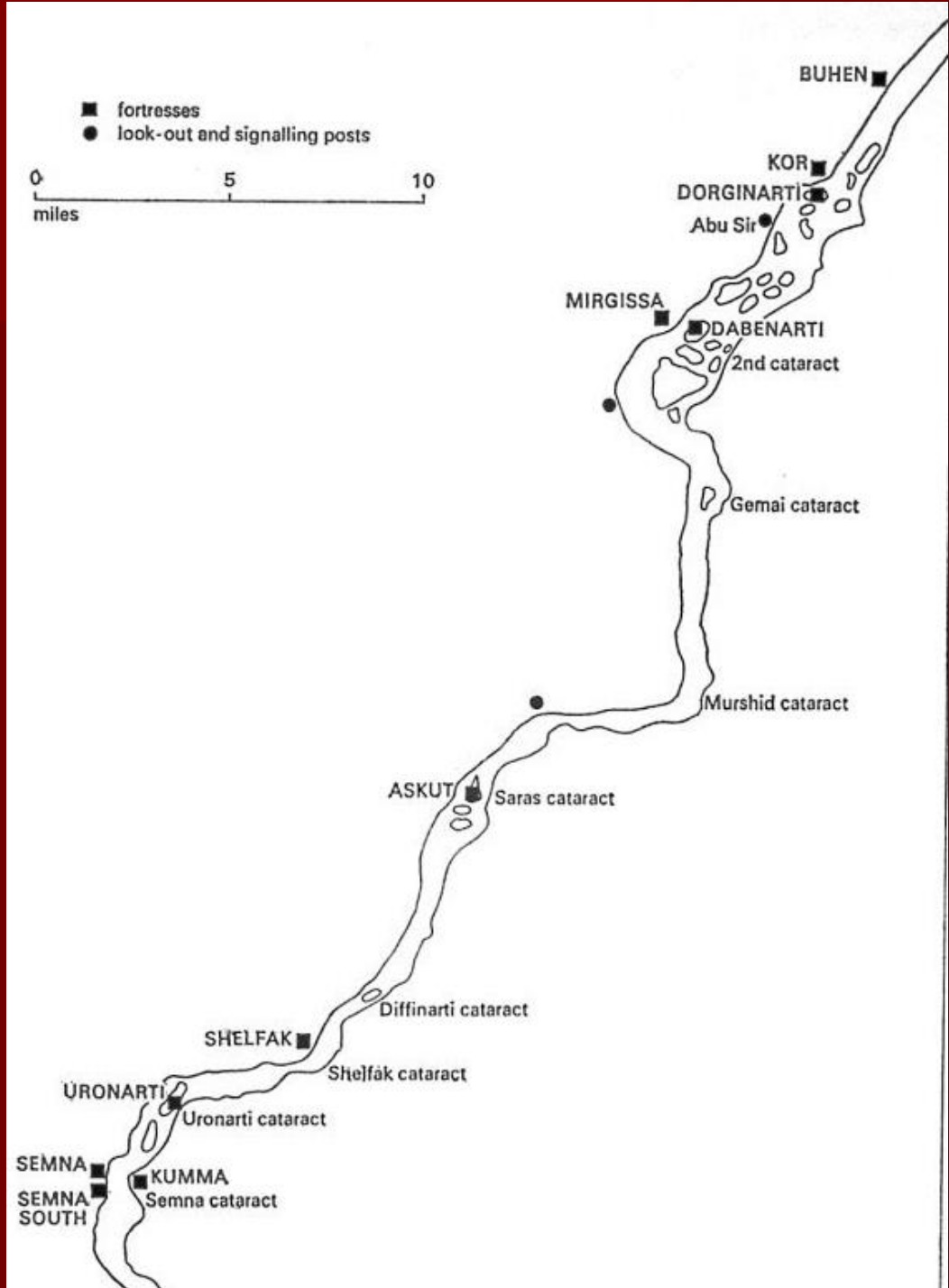




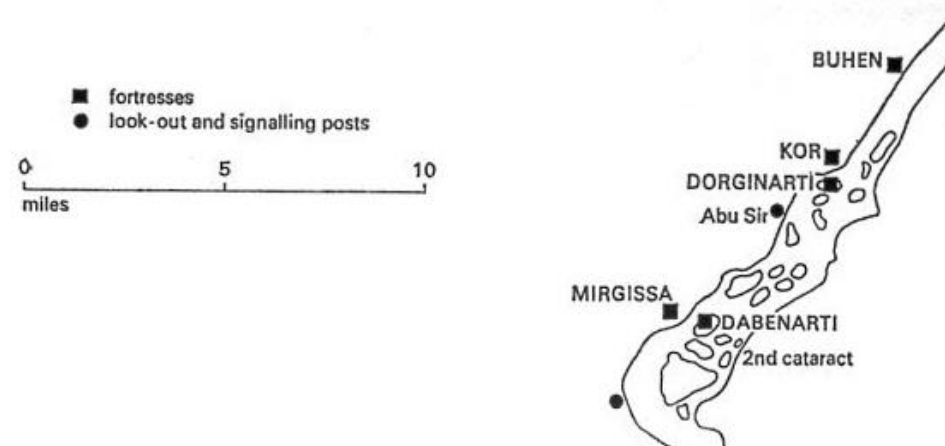
Nubian cultures

- ❑ Several cultures attested in Nubia in fourth to second millennia BC
- ❑ earliest of the Nubian cultures (the A-Group and C-Group) were located in northern Nubia
- ❑ until recently = thought that A-Group people were semi-nomadic herdsman; new research suggests a line of kings lived in Qustul in northern Nubia as early as, or perhaps even earlier than, the first pharaohs of Egypt → buried their dead in stone-lined pit graves, accompanied by pottery and cosmetic articles
- ❑ divided by their pottery styles

