

F12, Week 3 – Friday

Case Study: Osiris and the sacred landscape of Abydos

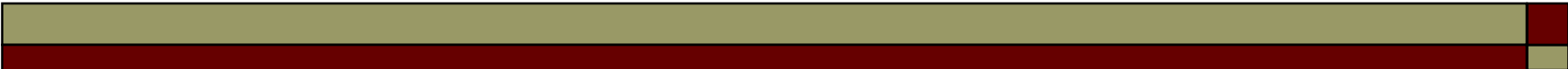
HPAH5076/6076

Funerary Beliefs in Ancient Egypt

Dr. Katharina Zinn

Reading

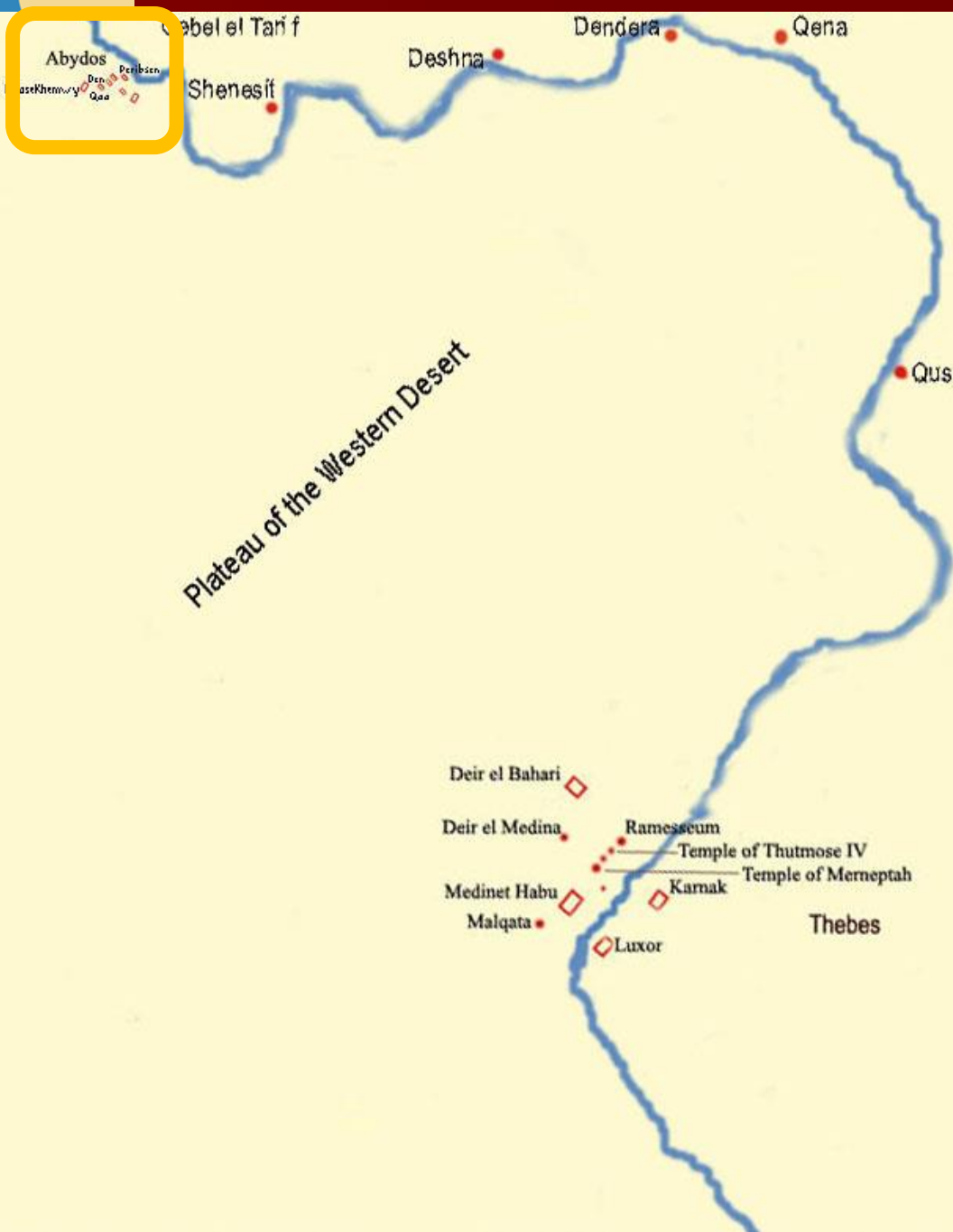
- ❑ O'Connor, D. 2009. *Abydos: Egypt's First Pharaohs and the Cult of Osiris*.
- ❑ Richards, J. 2005. *Society and Death in Ancient Egypt: Mortuary Landscapes of the Middle Kingdom*. Cambridge: CUP.
- ❑ Richards, J. 1999. Conceptual Landscapes in the Egyptian Nile Valley. In: Ashmore, W.; Knapp, B. 1999. *Archaeologies of Landscapes*. Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 83-100.



Additional Reading

- Ashmore, W.; Knapp, B. 1999. *Archaeologies of Landscapes*. Oxford: Blackwell. → especially chapter 1: Archaeological Landscapes.

Mediterranean Sea



Temple of
Ahmose

Temple of
Sensuoret III

Temple of
Seti I

Temple of
Ramses II

ROYAL
TOMBS

Aha

PUNERARY
ENCLOSURES

BOAT
GRAVES

Khasekhemwy
(Shunet el-Zebib)

Aha

Temple of Osiris

Harbor

Connector Canal

To Nile River
5 mi (8 km)

Canal

ANCIENT ABYDOS

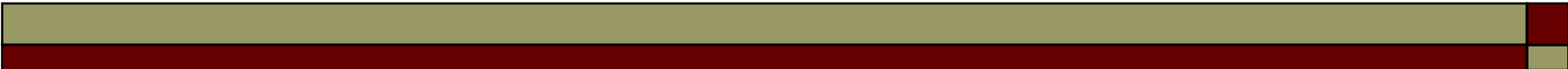
-  Early Dynastic
(1st-3rd dynasties)
ca 2950-2575 B.C.
-  Middle Kingdom
(11th-13th dynasties)
ca 1975-1640 B.C.
-  New Kingdom
(18th-20th dynasties)
ca 1539-1075 B.C.
-  Late Period
(25th-31st dynasties)
ca 715-332 B.C.

