

Same-Sex Desire in Pharaonic Egypt

Alex Clayden

Marc Matera

12/12/12

Introduction

When one evokes the image of Ancient Egypt, what frequently appears in the Western imagination are images of towering pyramids, mummies entombed in gold, and mysterious gods and kings. The people of Egypt are thought of as wearing white skirts, replete with large gold jewelry, and the walls of every home are covered with lurid hieroglyphs and intricate portrayals of gods. The veracity of these conceptions are slim; the majority of the Egyptian populace were craftsmen, laborers, or farmers and did not own such fineries, nor were their very modest homes decorated with anything more than the mud used to construct the walls. The vast majority of the population were completely illiterate in hieroglyphic writing, and few could afford the most basic embalming, let alone lavish tombs with gilded coffins.

Unfortunately, as illiterate Egyptians could not carve their lives into stone, and since what communication they shared has yet to be discovered, their stories and experiences are mostly omitted from the annals of history. What survives today are the moderate-sized stone carvings done for the elite by highly trained scribes and artisans, and sculpture and massive reliefs done in honor of various pharaohs. We have also discovered precious few fragments of literary evidence which have survived on papyri. Religious texts are among these papyri, and survive due to the sheer number of copies written for those who could afford it and their frequent use in the tombs of the wealthy. Many aspects of Egyptian culture are lost to us after millennia of wars and shifting sands, and scholars are forced to glean what they can from the surviving fragmentary evidence. The sexual aspect of Ancient Egyptians' lives is even more difficult to ascertain from the surviving evidence, only because the nature of the surviving texts shies away from such subjects. Sexuality is an inherent part of every society, but is culturally constructed. The Egyptians' culture was no exception, of course, but their societal conventions makes deciphering their sexuality difficult. The elite's recorded mores and norms very rarely mention sex acts without coding them in metaphor first, and the more formal a text, the more

taciturn it becomes on the issue of sex.¹

Egyptian homosexual behavior is even more difficult to study, due to its specificity within the subject. Additionally, homosexuality is not a classical idea: only recently has sexuality been divided into a binary system. In most of the ancient world, same-sex desire was a construct centered around one's role in sex acts, and one's willingness to buck a society's constructions of gender roles. So little evidence survives on female-female desire that the focus of this paper will be solely on the male-male aspect which was almost universally condemned in Pharaonic Egypt. The surviving literary evidence is mostly reticent on the passive partner in a homosexual relationship, but religious texts suggest it was highly stigmatized. The stigma for the active role seems to be predicated on desiring male-male interactions, instead of male-female. There are of course exceptions to the rule, and some sparse evidence survives of same-sex relationships which were not condemned, or of exceptions made when females are not present; these are explored later in this paper. The issue of sexuality in Ancient Egypt is a difficult one to address, and specifying the existence and treatment of homosexual desire in the same time period is harder still, but no less important. Through the analysis of surviving sources, including tombs, statues, religious texts, and narratives, I will attempt to gain a clearer picture of homosexuality throughout Ancient Egypt. At the core of Egyptian male-male desire lies intention; with the desire to penetrate men rather than women comes shame, but with women absent or to assert masculine dominance over an enemy there is no shame.

Books and papyri known as Teachings or Wisdom Books survive from Egypt and provide an insight into Egyptian morals and customs. Analysis of the texts and the contextualization of them in Egyptian history helps historians piece together the shifting of Egyptian mores and values, as few foreign historians recorded the customs of the Egyptians prior to the conquest of Egypt by Greece and Rome. Herodotus, a Greek historian, visited Egypt in the 5th century BCE, and noted some derivations

¹ Richard Parkinson, "Homosexual Desire and Middle Kingdom Literature," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, no. 18 (1995), 57.

from Greek custom which the Egyptians exhibited:

For example, the women of Egypt go to the marketplace and sell goods there while the men stay at home and do the weaving, which they also do differently from other peoples, who push the woof up from below while the Egyptians push it down. Here the men carry loads on the heads and the women bear them on their shoulders. Women urinate standing up, men sitting down. They ease themselves outside the house, but eat out in the streets, and justify this with the explanation that one ought to take care of base necessities in private, but those that are not base, in public.²

The omission of explicit sexual activity by Herodotus implies that they were amongst the indoor activities, making them a private. It is also possible that they were considered too taboo to be mentioned in public.³ He is not, therefore, wholly silent on the subject of sex, but only mentions it within a religious context. Herodotus has been called the Father of Lies, due to his tendency to include unsubstantiated evidence when he found it interesting. Many of his contemporaries and successors in the field of history, however, accused him of things which were just as fantastic as his alleged fabrications. Herodotus has a slight advantage in his portrayal of the Egyptians, however, as some of his claims are backed by Egyptian documentation. For example, Herodotus mentions that entering temples after intercourse with a woman without washing oneself was prohibited, as was having intercourse with a woman in the temple itself⁴ – an idea which has carried over into Judaic and Islamic texts and is no foreign notion even today. In *The Book of the Dead*, a text placed in the coffin or tomb of those who could afford such fineries, there is a portion in which the dead soul denies having committed various transgressions while alive in order to gain access to the afterlife, including not having “committed adultery in the sacred places of the god of the town”⁵ which backs Herodotus' claim. With so few sources, it would be folly to completely omit *The Histories* on account of Herodotus' fabrications, but their inclusion merits a measure of caution when reading.

As a Greek, Herodotus had little knowledge of Egyptian gods, so he compared Egyptian

² Robert Strassler, *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*, (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2007), 133.

³ Lise Manniche, *Sexual Life in Ancient Egypt*, (London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 8-9.

⁴ Strassler, 145.