Egyptian colonies in Nubia around the Second Cataract



Middle Kingdom fortresses



Kerma pottery

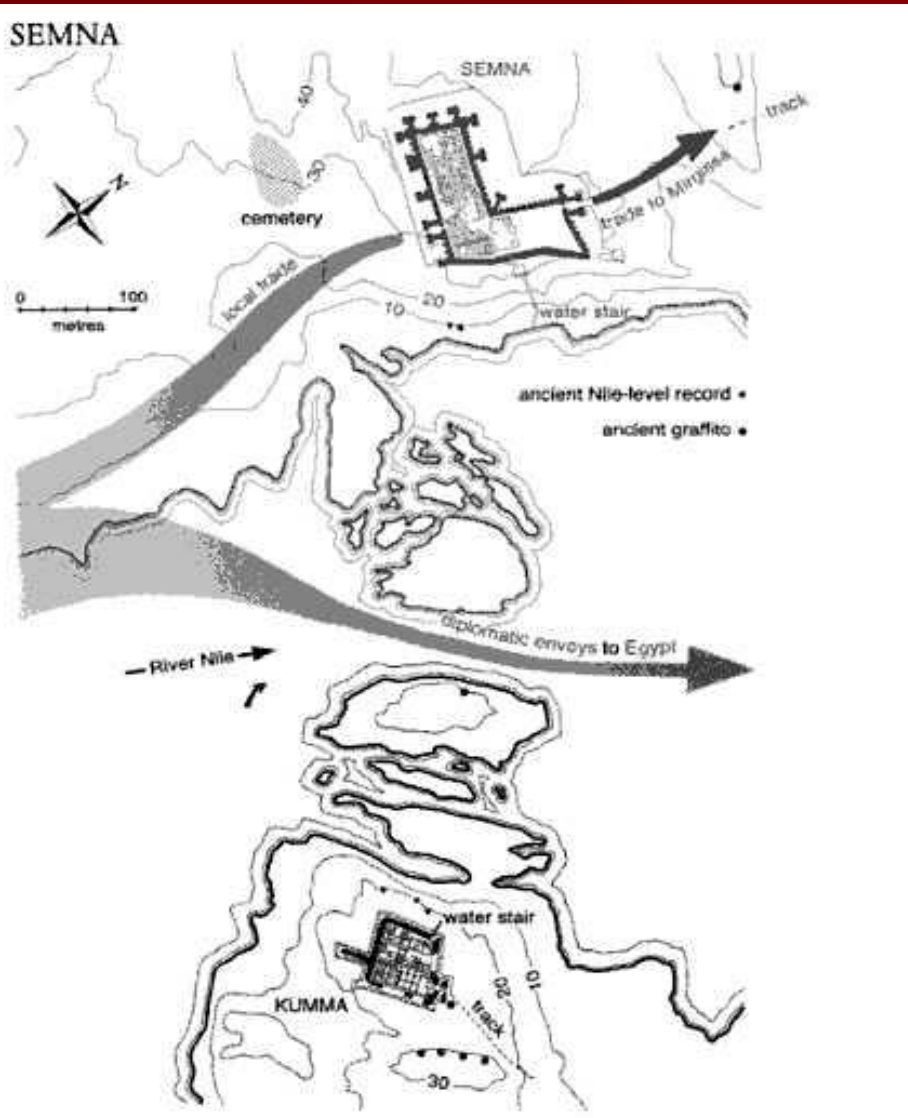
unprovenanced, but from Egypt (?)

found at Kerma



Forts of the Second cataract

"white water" at the
Second Cataract
circa 1954:



The Semna Stelae of Senusret III

– Stela from year 8 (ca. 1870 BCE)

- Year 8 stela at Semna documents his victories against the Nubians → made safe the southern frontier, preventing further incursions into Egypt
- *Southern boundary, made in the year 8, under the majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Khekuer, who is given life forever*
- *and ever; in order to prevent that any Negro should cross it, by water or*
- *by land, with a ship, (or) any herds*
- *of the Nubians; except a Nubian who shall come to do trading in Iken,*
- *or with a commission. Every good thing shall be done with them, but without allowing*
- *a ship of the Nubians to pass Heh, going downstream, forever.*

Kerma recaptured northern Nubia from Egypt

- ❑ Consolidation of power by Kerma's rulers brought its army, which was built around archers, into conflict with Middle Kingdom Egypt by 1650 BC
- ❑ Known to the Egyptians as Kush (indigenous name of the kingdom?), territory controlled by Kerma expanded north of the Egyptian fortresses at the 2nd cataract.
- ❑ military support of the kings of Kush = by Hyksos, rulers of Canaanite origin who occupied the Nile delta → Conflict ended with the rise of the Egyptian New Kingdom whose early rulers brought Kush under Egyptian control by about 1500 BC