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

ART BY RICHARD SCHLECHT
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAP 8

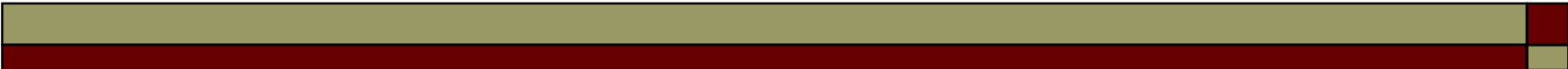
Landscape – Ritual landscape

- 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, constructed by the people inhabit the landscape → convey their intentions and meanings



Landscape – Ritual landscape

- Landscape often seen as being neutral
- But has binary relationship between people and nature
- Space =
 - Medium for human activity
 - Outcome of human activity
- Creates specific places → which NOT exists apart from that activity



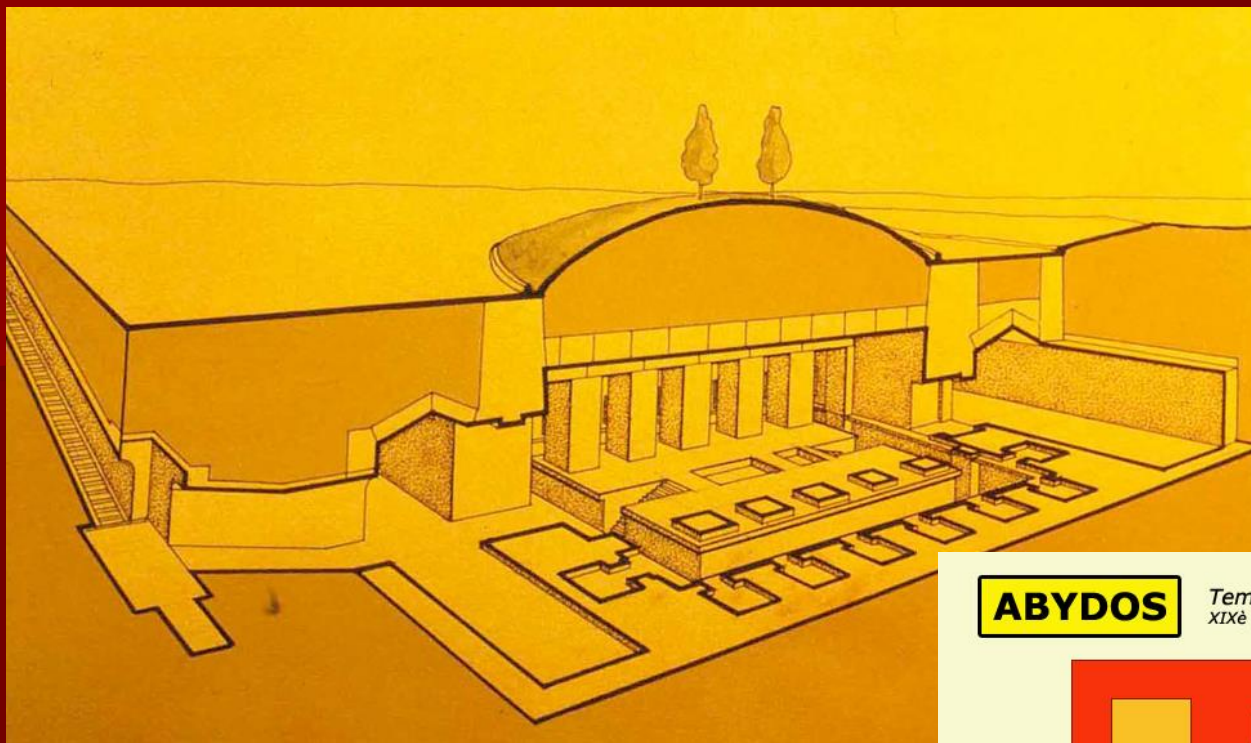
Definition of LANDSCAPE here:

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

Abydos: Um el-Quaab Temple Seti I

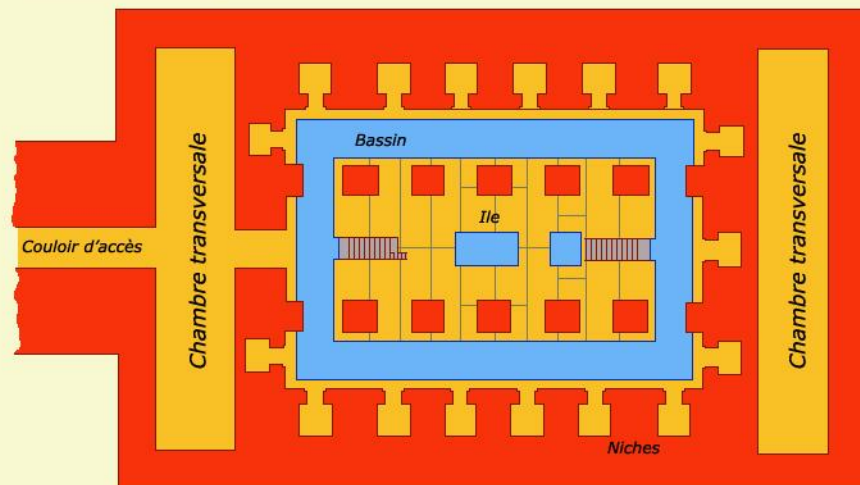






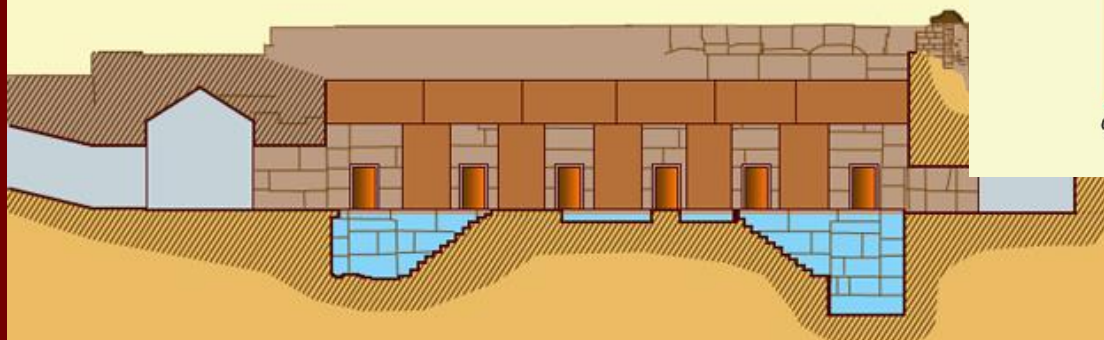
ABYDOS

Temple de Séthi I : l'Osireion - cénotaphe
XIX^e dynastie



ABYDOS

Temple de Séthi I : l'Osireion - cénotaphe
XIX^e dynastie
COUPE



Temple of
Ahmose

Temple of
Sensuoret III

Temple of
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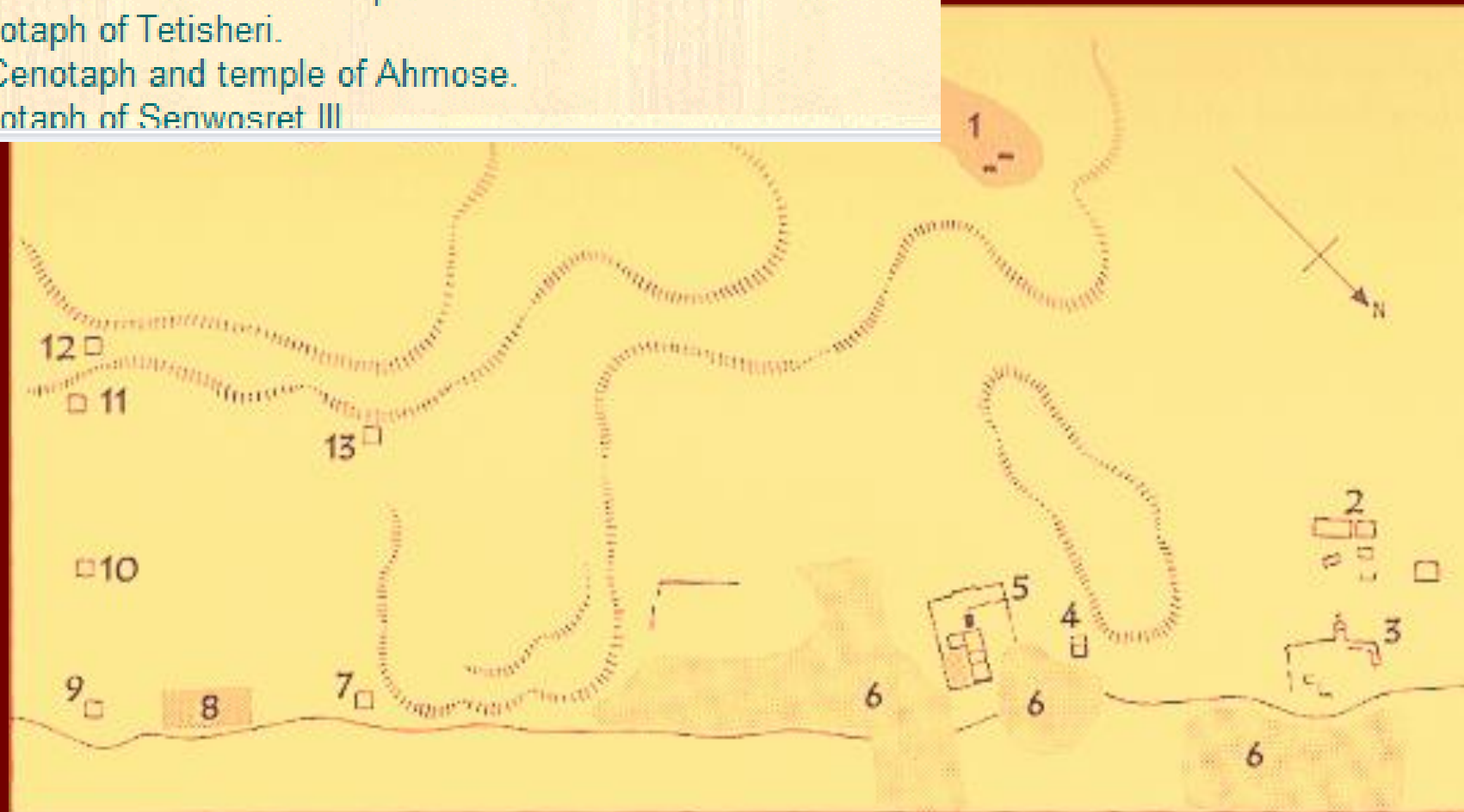
ANCIENT ABYDOS

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ART BY RICHARD SCHLECHT
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAP 8

- 1: Umm el-Qa'ab; Royal tombs of Dyn 0-1.
- 2: Shunet el-Zebib; Early Dynastic Funerary Enclosures
- 3: Kom el-Sultan; Temple of Wesir/Khenti-Amentiu & settlements.
- 4: Temple of Ramesses II.
- 5: Temple of Seti I and Osirerion
- 6: Modern village of el-Araba el-Madfuna.
- 7: Temple of Senwosert III
- 8: Middle and New Kingdom settlement.
- 9: Pyramid of Ahmose and temple of Ahmose Nefertari.
- 10: Cenotaph of Tetisheri.
- 11-12: Cenotaph and temple of Ahmose.
- 13: Cenotaph of Senwosret III





Khasekhemwy
Qa'a
Semerkhet
Memeith
Anedjib
Den
Djet
Djer
Peribsen
Narmer
Ka
Iri Hor
Hor Aha
Cemetery 'U'
Tomb Uj

200 m



Imagery © 2006 Earthstar
Map data © 2006 AMN

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Umm el-Qaab = Arabic for 'Mother of Pots' – area, excavated by Petrie (late 19th and early 20th c.) = 2 cemeteries: U and B

U: dated to Predynastic era, many tombs and offering pits;
 U-j: 12-chambered, bricklined structure, for a prominent Predynastic king or ruler

B: Early Dynastic Period, royal burial place: 6 kings + 1 queen Dyn. I, 2 kings Dyn. II → large funerary structures, some with satellite burials for servants (accompanied king into the Afterlife)