⁵ Budge, 203.

religious figures to what he deemed an appropriate analogue in Greek theology. In *The Histories*, Herodotus detailed a festival of Dionysus – a Greek god – wherein women carried large ritualistic phalli in processions. Here, Herodotus referred to the story of Osiris and Isis, in which Osiris' evil brother Seth murdered and dismembered him. Seth scattered the parts of Osiris throughout the various provinces, called nomes, of Egypt, and throws Osiris' phallus into the Nile where it was eaten by a fish. Isis collected all of the pieces of Osiris in order to bring him back to life, but cannot find the phallus. So she created one from magic, sat on it, and begat Horus.⁶

The Egyptians, therefore, can be seen as equally phallocentric as the Greeks and Romans would be centuries later. The Egyptians' creation myth is also highly phallocentric, claiming that the world was created when the creator god Atum autofellated himself and he spat his seed out. Shu and Tefnut sprang forth from the seed: the air and moisture/humidity respectively. Gods were not the only ones to be openly sexual, however; mortals were just as enthusiastic in their copulation. Some books survive, like *The Teaching of Ptahhotep*, which detail Egyptian morals for the time period in which they were written. These “Wisdom Books” catalog multiple facets of Egyptian society, but the distinction can be made between those from Ancient Egypt and those from after the Graeco-Roman conquest. The *Teaching of Ptahhotep* (1900 BCE), *The Wisdom Book of Ani* (1450 BCE), and *Ankhsheshonk* (332-30 BCE) all come from Ancient Egypt and each dictates that a moral husband will treat his wife well, and will avoid being unfaithful to her.

The typical conventions of Egyptian heterosexuality were not too far removed from modern Western mores and norms, and the Egyptians' attitudes toward atypical sexual practices seem to have followed in the same vein. Many fetishes seen as perverted by Western society were also rejected by the Egyptians. Egyptians, like the Greeks, viewed bestiality negatively with Herodotus having recounted his horror upon seeing “...a woman having open intercourse with a he-goat,” and how the

6 Plutarch, "Isis and Osiris," Accessed November 21, 2012.
http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Isis_and_Osiris*/A.html.

incident “...became notorious.”⁷ Dreams in which men and women had open intercourse with animals were generally taken as an ill omen, and to curse someone in Egyptian one could shout:



“May a donkey copulate with your wife and children!”⁸

Both Herodotus and Egyptian scribes wrote about prostitution as well, but most instances seem to be in regards to temple prostitution and were therefore not condemned, as a woman who prostituted herself for the purposes of the gods was not socially stigmatized.⁹ Adultery seems to be inherently negative, due to its inclusion in the Negative Confession of the *Book of the Dead*:



n nk hm.t t□

“...not have I defiled [another] man's wife.”

Necrophilia, too, was frowned upon, but only when desecrating female corpses. Herodotus writes:

But when wives of prominent men or very beautiful or noteworthy women die, they do not deliver the bodies to be embalmed at once. They give them over only on the second or third day after their death so that the embalmers do not have intercourse with the dead woman's body, for they say that one was once caught in the act of having intercourse with a woman's fresh corpse, and that this crime was disclosed by his coworker.¹⁰

Male corpse desecration, however, was different. The Egyptians believed that male sexual virility lasted even after death, and that a corpse could father children as Osiris was able to do with the magical assistance of Isis. If the sexual energies of the deceased were not dealt with, it was believed the soul would come back as a bird and sow chaos throughout Egypt.¹¹

The most common sexual deviation from modern norms which is most commonly associated

7 Plutarch, “Isis and Osiris.”

8 Wilhelm Spiegelberg, “Die Tefnachthosstele des Museums von Athen,” *Recueil de Travaux Relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie Égyptiennes et Assyriennes*, no. 25 (1903): 192. Accessed November 21, 2012. <http://ia700509.us.archive.org/1/items/recueildetravaux25masp/recueildetravaux25masp.pdf>

9 Manniche, 17-19.

10 Schlasser, 153.

11 Manniche, 29.

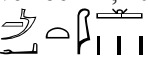
with the Egyptians is incest. Even though the Egyptians are seen as frequent practitioners of incest, it was only in the final centuries BCE that Pharaohs intermarried with close relations. This misunderstanding can be explained by the idiomatic use of “brother” or “sister”¹² – used between married persons as a term of endearment – which led many Egyptologists to confuse familial relationships with intimate friendships. Additionally, incest among the gods was very common in religious texts. It is therefore easy to see how, with a lack of conflicting evidence such practices could be ascribed to the followers of that religion. It is from this jumble of sexual ambiguities that the few sources related to same-sex desire in Egypt arise. Most of the evidence for same-sex behavior comes from literary sources rather than statuary or wall carvings, and the richest literary source comes from one of the core beliefs of the Egyptian religion: the conflict between Horus and Seth.

Literary Evidence

In the Egyptian mythos, it was believed that the king was an avatar of Horus, the Sky God. Horus was king of the gods and Egypt, and it was said that his eyes were the sun and the moon. His father Osiris, God of the Underworld, was murdered and dismembered by Osiris' brother Seth, God of Chaos and Confusion. Horus' mother, Isis, reconstructed Osiris and brought him back to life, and birthed Horus some time later.¹³ Horus was unique in that he was the only god not to be born fully mature, but rather he grew to maturity as a mortal would. Horus was the sworn enemy of Seth and fought against him as the voice of truth, while Seth represented disorder. The Egyptians attempted to always follow the ideals of truth or *mꜣꜥ.t*¹⁴, and avoided the concept of disorder or *jsf.t*¹⁵. Horus and Seth fought continuous battles to gain control of Egypt¹⁶, and their battles are written about in *The*

12 

13 Dollinger, André. "A Hymn to Osiris and the Legend of the origin of Horus." Last modified Oct. 2006. Accessed November 21, 2012. http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/osiris_hymn.htm

14 

15 

16 Dollinger, "The Abydos Triad – Osiris, Isis, and Horus – and Seth."
<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/religion/osiris.htm>

Contendings of Horus and Seth, which comes to a head with a distinctly homosexual episode.