Nubians in Egypt

- The classic Middle Egyptian phase of the Egyptian language provides evidence for Egyptian attitudes to the inhabitants of lands immediately south of Egypt
- two main words used
 - Nehesy (nHsy) for inhabitants of the river valley
 - Medjay (mDAy) for a group or groups from the deserts east of the Nubian Nile Valley
- indicates the view from Egypt, as mediated through language: it is possible that it represents a simplifying generalisation for a more complex linguistic and ethnic map of Nubia

Nubians in Egypt

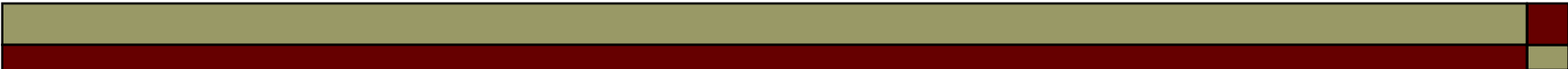
- evidence for Nubians living in Middle Kingdom Egypt is open to several interpretations
 - name Nehesy - 'Nubian' appears several times
 - does it refer to a Nubian, either born in Egypt or someone who changed their foreign name?
 - Was it just a 'fashion' to call somebody 'Nubian' or was the child darker-skinned than usual so that the parents decided to give him that name?
 - What does darker skin mean?
- led to the modern debate over race in ancient Egypt

seals of the 'eldest king's son' Nehesy



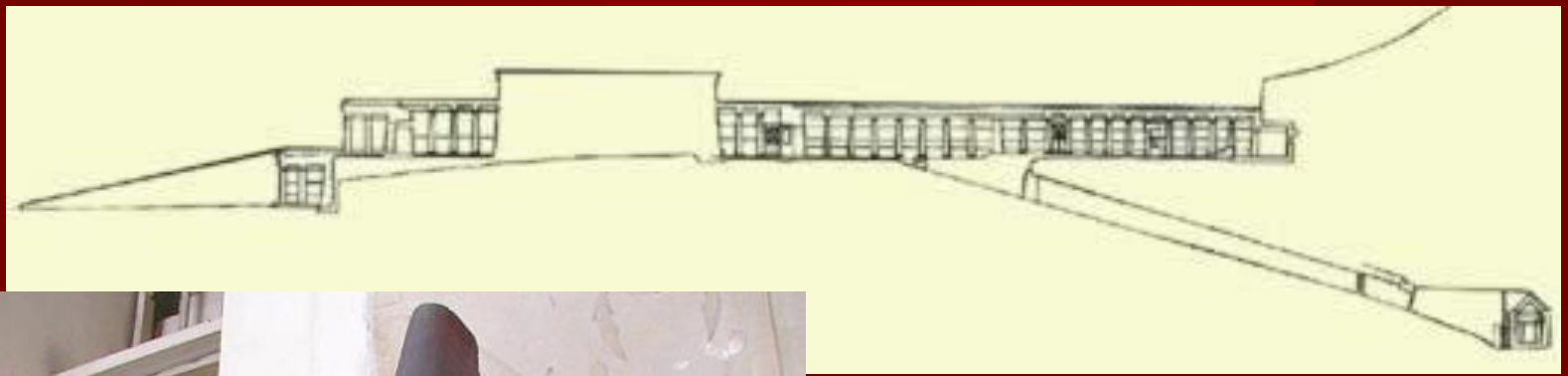
seals of the 'chief scribe of the treasurer' Nehesy





Nubians in Egypt

- ❑ Dark skinned people are sometimes depicted in Middle Kingdom art
- ❑ but very difficult to draw any conclusion: almost impossible to decide, whether Nubians or dark skin chosen for other reasons ('rebirth')
- ❑ Second Intermediate Period there is good evidence from material culture that inhabitants from Nubian eastern desert settled in Egypt (pan-graves)



Limestone relief
showing
Mentuhotep's II
wife Kemsit
BM EA 1450

From the Temple of
Mentuhotep II, Deir el-
Bahari, Egypt



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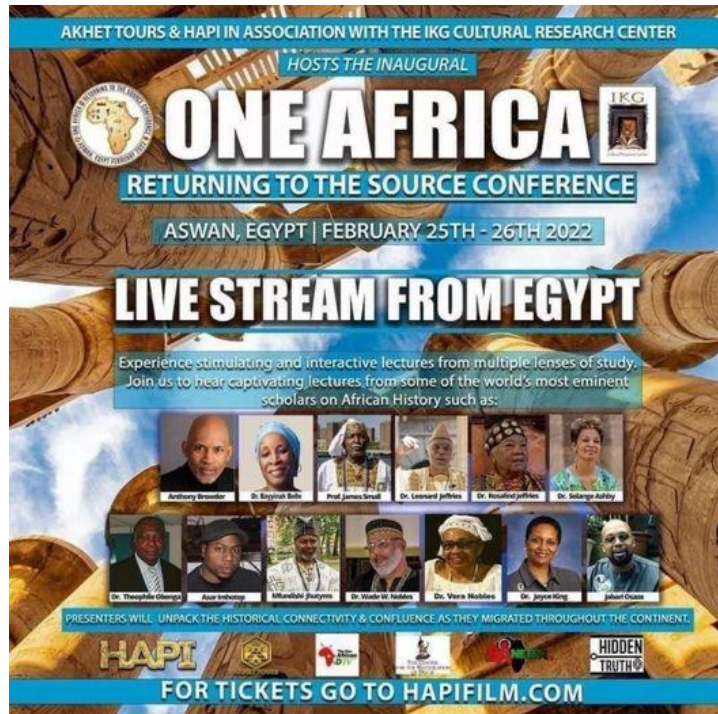
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Heritage and identity – problems and different layers of trauma?!
Inclusive or not?