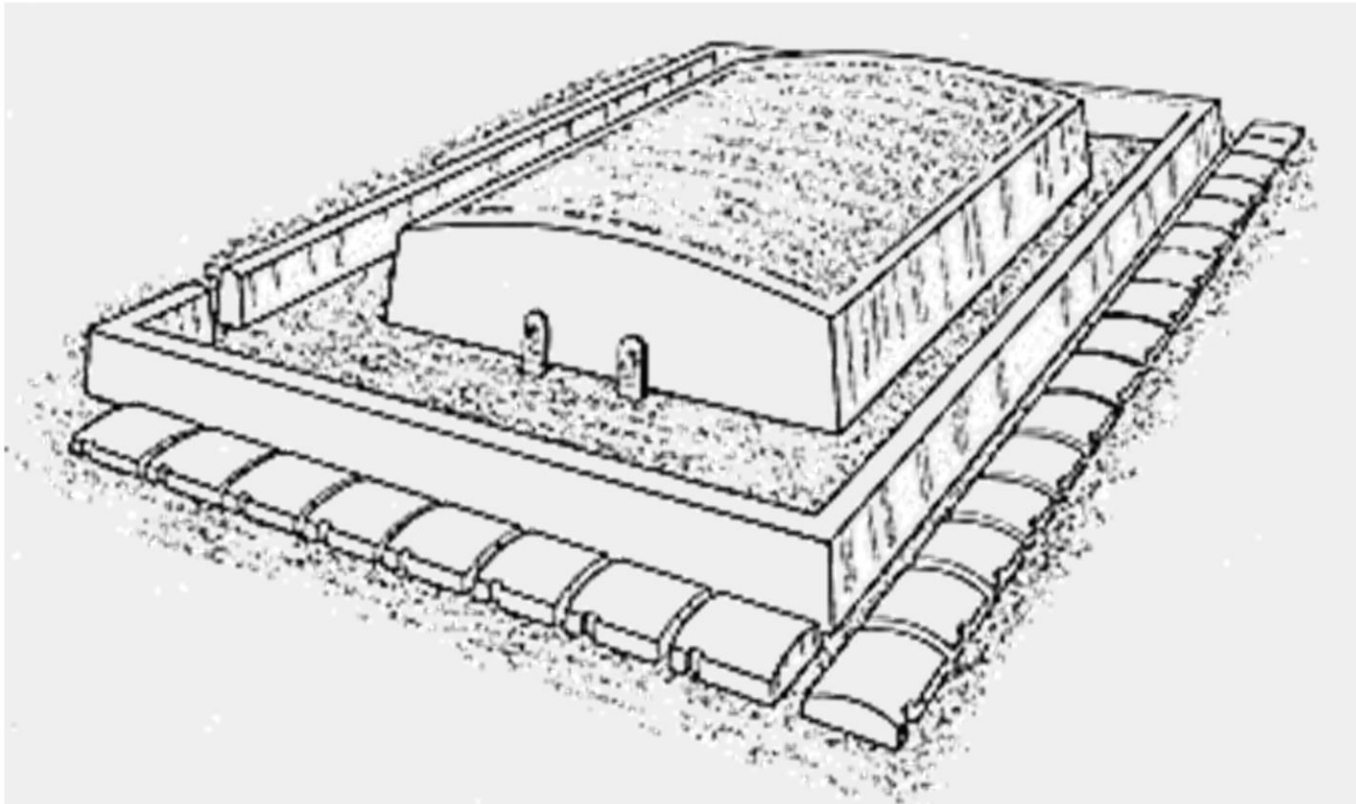
tombs = large, square pits dug into the ground, lined with mudbrick walls + added extra chambers

wooden boat graves nearby → theory: early funeral structures = prototypes of OK pyramid complexes.

Mounds of sherds—the remains of cups, bowls, and other pieces of pottery smashed to the ground as offerings for Wesir (Osiris),—have inspired a modern nickname for the site of Egypt's earliest royal tombs: Umm el-Qaab, or "mother of offering pots." Abydos became an important pilgrimage center after Middle Kingdom priests proclaimed the tomb of Djer, a 1st-dynasty king, as the burial place of Osiris, god of the dead. An annual festival honoring the death and resurrection of Osiris brought crowds from around the country to this sacred place.



One possible reconstruction of mastaba of queen Merneith in Abydos



The important tomb Uj

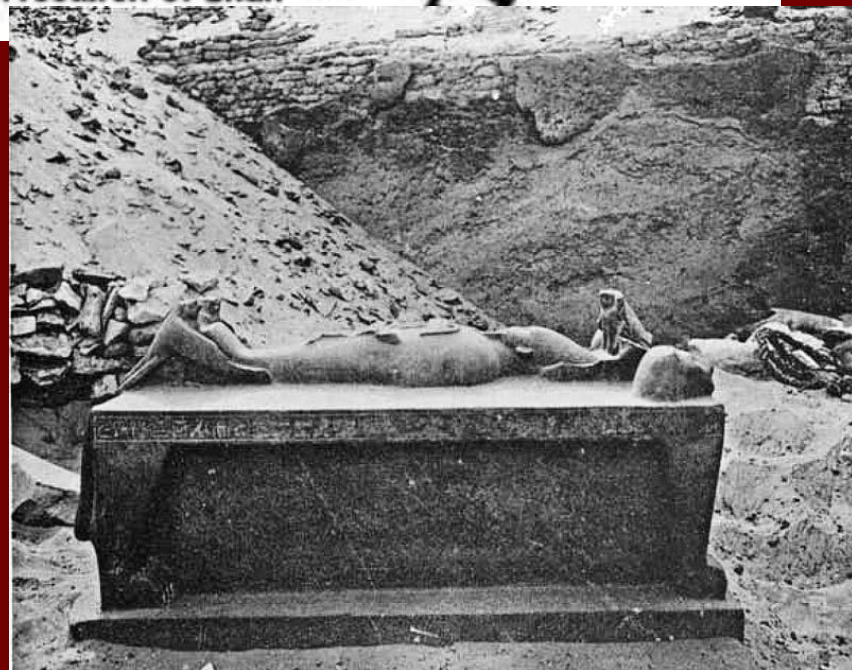
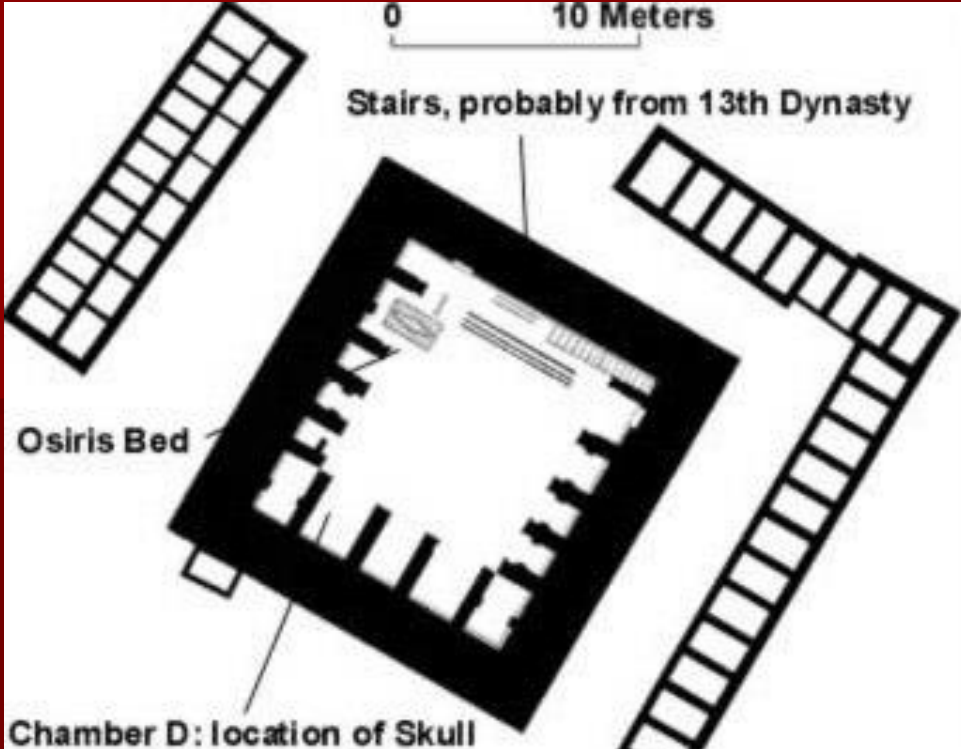