The *Contendings* has its roots in both the Middle (2055-1650 BCE) and the New Kingdoms of Egypt (1550-1069 BCE), and by amalgamating both versions scholars have been able to construct a coherent narrative. Seth was upset that Horus received the crown of Egypt, and challenged him to complete various tasks in order to prove his worthiness for the throne. He suggested that they take the form of two hippos, and remain on the riverbed for three months. The first person to take a breath or remove themselves from the riverbed would be declared unfit to wear the crown. Isis attempted to help Horus by piercing Seth with a copper-barbed harpoon, but after Seth entreated her to be kind to her own brother, she relented and freed the barb. Horus was enraged and decapitates his mother for being sympathetic to Seth, but when the Ennead¹⁷ heard of his matricide they vowed to punish him.¹⁸

Horus was later discovered by Seth in an oasis, and Seth plucked out his eyes, transforming them into the sun and the moon. Seth then lied to the Ennead and told them he hadn't encountered Horus, but later Hathor encountered Horus in the desert and restored his eyes with milk. The Ennead said that the two gods should be judged, but the Sun God Re merely told them both to stop quarreling and instead to have a feast. Seth invited Horus to his house for a banquet to which Horus agreed.¹⁹ In the middle of the night, Seth engaged in intercrural intercourse with Horus, but Horus caught Seth's semen in his hands and ran to his mother Isis.²⁰ Isis chopped off her son's hand and hurled it into the Nile, then gathered Horus' semen into a pot and told Horus to feed it to Seth on a lettuce leaf – Seth's favorite food. Seth then entreated the Ennead to deny Horus kingship on the grounds that Seth had “performed the labor of a male against him.”²¹ Horus objects, and asked that both gods' semen be summoned, and to let the Ennead see whence both emerged. Thoth, god of writing, called forth the

17 The Egyptian Pantheon of nine gods: Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys.

18 Dollinger, “The Contendings of Horus and Seth.” http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/horus_and_seth.htm

19 Dollinger, “The Contendings of Horus and Seth.” Accessed November 20, 2012.
http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/horus_and_seth.htm

20 In an alternate version of the tale, Seth propositions Horus, and Isis gives Horus the idea to catch the semen in his hand. Francis Ll. Griffith, *Hieratic Papyri from Kahun and Gurob*, (London, UK: Bernard Quaritch, 1898), Pl. 3, VI, 12.

21 Dollinger, “The Contendings of Horus and Seth.” Accessed November 20, 2012.
http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/horus_and_seth.htm

semen of Seth, and it answered to him from the Nile, where it sat in Horus' hand. He then called the semen of Horus and it answered from within Seth, and then emerged from his forehead. Seth was furious, and challenged Horus to another labor, but in the end it is Horus who was awarded the kingship.²²

By attempting to penetrate the boy god, Seth tries to make Horus unfit to rule through his baleful activities. It is, however, the intention of Horus which seems to be the issue here, rather than the action. This backs up the idea that it was the desire of penetrative intercourse with a male and not the sexual acts themselves which dictated homosexuality in Ancient Egypt. The notion of desiring same-sex activity in Egypt was almost universally condemned. Egyptians saw the idea of male-male desire repugnant with few exceptions. It was accepted as a means of domination over a fallen enemy, lacking any form of desire, or on occasion when no women were present.²³ The marginalization of same-sex acts in literature is evidence that the practice was disdained, and the lack of any literary sources detailing reciprocal male-male love suggests that it was never written about. Homosexual desire was written about sparsely and seems to convey the idea that it was an impure feeling, and to act on it would taint the participants.

Horus feigned his willingness to be penetrated by Seth in order to fool him, and spurned Seth's advances on the grounds that his "strength will not be equal to [that of Seth's]."²⁴ Horus instead claimed he would be a better partner for Seth if he was stronger, and Seth needed to "give [Horus] strength"²⁵. At the time, Horus was a youthful god and the perfect age to be seen as a feminine male; his strength having been weaker than that of the sexually mature Seth. Horus' refusal on the grounds that he would be too weak to withstand Seth's sexual energies defies convention as the weakness of the passive partner would be an attractive and feminine quality which is deviant from the strength of masculinity

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Parkinson, 64.

²⁴ Griffith, *Hieratic papyri*.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

and therefore would be divergent from desiring masculine qualities in a sexual partner. By refusing Seth because he was too weak and suggesting Seth would desire him if he was stronger, Horus has indirectly accused Seth of being a homosexual by saying that masculine qualities would be more attractive to him. This attraction to the masculine is confirmed later when Seth penetrated the goddess Anat while she was “dressed like a man,” and illness befell Seth soon after. This illness affected Seth's eye, and the Egyptians held the belief that the eye could be damaged not just by a blow, but also by rape.²⁶ His attraction to the male form, and his general bisexuality add to the confusion of his character. When taken with his other transgressions in various tales, the idea of male-male desire being associated with Seth makes the active seeking of a male to penetrate a negative act.

The lettuce in the tale is also of importance. Min, god of fertility and procreation, is represented most often with a flagellum and a headdress, an enormous erect phallus, and piles of lettuce in the background.²⁷ In addition to being inherently phallic in shape, the Egyptians also believed that lettuce could act as an aphrodisiac.²⁸ Egyptian lettuce has a very high natural rubber content – which is milky white and sticky in its natural state – and when it is broken or rubbed it emits the rubber through its membranes. The Egyptians were thus reminded of the phallus which emits semen in a similar manner when stimulated.²⁹ The hieroglyphic word for penis also contains a plant glyph which could be another connection between the phallus and the lettuce.³⁰ By claiming Seth's favorite food was inherently phallic, and feeding semen to him on it, Horus again outed Seth as a homosexual character.