Heritage and identity – problems, different layers of trauma?!



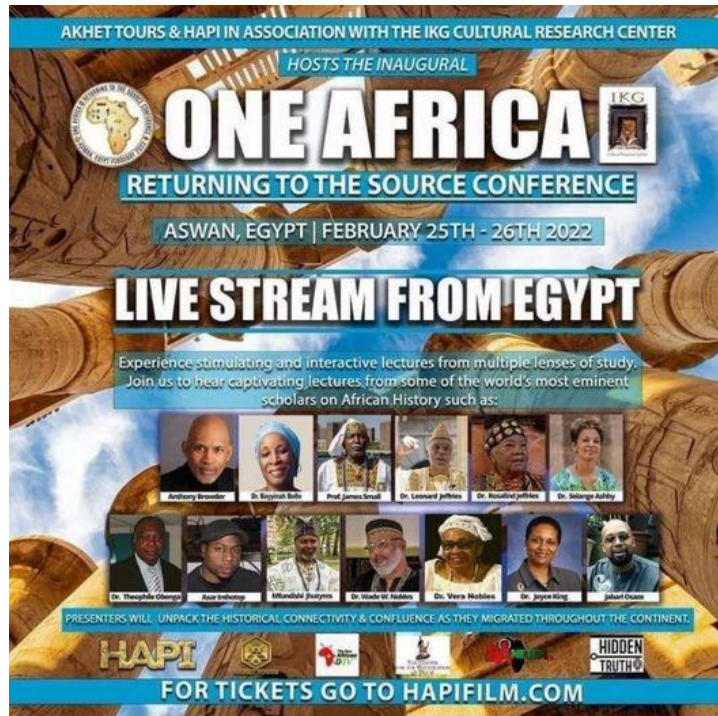
- ❑ Big debate on social media – ferocious response of many (?) Egyptians
- ❑ use of disturbing image: pharaoh smiting the Nubians, etc.) and ethnic slur words on Twitter has come as a shock to many
- ❑ Colleagues – especially in Aswan – have witnessed disturbing instances of street behaviour to the use of ethnic slur by a world-famous Egyptian Egyptologist on Egyptian TV (to no reaction from the host). A student once used the n-word in an essay, apparently without realizing it was a slur.

Heritage and identity – problems, different layers of trauma?!



- Afro-American scholars coming to Egypt to discuss the "Africanness" of Ancient Egypt seen as trigger for anger, reveals unspoken bias
- Extreme on both sides
 - potential audience of conference seems engaged in equally violent narrative: "we will make the Mediterranean red with the blood of the Egyptian children" → Biblical references???

Heritage and identity – problems, different layers of trauma?!