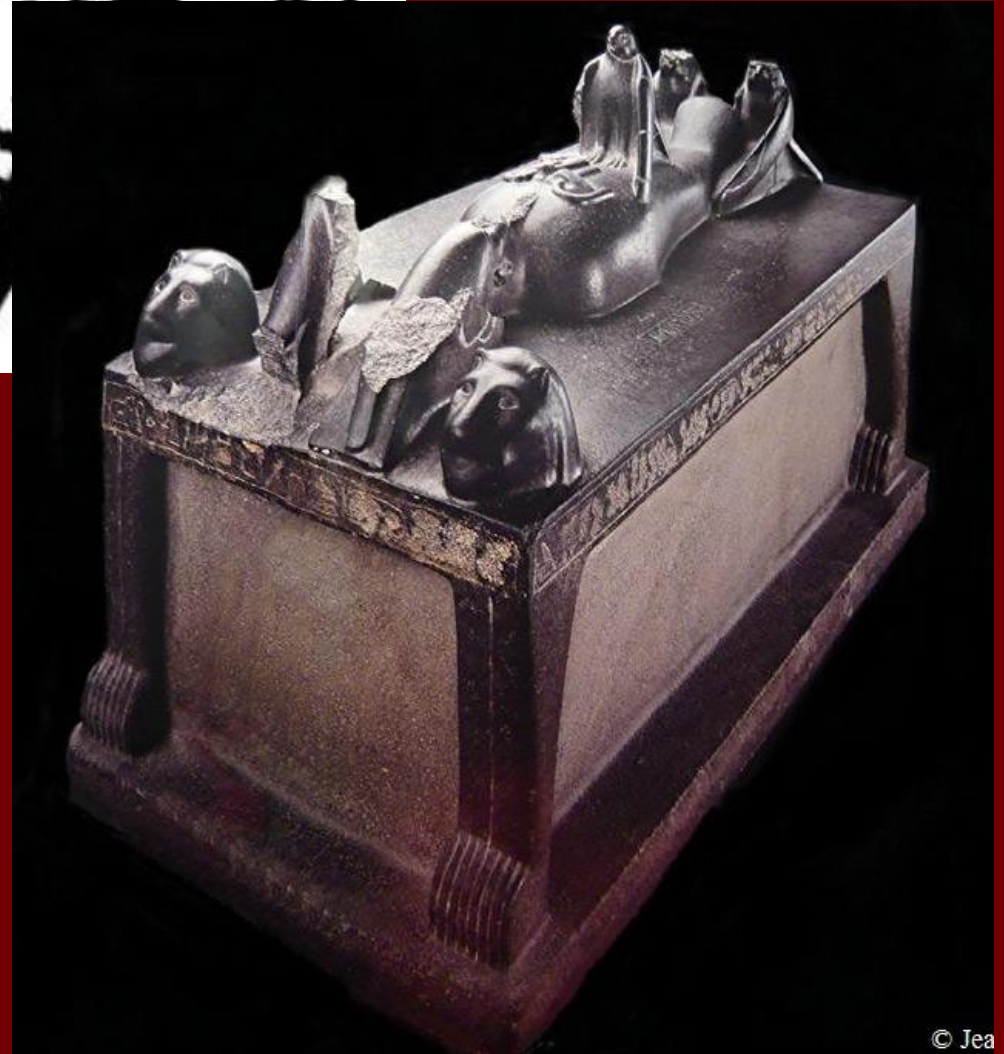
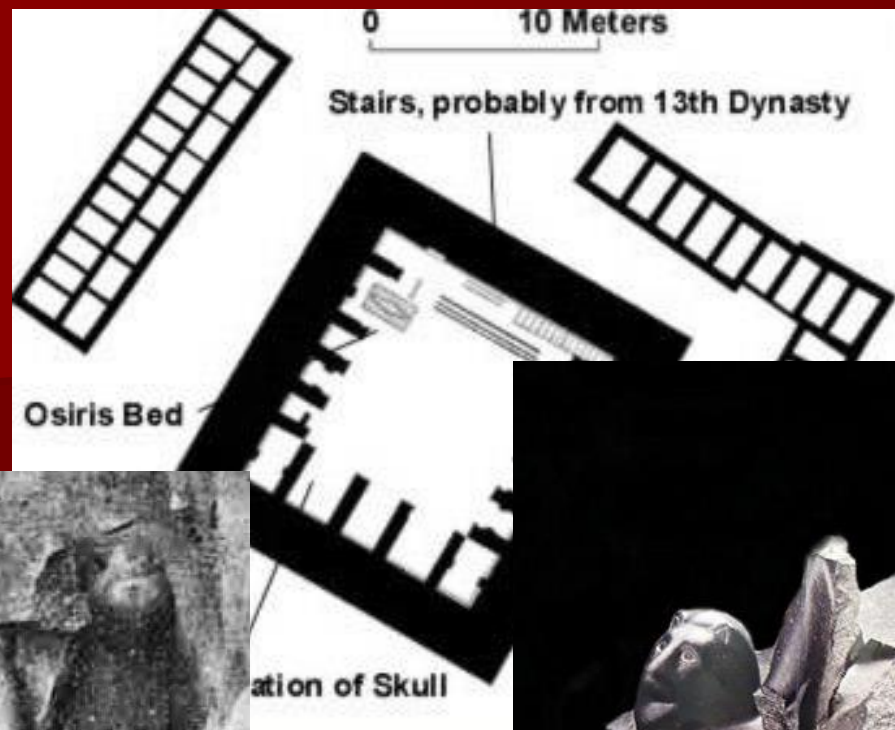
Funerary Complex of Aha