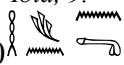
The *Contendings* is not a complete narrative; the fragments that scholars have pieced together suggest that what survives constitutes the final portion of the narrative. Unfortunately, most of the narrative is lost and the first page of the surviving manuscript contains only enough information to indicate that

²⁶ *Ibid*, 37.

²⁷ Harlan, Jack. "Lettuce and Sycamore: Sex and Romance in Ancient Egypt." *Economic Botany*. 40. no. 1 (1986): 6.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

³⁰  , hnn

there was a dialogue, but not enough to reveal its content.³¹ What has survived begins with Seth attempting to court Horus by using the line:



nfr.wj-phwj = kj

“How beautiful are thy buttocks!”³²

This line is attested to be the world's first pick-up line and a play on the traditional greeting of:



nfr.wj-hr = k

“How fair is your face!”³³.

The parallels drawn between 'face' and 'buttocks' would suggest a parody was intended to set the mood for the following story as absurdist.³⁴ Additionally, in later using *phwj* to connote male strength, Seth is using a pun on 'strength' and 'buttocks' to confess his attraction to the male form. By choosing *phwj*, Seth ensured that his strength is seen as primarily sexual, rather than merely physical.³⁵ In one story, Seth was castrated by Horus and was referred to as a *hmtj*.³⁶ The term homosexual is a modern one, and as such has no direct translation into Egyptian, but the Egyptians seemed to use the word *hmtj* to refer to a man with feminine sexual qualities. The first sign in the word; *hm* can mean vagina, and when coupled with a dripping phallus determinative, which implies urine or semen, one can see that the Egyptian word for homosexual was a combination of a sexual desire of a feminine nature. All of these things combined display Seth as a character who was deeply rooted in sexually ambiguous tendencies. By associating homosexuality with the god of chaos and evil, this indicates that the Egyptian view of

³¹ Parkinson, 70.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Parkinson, 70.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Henk te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J Brill, 1967), 38.

³⁶
 The hieroglyphs consist of: a staff with a loop (hm), a determinative of a man (tj), and a dripping phallus (j).

male-male desire was negative.

Richard Parkinson, Assistant Keeper of the Egyptian section of the British Museum and author of the seminal work on Egyptian same-sex desire, links *ḥmtj* not to *ḥm.t* “woman”, but to the verb *ḥm* “to retreat”³⁷, related to *ḥm* a noun meaning “coward.”³⁸³⁹ By taking the root of *ḥmtj* as “retreat,” the implication is that being a homosexual is a cowardly or vile act, as Parkinson says: “Presumably to 'turn the back' is tantamount to allowing oneself to be buggered.”⁴⁰ In contrast, the late J. Gwyn Griffiths, former Chair in Classics and Egyptology at Swansea University, says in his book on Horus and Seth that “the word is presumably derived from *ḥm.t*, 'the female organ',”⁴¹ as previously suggested. In Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, such ambiguities are commonplace, and words can take on multiple meanings. It is possible, then, for the words to have both the connotations of cowardice in retreat and feminine sexual activity. The desire of sexual penetration is therefore the defining feature of Seth and Horus' homosexuality. Because Seth desires the young Horus, he is seen as evil; Horus resists the penetration, and therefore avoids social stigma. However, in later texts like *The Book of the Dead*, it becomes not the desire, but instead the act itself which defines the Egyptian as a social pariah.

Readings from the Book of the Dead suggest that by Egypt's New Kingdom (1550-1069 BCE), the stigma had shifted to include the action of homosexual penetration, rather than solely the desire for the act.⁴² Absent from the Egyptian consciousness, however, seemed to be the convention of any firm and defined sexuality. Modern conventions of homo- or heterosexual were absent because there was no affiliation for sexuality beyond the sex acts themselves. The relevant line in the *Book of the Dead* is:

37 

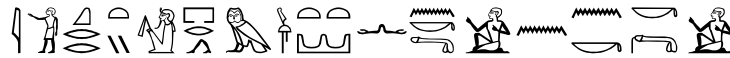
38 

39 Parkinson, 68.

40 *Ibid.*, 66.

41 Griffiths, 44

42 Parkinson, 62.



j qrr.tj prj m jmn.t(j)t n nk n nkk(w)

“Oh Qererti, coming forth from the West, I did not *nk* a *nkk(w)*.”⁴³

nk here is a verb which means “to have penetrative sex (with)”⁴⁴, and contains no moral implications. A *nkk(w)* is a man who is penetrated, or literally “a man upon whom a sexual act is performed”⁴⁵. Notice that the definition of the a *nkk(w)* is no longer a man who desires penetration, but rather any man who is sodomized or irrumated. This departure from the previous conventions of homosexuality in Egypt indicates a shift in values from the Old Kingdom to the New, which was hardly surprising considering the length of time between the two was roughly a millennia. A parallel in Egyptian custom can also be drawn between the passage condemning the penetration of a catamite, and the one forbidding the penetration of a married women. The most obvious corollary lies in recognizing both as penetrative sex acts, but one could also suggest that same-sex acts are on par with adultery in their ranking on the scale of moral misdeeds.⁴⁶ It can be concluded, then, that homosexuality was rejected by the so-called ideal of Egyptian philosophy, though the practices may have differed in reality.