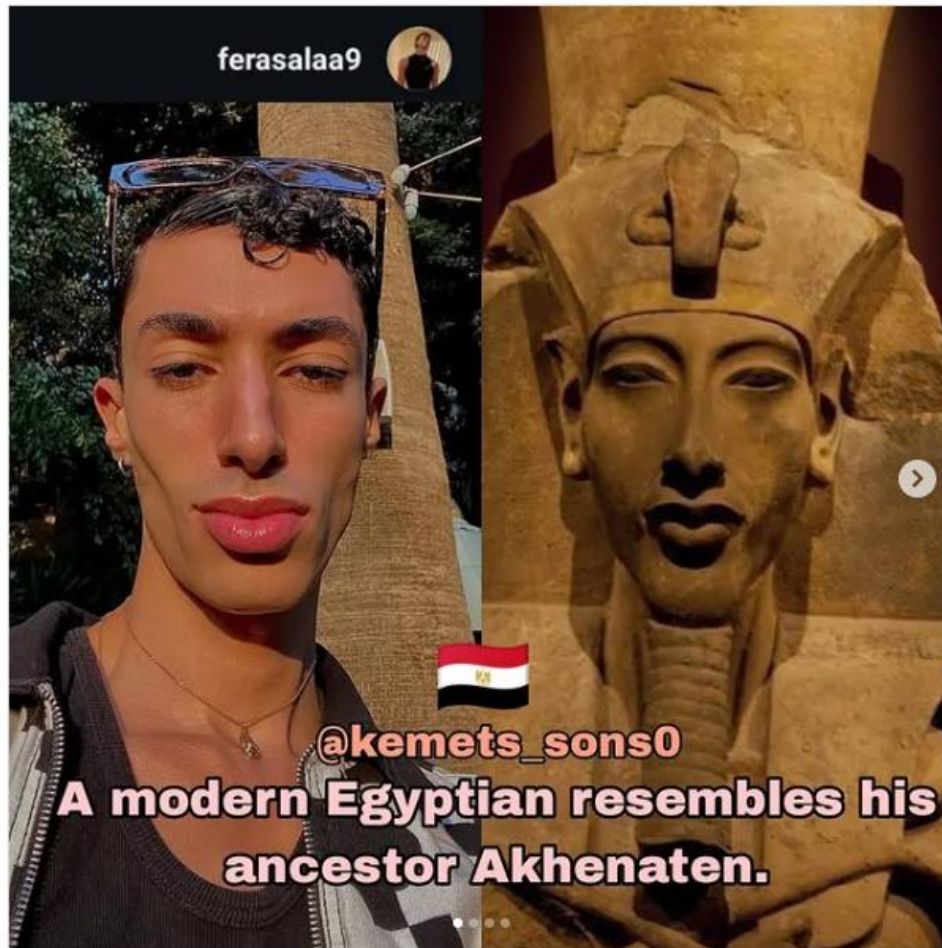


- ❑ Aswan affected in recent years by ethnic violence (2014)
- ❑ (minority) Nubians are a very sensitive topic in Egypt in general → destroying Nubian villages to build Nasser dam and lake Nasser
- ❑ Reactions similar to Pharaonism of 1919/1920 culminating in 1919 with the famous sermon of Father Sergius (Coptic priest, prominent nationalist orator) at the al-Azhar mosque - justified British to remain in Egypt on the grounds that they were protecting the Copts "let the Copts die and Muslims live as free men".

THE AFRICAN HISTORY

TRULY AFRICAN





kemets_sons0 • Follow



kemets_sons0 Akhenaten wasn't black-skinned; his features closely resemble those of modern Egyptians. The depictions of ancient Egyptians in art, statues, and wall carvings align more with the physical traits of contemporary Egyptians and North Africans, rather than those of Sub-Saharan Africans. #kemets #egypt #egyptology #africa #afro #afrocentric #black #akhenaten #tutankhamun #ankh #ancientegypt #مصر

Edited · 13w



mjrd_ae فيه فراغه بيض و سود درسوا التاريخ قبل لا تعمموا

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Racism in the Arab world, including Egypt

- President Anwar Sadat insulted as not looking "Egyptian enough" and "Nasser's black poodle“
- E.g. Nubian soccer player Mahmoud Abdel Razek stopped playing football due to racist slurs by rival Egyptian fans during a game
- Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR): black African immigrants face physical violence and verbal abuse, esp. refugees from Sudan
 - attributes violence and abuse to both a lack of government efforts at disseminating information, raising awareness and stereotyping on the part of the Egyptian media

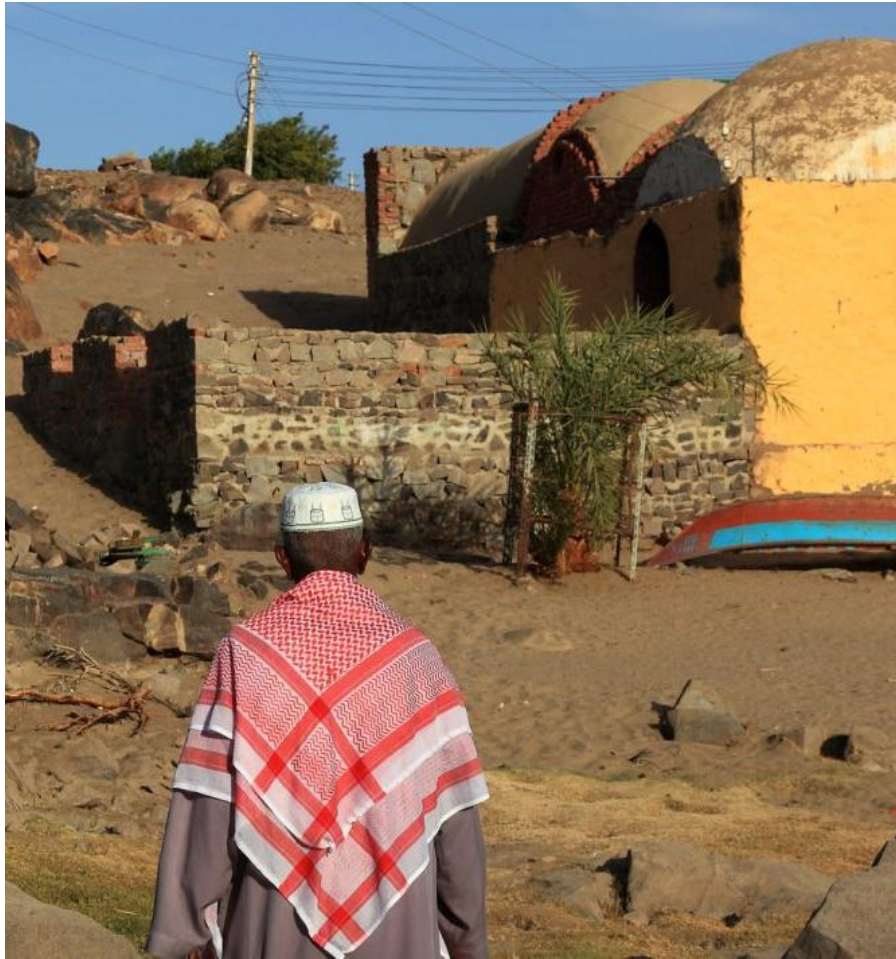
Anti-Racism – The Nubian Movement in Egypt compared with international Black Lives Matters movement?