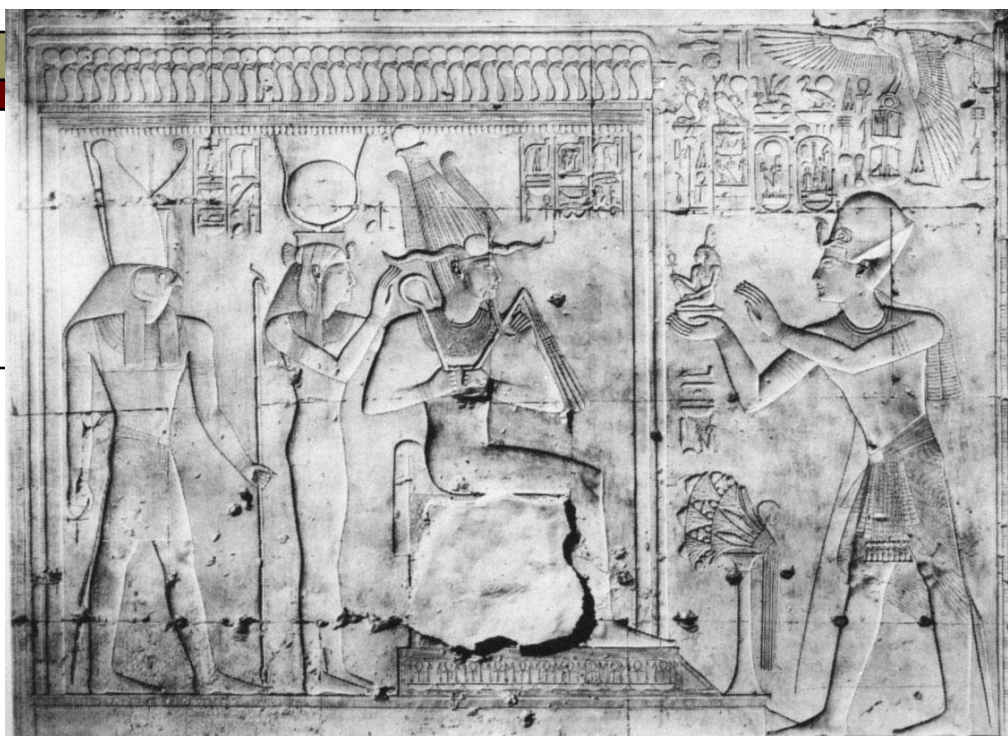
Djer







Osiris myth

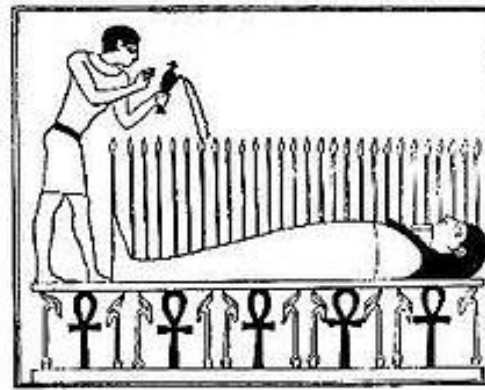


- Several different versions (?) in Egypt, but best known from (misunderstood) versions of Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus
- chthonic (earth) deity – fertility of earth and all on it
- first appears in texts end of the Fifth Dynasty (2500–2350 BC) - private mastabas and Pyramid Texts (Unas)
- Name Wsr-jr –weser, "mighty" → Osiris = the "mighty one"



Osiris myth

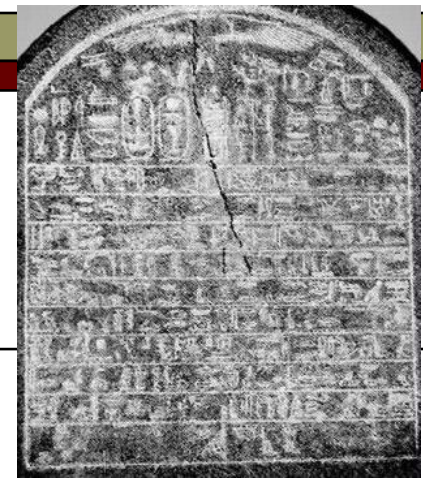
□ mmmm



Osiris-Neptra, wheat growing from (Philae) – sprouting wheat implies resurrection



Wagaf/Neferhotep Stela



- ❑ granite stela
- ❑ south-west corner of the North Cemetery (1 of 4) – to enclose ‘Sacred Land south of Abydos’
- ❑ royal decree: promulgated by Wagaf and later usurped by Neferhotep I – 13th dyn. → time of upheaval (SIP), sacred places are the only safe areas to guaranty an eternal afterlife
- ❑ Explains which parts of the cemetery were available for use to keep unimpeded processional way to the tomb of Osiris at the Umm el-Qa’ab

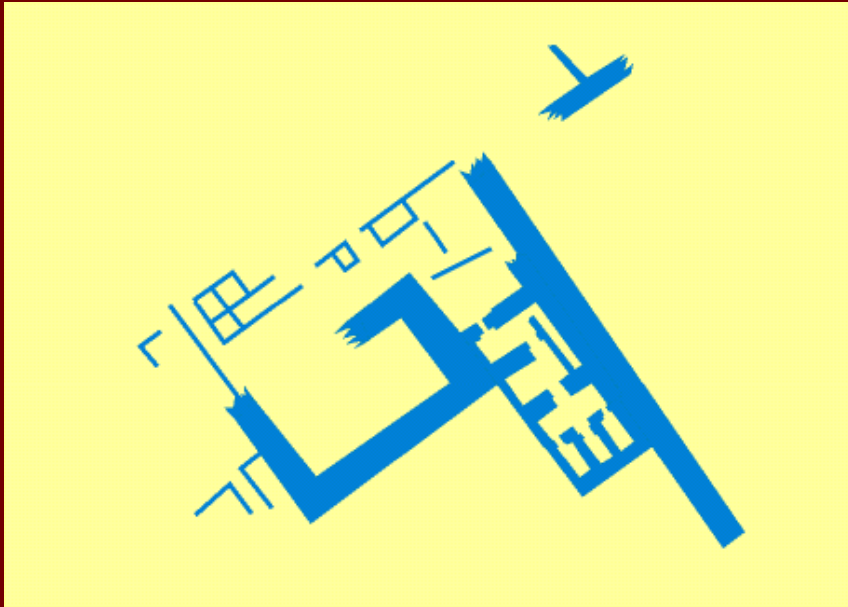
Umm el-Qaab and South Hill

- 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





Earliest Temple - Kom el-Sultan, the Early Town



- walled town called Kom el-Sultan
- Remains brick-built temple to canine deity Khentamentiu, (Foremost of the Westerners') - massive mudbrick wall is from the 30th Dynasty
- Traces of early settlement Remains