The force of sodomy, therefore, seems to take on the role of asserting one's dominance over another. In the Coffin Texts – funerary spells written in tombs between 2181 and 2055 BCE – the idea of *nking* is reiterated, showing that sexual activity is meant to be a commonplace activity in the afterlife. Parkinson notes that *nking* in the afterlife is evocative not just of pleasure, but of rebirth, which makes the intercourse solely heterosexual.⁴⁷ Same-sex intercourse is not excluded wholly from the text, however, there is a single passage in Spell 635 which states:

Re has no power over -----

43 E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead*, (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967).

44 Parkinson, 62.

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*, 64.

[It is -----] who takes away his breath.

Atem has no power over -----

----- *nks* his backside.⁴⁸

This further illustrates the trope that sodomy was a means of subjugation to an enemy or an inferior. Another passage in Spell 700 of the same text says “[the subject’s] phallus is between the buttocks of his son and his heir”⁴⁹ The context of the passage is vague, but the notion of penetrating in order to conquer another seems to exist in the same way as before.⁵⁰ It is the action which therefore defines the morality of the sex acts, not just the intention itself. In the *Teaching of Ptahhotep*, the intention is explored not through explicit desire, but rather through necessity.

The Teaching of Ptahhotep comes to us from the Twelfth Dynasty (1991-1802 BCE), and describes a vizier, Ptahhotep, requesting retirement from the king and suggesting his son as a replacement. The king consents on the condition that Ptahhotep passes on to his son the wisdom which old age possesses. *Ptahhotep* is not a narrative, but rather a teaching: a compilation of moral platitudes wrapped in a fictional setting.⁵¹ The teaching includes various segments on being mindful of the past, not allowing pride to become an obstacle in doing what is right, and following the example of just men.⁵² The thirty-second stanza of the teaching reads:

May you not have sex with a woman-boy⁵³, for you know that what is opposed

will be water upon his breast

There is no coolness (relief) for what is in his belly (appetite)

Let him not spend the night doing what is opposed

48 R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, (Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 1973).

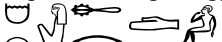
49 *Ibid.*

50 Parkinson, 64-65.

51 Parkinson, 68.

52 University College London, "Teaching of Ptahhotep." Accessed November 20, 2012.

<http://www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/literature/ptahhotep.html>.

53 , *hym.t-hrd*

*he shall be cool after destroying his desire.*⁵⁴

Rejecting the notion proposed by Hans Goedicke in his translation,⁵⁵ Parkinson says that it condemns sodomy but condones oral sex between men, and relies on too many “idioms proposed without supporting parallels”.⁵⁶ The person being penetrated is a young man, and must possess some feminine qualities to be called a woman-boy. Whether these characteristics are simply the act of being willingly penetrated, or other markers of the feminine is not fully known, nor is his social standing. Being a boy, it would have been less difficult for him to adopt feminine characteristics and in many classical cultures, boys were substituted for women for sexual acts.⁵⁷ The sentiment is repeated in the *Wisdom Books of Ankhsheshonq* – which dates to the Ptolemaic Period (332-30 BCE) – where the same prohibition of sodomy with a feminine boy is seen in the quote: “Do not take a young man for your companion.”⁵⁸ *Ptahhotep* refers to “that which is opposed,” here in reference to penetrative sex with a woman-boy. “That which is opposed,” or *ḥsfwt*, derives from the verb *ḥsf*, to ward off or oppose and has the implications of scandal and misdeeds.⁵⁹ This condemnation of the passive role is set in contrast to the eighteenth passage of *Ptahhotep*, which condemns the act of adultery by means of seeking it out.⁶⁰ In that passage the active role is the one seen as immoral, in stark juxtaposition to the passive role of the woman-boy, even though both the wife and the woman-boy are referred to as *ḥmt*: womanly. However, the act of male-male sexual acts was not perverse enough in the eyes of the Egyptians to avoid being mentioned altogether. The conception of being homosexual in Ancient Egypt seems to embody not the action of being penetrated, but rather the desire behind it. From the word *ḥmtj*⁶¹ the

⁵⁴ Parkinson, 68.

⁵⁵ 'You shall not nk a vulva-boy, after you have learnt of (his) objections concerning semen from the glans of his penis. There is no calming one who is in his bowels; let him (the boy) not (have to) spend the night making objections; he (the seducer) will be calm (only) after he has destroyed his wish.'

Hans Goedicke, “Unrecognized Sportings,” *Journal of American Research Center in Egypt*, no. 6 (1967): 101.

⁵⁶ Parkinson, 68.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 69.

⁵⁸ Manniche, 99.

⁵⁹ Parkinson, 69.

⁶⁰ University College London, “Teaching of Ptahhotep.”

⁶¹ 

initial sign, *hm*, is also the phoneme seen in the word “woman” and “woman-boy,” and is also the sign for vagina or anus.⁶² The dripping phallus determinative implies male sexual emissions and activity.⁶³ Taken together, it seems that the Egyptian homosexual was seen as a male whose sexual practices and emissions were related to the anus, which is to say sodomy. An alternate interpretation could be that the male's sexual practices were similar to that of the vagina, in the sense that the male and vagina are both being penetrated. As mentioned earlier, in Egyptian writing such dual meanings are common, and the word is capable of being read both ways at the same time. Like *Ptahhotep* would suggest, the intention of the passive partner is the determining factor in whether or not the act is considered shameful or not. While *Ptahhotep* categorizes the pederastic aspect of homosexuality and details the occasional taking of male concubines in the absence of the female, the *Tale of King Neferkare and General Saset* illuminates not only the sexual relationship between two fully grown men who are both members of the elite, but also gives us a glimpse into how same-sex relationships were seen on a social level, rather than a purely moralistic one.