- ❑ Nubian history: 1898 Nubia divided into Egyptian Nubia and Sudanese Nubia at 22 degrees north latitude (agreement between British + Egyptians)
- ❑ influence British colonialists evident until the Mahdist revolution, but continued with construction of reservoirs in Egyptian Nubia in 1902 (older Aswan Dam) for water for cotton cultivation → water rose → Nubians displaced to the highest point of the Nile
- ❑ No help from Egyptian government
- ❑ construction of the High Dam and creation of Lake Nasser, which flooded many Nubian villages on the banks of the Nile → displacement of Nubians (October 1963 – June 1964) organized by Egyptian government, moved villages to Kom Ombo desert: most houses unfinished, and many elderly and children died (displacement and lack of medical care)
- ❑ migration = difficult AND hope
- ❑ But became main drivers of Nubian movement

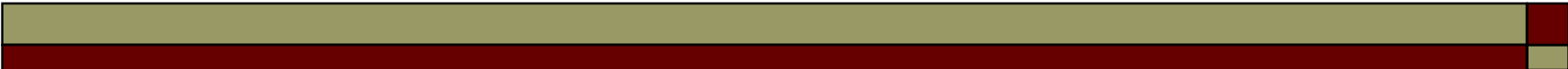
The Nubian Movement

- Arab Spring as opportunity to express Nubian mind
- Muslim Brotherhood: saw Nubian kings (25th dyn) as invaders → Provoked change: preserve the cultural / linguistic heritage of Nubia
- Nubian political activism is characterized by several qualities
 - Nubian movement organized between Cairo, Alexandria, Suez, and the villages of displacement (several tribes) → collective movement = shared common goal
 - organizational structures (committees, Nubian Lawyers Association, village associations in cities of migration)
 - BUT –action = seasonal: without clear plan or strategy → only reactions to the regime, without any anticipation of the government's actions
 - weak relationship between political parties, civil society organizations, human rights organizations = obstacle because Nubians only coordinate in times of crisis (links missing)
 - worst aspect of Nubian activism is the distance of youth and women from decision-making circles

Protests and governmental response

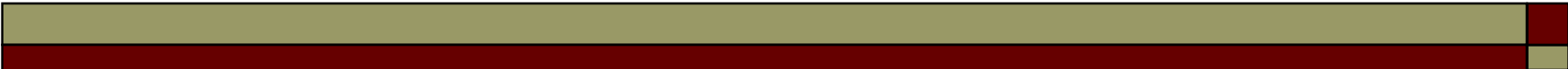


- ❑ 2017: 24 Nubian activists detained after protest calling for respect of their cultural rights
- ❑ Protesters gathered and marched 500 meters in al-Guzzayra square in downtown Aswan
- ❑ security forces were beating male and female participants



The "Black Egyptian" Theory

- ❑ often associated with Afrocentric views
- ❑ theory suggests that ancient Egyptians were black Africans and that their culture and civilization were rooted in Africa
- ❑ Counterarguments: many scholars (including anthropologists and Egyptologists) argue that ancient Egyptians had a diverse range of appearances → "black Egyptian" theory = oversimplification



Afrocentrism and Pan-Africanism

- ❑ Afrocentrism: worldview centered on history of people of African descent, often favours over non-African civilizations as response/counter to Eurocentric attitudes about African people and their historical contributions
 - function over self-determination and African agency
- ❑ Pan-Africanism: nationalist movement aiming to encourage / strengthen solidarity between all indigenous peoples and diasporas of African ancestry to counter Atlantic and Trans-Saharan slave trade
 - extends beyond continental Africans with special support among the African diaspora in the Americas and Europe

Ancient Egyptian Religion?????

KEMETISM AS RIVIVAL !

Harrison, P. 2017. Profane Egyptologists: The modern revival of ancient Egyptian religion. London Routledge.

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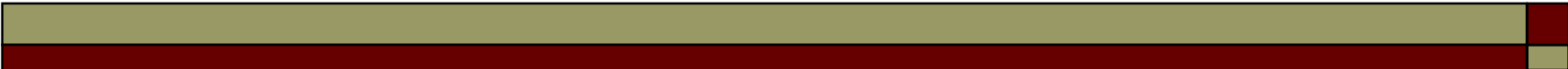
Closing thoughts

Bibliography

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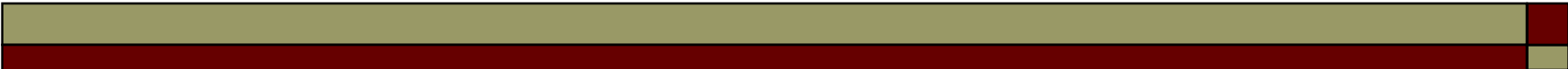
Appendix