- fragmented vase with *serekh* of Aha
- → show that place was in use already at the beginning of the 1st Dyn.
- only a few blocks remain from the earliest temple, which show traces of repeated rebuildings and which from the 12th Dynasty was dedicated to Wesir



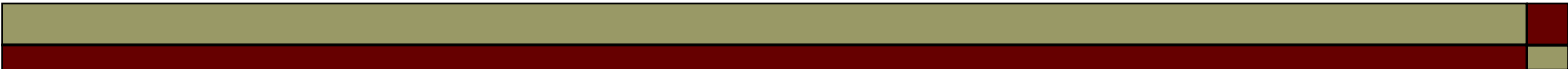
Ancient procession route: leads from Osiris' Tomb at Umm el-Qa'ab to the Temple of Osiris (lies along a natural fold in the valley formed by a large wadi, enters Abydos through cliffs along its southern border



The Cult of Osiris at Abydos

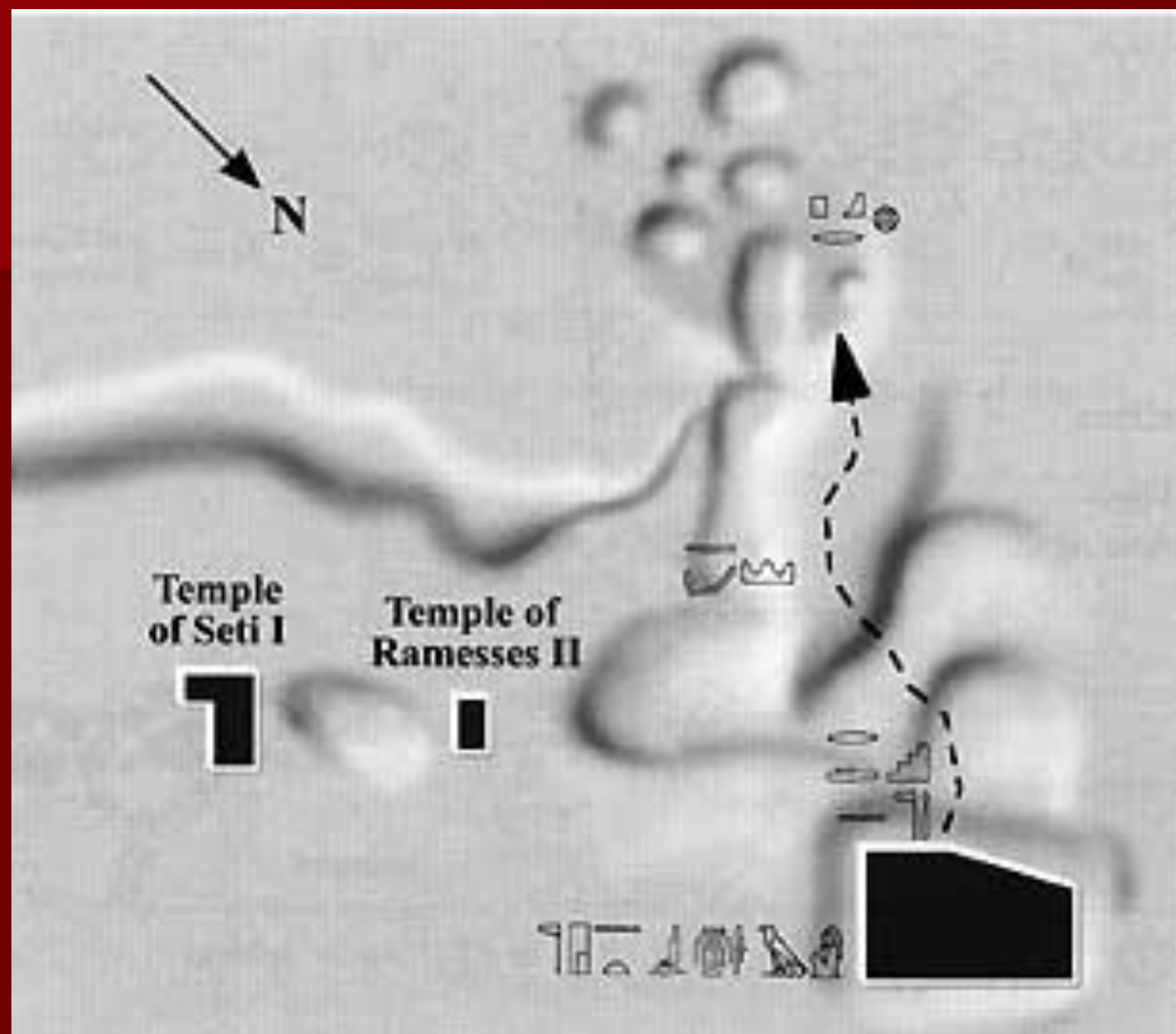
- Best described on
Ikhnofret stela - Stela
Berlin 1204





The Cult of Osiris at Abydos

- ❑ Heart: annual festival –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
- ❑ MK: members of elite dedicated stelae, erected offering chapels as cenotaphs → hope to ensure their continued participation in the festival after their own death