In various fragments, spanning from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-fifth Dynasties (1292-656 BCE), *The Tale of Neferkare and Saset* provides us further literary evidence of male-male relationships. Its subject matter and the similarity of its style to earlier elite works implies that, while it came later in history, it was still an elite text. As such, it firmly ensconced itself in the literature of the time and would have been read extensively throughout the empire by literate elites.⁶⁴ In what few fragments survive, we are introduced to King Neferkare and his military commander Saset. Their inclusion on most of the fragments would suggest that they were two of the main characters of the piece.

Parkinson describes the fragments, the first of which is practically destroyed and impossible to

62 khemet.de, "Gardiner Liste - Gruppe N." Accessed November 20, 2012.
<http://www.khemet.de/altaegypten/schrift/gardiner/N.html>

63 khemet.de, "Gardiner Liste – Gruppe D." Accessed November 20, 2012.
<http://www.khemet.de/altaegypten/schrift/gardiner/D.html>

64 Parkinson, 72.

measure from the beginning of the text, and therefore contextualize. The second and third are successive pages, and is it the third page which contains the passage wherein the king and his general rendezvous under cover of darkness.⁶⁵ It is then that the king is spotted:

going out at night

*all alone, with nobody with him.*⁶⁶

And after spending a third of the night with his general:

after his Person had done what he desired with him

*he returned to his place.*⁶⁷

The desire here is a sexual and a consensual one. Rather than doing what he desired against (*r*)⁶⁸ him, he does it with (*hn*) him. Parkinson suggests that this constitutes “deeply scandalous behaviour,” when the king was “already the object of rumour,” which was “shocking enough to warrant a man's following the king 'without misgiving'.”⁶⁹ The general is mentioned at the beginning of the text “without there being a wife [in the/his house],”⁷⁰ which might be due to the king's actions and his influence over the general. It is the passive partner in the relationship who is typically shown as the one lacking a wife⁷¹ Unlike in *Ptahhotep* however, rather than the passive partner being a woman-boy, it is instead a fully mature man with a house and a title. It is possible that same-sex desire took the place of heterosexual desire when a lack of a woman drives men to it, as mentioned in *Ptahhotep* in reference to the woman-boy.⁷²

On the preceding piece of papyrus, a man attempts to speak to the court but the fervor of the

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Dollinger, André. "The Tale of King Neferkare and General Sasetet." Last modified Oct. 2006. Accessed November 21, 2012.

<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/sasetet.htm>.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Parkinson, 72.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Dollinger, King Neferkare and General Sasetet. Accessed November 20, 2012.

<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/sasetet.htm>.

⁷¹ Parkinson, 73.

⁷² David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

musicians, dancers, jubilators, and rejoicers drowns him out until he is driven from the court in tears, having never delivered his message.⁷³ Parkinson suggests that he may have been speaking out about the king's nocturnal activities, and have been silenced by the ribaldry of the court. If this is the case, it's also possible he is the source of the rumor mentioned on the next page.⁷⁴ Should this have been the case, and the man have been protesting the relationship, then it would imply the affair was morally negative. Even if the act was negative, it is still considered low enough on the scale of morally dubious activities to allow for the general populace to speak about the king committing such a scandal. With the literary evidence spanning both space and time, and covering a multitude of subjects, the general view of homosexuality begins to become more clearly negative. Thus homosexuality in Ancient Egypt is not a category of person but rather an action undertaken and interpreted on a case-by-case basis.

The literary evidence is clear: same-sex desire in Ancient Egypt when coded in religious texts or narratives is condemned, from the earliest to the latest texts. In some cases the condemnation spreads to the action regardless of the inherent desire, but the overall consensus is that homosexuality is an offense against common Egyptian mores and norms. This is, however, only exhibited in written works. It seems that when the intention was official or public discourse, it was required by societal convention that the acts be rejected. Contrary to the literary evidence, however, physical evidence on walls or in tombs has survived which details homosexual relationships not inherently denounced.

Physical Evidence

Perhaps one of the most infamous Pharaohs of all time is Akhenaten, father of Tutankhamen and husband of Nefertiti. During his reign (1353-1336 BCE) he upended the entirety of the Egyptian religious structure, becoming the world's first monotheist, and spurred a revolution in art and design which constitutes one of the most graphically unique periods in Egyptian history. Whether or not Akhenaten was a homosexual is still an issue of debate, with Egyptologists divided on the subject

73 Dollinger, King Neferkare and General Saset. Accessed November 20, 2012.
<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/saset.htm>.

74 Parkinson, 73.

thanks in part to the portrayal of male and female forms as near identical by artists of the time. There have been implications, however, that over time Akhenaten spurned his wife Nefertiti in favor of his son-in-law Ankhkheperure-Smenkhare.⁷⁵

The Amarna period changed the tropes of Egyptian art, shifting the portrayal of gender from distinctly male and female to something more androgynous. The ideals of beauty also seem to have shifted from masculine and feminine to something in between. When one compares the sculpture of Akhenaten and his predecessor Thutmose III, it is not difficult to see the differences highlighted (fig. 1, 2). While the predecessors of Akhenaten have firmly defined torsos and square heads with thin lips, Akhenaten has portrayed himself with a very slender face and full lips; classic of the Amarna period. His chest is also very slender with a rounded, protruding belly and rounded thighs, also seen in wall carvings done in the Amarna style. (fig. 3)



Fig. 1: Pharaoh Akhenaten

Image courtesy of Wikimedia



Fig. 2: Thutmose III

Image courtesy of Wikimedia



Fig. 3: Akhenaten and Nefertiti with their children.