Wave One
Wave Two
Wave Three



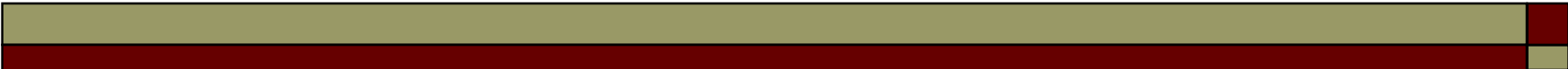
Kemetism

- ❑ Loosely defined as re-creation of the religion of ancient Egypt
- ❑ Within paganist movement (following the wider / broader historical use with denotation as “non-Christian” status)
 - Modern neo-pagan religion
 - Emerged in 1970s
 - focuses on understanding and practicing the principles of ancient Egyptian spirituality and ritual
 - Polytheistic religion
- ❑ Includes African traditional religions and combines them with contemporary (!) pharaonic religion as blue-print in the reconstruction of practices and ideologies
- ❑ Important within BAME, Black Live matters and an awareness of religious experiences

- 
-
- ❑ Kemetism, also known as Kemeticism or Neterism, is a neopagan religion reviving ancient Egyptian religion, emerging in the 1970s, and is often viewed as an African Traditional Religion with connections to other African diaspora religions.

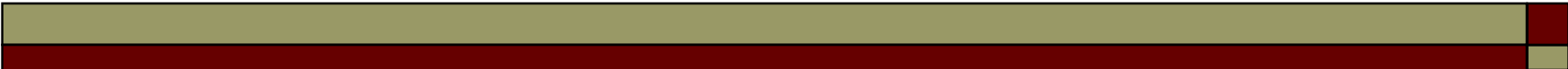
Ancient Egyptian Religion?????

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION!



HOWEVER ...

- ❑ Heightened need of knowledgeable understanding of AE religion and its civilisation beyond eclecticism and esoteric interpretation
- ❑ Eclecticism – blending several traditions of different cultures and areas (mostly) free of concern of historical and cultural authenticity
- ❑ Reconstructionist – reconstructionist understanding of ancient Egyptian religion, not simply copying it



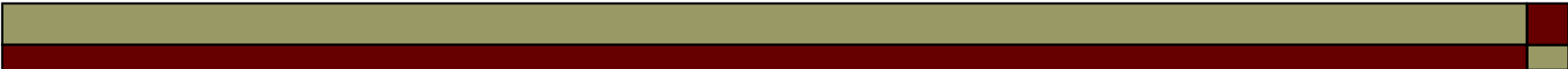
Kemetiosm and religious experience

- ❑ Ritual and Practice - Followers engage in rituals, ceremonies, and practices (offerings, prayers, magic)
- ❑ Shrines and Worship – often in both personal and public shrines, temples / shrines maintained /worldwide
- ❑ Ma’at – as central, describing order, truth, justice, balance
- ❑ Symbolism – utilisation of various symbols from ancient Egyptian religion (Ankh, Khepera, Eye of Horus), which hold significant meaning and represent important aspects of the religion.
- ❑ Parent Divination (Kemetic Orthodoxy) – followers choose a "parent god/goddess" or pair of deities through a Rite of Parent Divination → determine deity most closely related to individual



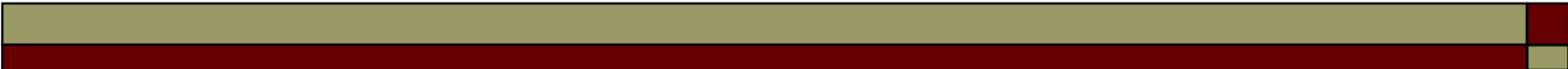
THE LIVING LEGACY





BUT ... - at the same time

- ❑ Heightened need of knowledgeable understanding of Kemeticism, paganism etc beyond Egyptological and religious studies interpretation
- ❑ Be open for interdisciplinarity, comparatist views on (ancient) religions and aspects of an anthropological view on (past) religions
- ❑ Multicultural and Inclusive –multicultural religion, not limit membership based on ethnicity or skin colour, prohibits racial discrimination among its members



Kemetic Orthodoxy

- ❑ prominent branch of Kemetism
- ❑ founded by Tamara Siuda
- ❑ movement emphasizes the importance of correct action, rituals, and liturgy, often prioritizing practice over strict adherence to a specific scripture

But open to many interpretations



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1 Reply Award Share



WebenBanu OP • 6mo ago

Our gods are immanent in the world around us, so They're already here. To get Their attention, I like to recite some of Their epithets. Here are some translated passages from a text which has lists of these epithets.

For Sekhmet, the epithets start on the 7th page of the document:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/zqu48m6pkup1guqt0hg31/Sekhmet.pdf?rlkey=4chw445ek5cebxtqszowimew4&dl=0>

For Sobek, the epithets also start on the 7th page of the document:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/zmvzt15rohd0fi8egyq0d/Sobek.pdf?rlkey=nwq0mv54eqryelgbtul35wli8&dl=0>

For Heru, it's a bit more complicated, as there are several Herus (Horuses) listed. I'll boil it down to three.

Heru pa Khered is Horus as an infant. His whole life is ahead of Him, and He is often invoked in magic as He overcomes various threats to His health and safety with the help of His mother. His epithets start on page 4 of this document:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/b2etzw2uqd1hnelkqmh2w/Herupakhered.pdf?rlkey=5lid4fawgq9vspky74d25p7c2&dl=0>

Hope that helps!