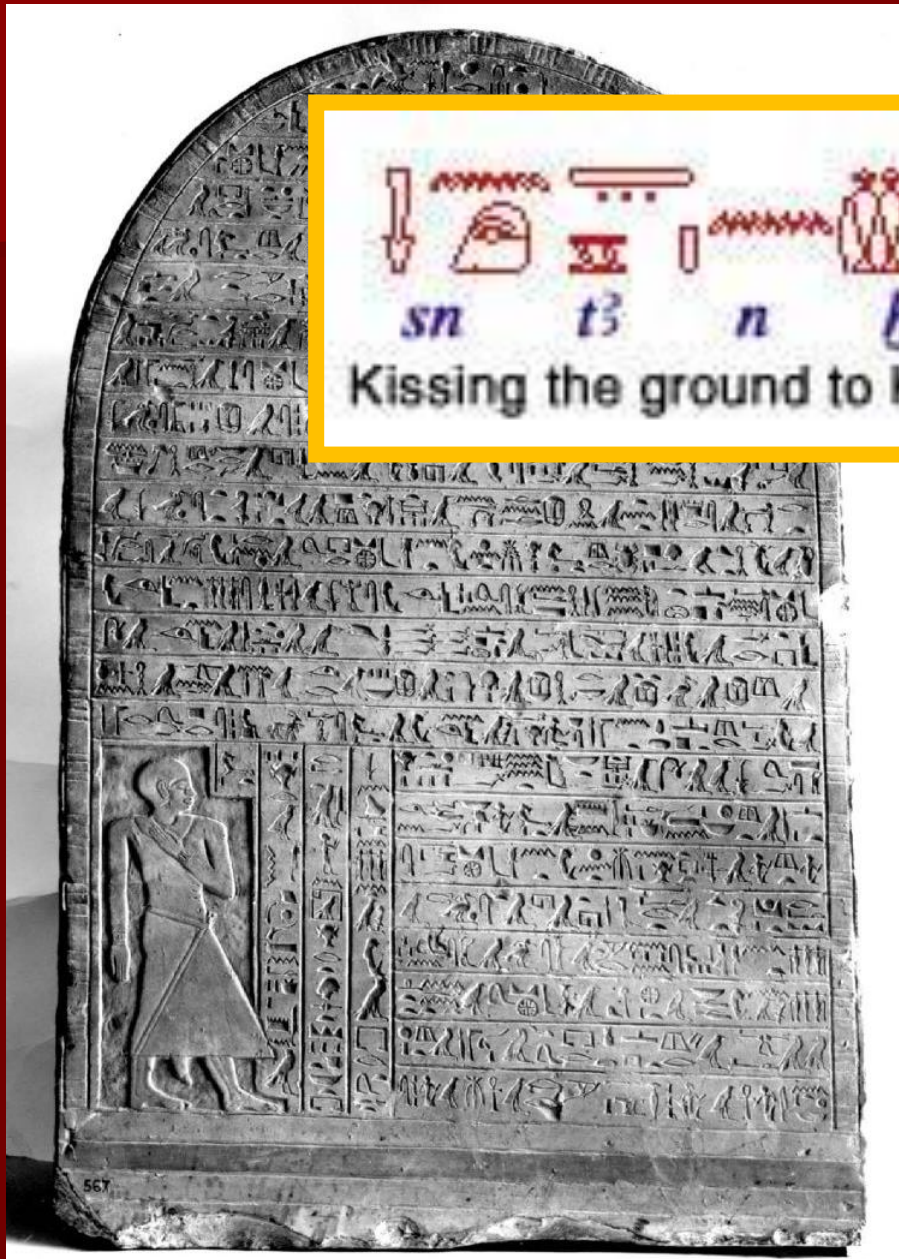
Festival processions in Abydos

- starting point: *Osiris Temple* – housing the statue of Osiris
- two outward processions
 - '*procession of Wepwawet*'
 - '*great procession*' of Osiris
- Stelae near the western entrance to temple (high ground, known as the '*terrace of the great god*') – deceased could look upon emergence and return of gods

Festival processions in Abydos

- owner of Abydene offering stela often expressed wish to participate in certain important festivals beyond death, particularly the Osiris mysteries
- Deceased wished to participate in them
 - directly - through *seeing* , *adoring*, *kissing the ground*, or *giving praise* to the god (references to '*kissing the ground*' and '*giving praise*' as the images of the gods passing by)
 - having offerings made to the deceased a such times

Abydos Stelae BM EA 567

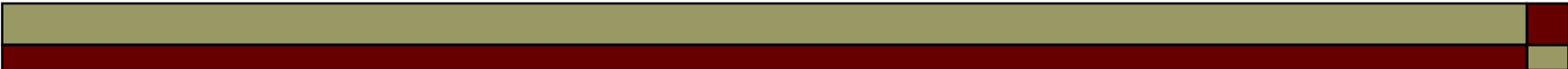


sn t3 n hnty-imntw m prt 3t
Kissing the ground to Khentyimentu in the great procession

lengthy adoration
caption before
the figure of the
Amenemhet

Festival processions in Abydos

- 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*  *Bt ntr* to *Poker*  *plr* where divine mysteries and rites were performed



The Osiris Mysteries at Abydos

- ❑ major festivals of Middle Kingdom Egypt, centred around burial and rejuvenation of Osiris and for all the blessed dead
- ❑ The festival itself seems to have comprised five parts:
 1. The first procession led by Wepwawet and culminating in combat against the enemies of Osiris. This seems to have been a celebration of kingship with the repelling of the forces of chaos and disorder (possibly reflecting the threat of disorder at the death of the old king Osiris).
 2. The great procession of Osiris himself. This seems to have been the start of the burial procession of Osiris as the dead king, when he was equipped and prepared for burial. Osiris here appeared in his form of Khentyimentu '*the one who is foremost of the westerners*' and was taken out from the temple through the surrounding cemetery site.

The Osiris Mysteries at Abydos

- The festival itself seems to have comprised five parts:
 3. The god's boat-journey to Poker. The god was conveyed in the great bark out into the desert to his supposed tomb at Poker (probably the tomb of King Djer of the First Dynasty at Umm el-Qa'ab).
 4. A night of vigil in which the god was rejuvenated as Wenennefer including the Haker-festivities and a slaughter of the enemies of Osiris at Nedyet (the mythological place of his death). Unfortunately, this remains the most secretive and elusive part of the mysteries, though later accounts mention that Osiris was crowned with the crown of Justification and transfigured or enspirited
 5. The return journey to Abydos among general rejoicing and the reentry of the god into his temple.

A different sacred landscape?



Aliens?



A different sacred landscape?




 dr
 to expel
 drive out



Glyphs
 Overlaid




 mak
 kmt
 defend
 protect kemet



Glyphs
 Overlaid

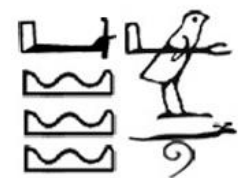



 psDt
 The Nine Bows



Glyphs Overlaid




 wafw
 to conquer, subdue



Glyphs Overlaid



Glyphs during Seti I



Both Sets of Glyphs Together



Glyphs during Rameses II