Image courtesy of Wikimedia

It is clear to see in wall carvings that while the ideals of the male/female form in art shifted from the Eighteenth Dynasty to the Amarna period which fell within it, markers of gender still existed in dress. The crowns of the couple are different, and the male's outfit scoops below his navel, while the

⁷⁵ Percy Newberry, "Akhenaten's Eldest Son-in-Law 'Ankheperure,'" *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, no. 14 (1928), 3.



Fig. 4: Akhenaten and Nefertiti

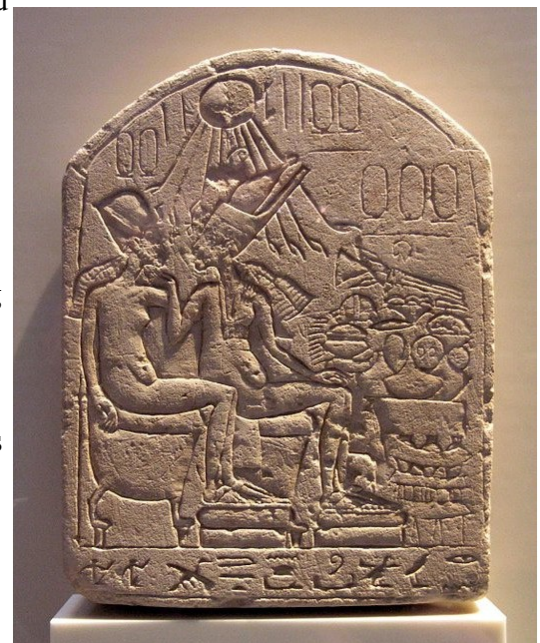
Image courtesy of Saint Louis University

female's conceals her breasts and stomach (fig. 3). Despite the differences in clothing coverage, it is always form-fitting and thin, and the underlying body is represented. Akhenaten has taken on the form of his wife Nefertiti with “small, firm breasts, narrow waist, and heavily rounded hips and thighs.”⁷⁶ This is also visible in the sculpture of the time (fig. 4). Due to her prevalence in the art of the period, Nefertiti must have been present for a major portion of Akhenaten's rule. At some point, though no one is sure precisely when, Nefertiti disappeared from the historic record⁷⁷. Either after her death or some sort of disgrace, her name was erased from monuments and replaced with that of Akhenaten's eldest daughter Meriaten.⁷⁸ Replacing Nefertiti's epithets of “beloved of Neferkheperure” and “beloved of Waenre” (some of Akhenaten's other names) was the boy-king Smenkhare.⁷⁹

A stela was found in Amarna which depicts two seated figures next to a sumptuous pile of food. The figure on the right wears the double crown of the pharaoh, while the figure on the left wears the *hprš* crown, a crown of war worn only by kings or gods. This, coupled with their clothing displaying the chest and stomach shows that both are male figures in the scene. The figure on the right would seem to be Akhenaten as he is the only one bearing additional jewelry, and is placed in the foreground. Seated next to him would appear to be

Fig. 5: Akhenaten and Smenkhare [?]

Image courtesy of Flickr



⁷⁶ Manniche, 26.

⁷⁷ Newberry, 6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

Smenkhare, with his arm around Akhenaten's shoulder. Akhenaten cradles the boy's chin in a very loving gesture, and they stare into one another's eyes (fig. 5).

With Nefertiti gone, it is Smenkhare who fills not only the names left behind by the queen, but also her place next to her husband on wall carvings. Smenkhare's usurping of Nefertiti could be indicative of the king favoring the boy's company over the queen's, either after her death or her disgrace. During this tumultuous period in Egyptian history, however, it is hard to prove facts as concrete, and harder still to find instances of same-sex behavior. Indeed, even with wall carvings like fig. 5, it is difficult to make the distinction between homosexual and homosocial behavior. While in many cultures today it is difficult to make the distinction between the social and sexual aspects of an erotic relationship, it is important to remember that some cultures had male-male erotic relationships that were implicitly asexual.⁸⁰ But perhaps the most striking non-literary evidence of homosexuality comes from the Old Kingdom: a tomb which depicts two men in multiple scenes of a similar manner to that of a married couple.

A tomb from the Fifth Dynasty (c. 2400 BCE) was discovered which belonged to two males, who may have been lovers. The two false doors to the tomb show two men holding one another in an eternal embrace, their names above the doors: Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep. Both men were also given the same titles: manicurists to the King and Inspector of the Manicurists of the Palace. The scene is repeated elsewhere in the entrance hall,⁸¹ and a statue of the two likely lovers holding hands can be seen in a wall scene after entering the tomb. The poses they hold are very similar to the poses shown in other tombs for a husband and wife, suggesting “conjugal sentiment”(fig. 6).⁸² While the potential for a same-sex relationship between the two men is strong, both men had wives and children, indicating that if they had a relationship in life it would not have been acceptable in Egyptian society for them to

80 Parkinson, 63.

81 Greg Reeder, “Same Sex Desire, Conjugal Constructs, and the Tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep,” *World Archaeology*, no. 32 (2000): 193.

82 *Ibid*, 196.

spend their lives together as sole partners.