Heru Sa Aset is the son of Isis and Osiris Who seeks to reclaim His throne and avenge His father. His epithets start on page 5 of the document:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/tjemhc8mifvxkbn9m4j1j/Herusaaset.pdf?rlkey=vbq15vynzvuj4lc04q2qsn4i1&dl=0>

Heru-Wer has His throne and is reconciled with Sutekh. He is still the son of Osiris and Isis if I recall correctly, but He's past the need for revenge now and focuses on rulership. His epithets start on page 4 of the document:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/f5firo0iv21mv7y0ps9f8/Heruwer.pdf?rlkey=q1zvp4d5aznbp11yre0v1o90n&dl=0>

Hope that helps!

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But open to many interpretations



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harm in taking breaks to recharge and refresh.

Other than what I have said before but again it's a work in progress. So take it with a grain of salt, pepper, sugar, spice, whatever spice you like.

3 3 Reply Award Share ...



Heidr_the_Dragon • 7mo ago • Edited 7mo ago

Reconstruction of the Kemetic Path or Reconstruction of Neteru Worship

Currently, I am in the phase of Transliterating texts and reconstructing practices and faiths. I am putting them into a document, and maybe I'll publish it as a book.

Beliefs

When it comes to my own personal beliefs, though, it is my own and separate from any religion. It is a blend of many things and perspectives. When it comes to reconstructionist vs. revivalists I think they both have their purpose and are personal to each person.

Practice

For my Kemetic practice, I currently work with Djehuty but plan on working with Anpu and Suketh. I'm still not in a place to properly have an altar or do what I'd like for offerings. As I mentioned, I am still in the process of constructing.

I posted here more about it: <https://www.reddit.com/r/Kemetic/s/49qNhel3WQ>

I may also post here: https://www.reddit.com/r/TOP_Occult_Community/s/dbAFp0CUP9 or on my (unpublished) website anything about it or what I find.

Advice

All paths are personal, so don't fret about doing anything "right." I personally like to ask the spirits/gods themselves how they like things done, what they like, etcetera, and not rely to much on others' correspondences, as most of the time their personal, it can be constructed from ancient texts though.

In reality, although (at least as we think they are), we put it all under "Kemeticism." There were local beliefs and practices. All with their own pantheon and hierarchy. So again, there isn't a "the way only" way of doing things.

Even though we may never know the full story and all we have are interpretations, I do appreciate efforts to reconstruct or revive things.

3 3 Reply Award Share ...

But open to many interpretations



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zy ago • edited zy ago

First of all a big thank you and *henu* to [r/WebenBanu](#) for the description in six parts which is like a mini introduction/beginner's course <3

I describe *myself* as 'pantheist & Kemetic animistic polytheist', to others (if and when) as 'Kemetic polytheist' and to other Kemetics (if and when) as 'Kemetic revivalist' :D

Important to my path are (amongst other things):

- Cosmology: the idea that the Self Created One (Existence) burst forth from the Cosmic Egg (Universe) nurtured and infused by the Primordial Waters (Potential). As main personalisation I link the Nun/et (Primal Waters) to Neit and the Self Created One to Amun (the *hidden* "aspect"), with Ra (the *visi8ble* "aspect") [NB I am putting aspect in quotes because I still see them as Netjeru in Their own rights.] Atum I see as the fist manifestation of our earth planet (the Primordial Mound) with Shu and Tefnut as atmosphere. (As a side note: I like how in Kemetism - unlike any other cosmology/mythology the earth is male and the sky is female :))
- Ma'at: I cannot say in words how very much I appreciate, honour, worship etc etc this concept personified by the Netjert Ma'at. Ma'at gives meaning and purpose to, well, absolutely everything. I love nothing more than kindness, generosity, justice, wisdom, putting things right, harmony. Having Ma'at as the be-and-end-all is what I love about Kemeticism the most!
- Afterlife: the idea that the deceased person (and by person I mean any being with a personality) first undergoes a transition (through the Duat), being judged (in the Hall of Ma'at), the weighing of the heart is so meaningful to me, then their essence being transformed into an akh. And my belief here is that, unless a person has lived against ma'at and lived a life for *isfet*, that "amount" of them which lived ma'at will live on as akh. (Basically, a person who has fully lived ma'at will be a very strong akh, whereas someone who had faults but not to the point of being on the side of *isfet* will remain as a weak/er akh.) The "remainder" of the composite-soul is then being recycled back via Wesir into new forms of life.
- Interconnection: the understanding that everything is interconnected and that - again as part of ma'at - we are taking care not only of other *humans* but also of animals and plants. I love how Kemeticism - unlike other religious views - are not androcentric to the exclusion of animals and plants.
- 'Animistic Polytheism': the idea that the Netjeru are immanent animistic Powers. They are not removed from nature, cosmos, and mind but are *present* in the very things They represent.
- Civilisation/Society: while by no measure perfect, I find that AE civilisation and society was not only head and shoulders above any other ancient civilisation, but in many respects superior to modern Western society. (I guess I'm a genuine "Kemetic snob" :D)

To be continued.

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Reply

Award

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