It has been suggested that the pair are not lovers at all, but rather twins. Richard Parkinson supports this theory in his article “Homosexual Desire in Middle Kingdom Literature” but it is disputed by Greg Reeder, a widely published Egyptological photographer and researcher.⁸³ While the term used to describe the relationship between the two men is *sn*⁸⁴, which is typically translated “brother”, it can also be translated metaphorically as “‘friend’, ‘lover’, ‘husband’, ‘colleague’, ‘confrere’, or ‘co-regent’”. In such cases *sn* refers to an alter ego, a person who is on an equal footing with someone else, because both share the same values or hold the same power.⁸⁵ Jean Revez disputes this notion in the paper he presented at the Royal Ontario Museum in 1997. In it, Revez uses the additional Semitic constructions of “he went forth from the womb with me on that day” to back up his assertion that *sn* in the context of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep is purely metaphoric.⁸⁶

The evidence for their twinship is present through the use of the word *sn*, but the evidence for their same-sex relationship is stronger. In addition to the pose of the two men over the false doors, the deeper into the tomb one explores, the more intimate the nature of the couple's pose becomes. While the entrance to the tomb bears no images of the men, it is the pillars flanking the doorway which set them as equals. The pillars and the lintel bear identical inscriptions with the

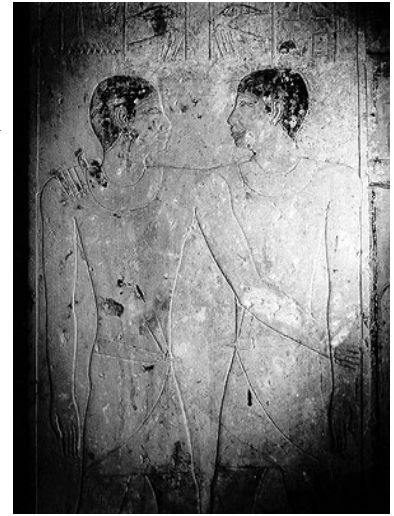


Fig. 6: Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep embrace near the false doors.

Image courtesy of Greg Reeder

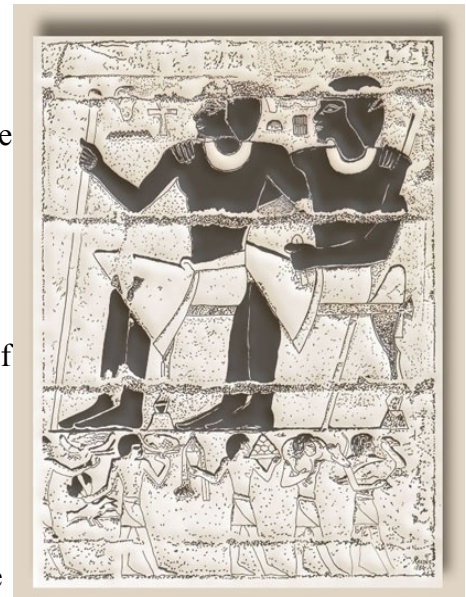


Fig. 7: The two men greet visitors to the tomb.

Image courtesy of Greg Reeder

⁸³ *Ibid.* 195.

⁸⁴ ↓, or ↓

⁸⁵ Jean Revez, “The metaphorical use of the kinship term *sn*, ‘Brothers’”. Paper presented at the Society of the Study of Egyptian Antiquities Scholars’ Colloquium, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada. 1997 via Reeder.

⁸⁶ Revez 1997

exception of one word: the men's names. To the left of the entrance the two men sit next to one another greeting the visitors to the tomb, ready to receive offerings from the deceased's families (fig. 7). Further into the tomb, Niankhkhnum's son, Hamre and his wife Tjeset are shown to receive offerings in a pose similar to Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep: the pose of husband and wife. Leaving the offerings chamber and heading deeper into the tomb, one passes a wall carving depicting the men inspecting the tomb, walking hand in hand (fig. 8).⁸⁷

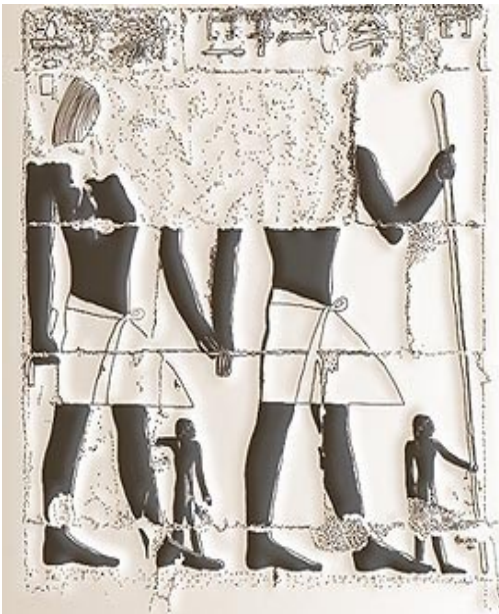


Fig. 8: Niankhkhnum leads Khnumhotep by the hand, guiding visitors to the offering chamber.

Image courtesy of Greg Reeder

The banquet chamber leads to the false doors, and contains an intricately carved scene depicting Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep enjoying massive quantities of food and drink, and below them are multitudes of dancers, musicians, and singers (fig. 9). Behind Niankhkhnum (left) sits his wife, but the designers of the tomb removed her image, leaving only fragments of her form to show us where she sat. No space was left behind Khnumhotep for a wife, making the two men the only honorees at the banquet.⁸⁸ Khnumhotep sits and smells a lotus flower, an irregular pose for Old Kingdom men to typically adopt. The only other people shown smelling lotus flowers in the

tomb are the men's wives and daughters.⁸⁹ Beneath Khnumhotep is a band, and the conductor of the band instructs his musicians to play '...the one about the two Divine Brothers' which is probably a reference to the tale of Horus and Seth. As mentioned earlier, the relationship between Horus and Seth has many homosexual implications, so such a demand to the band may draw a parallel between the gods and the men, as the god's acts were said to have taken place after a banquet.⁹⁰

87 Reeder, Greg. Egyptology.com, "The Tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep." Accessed November 19, 2012. http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/floorplan.html.

88 *Ibid*, Accessed November 19, 2012. http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/banqueta.html

89 *Ibid*, Accessed November 19, 2012. http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/lotus.html Reeder, 200.

90 Reeder, 202.

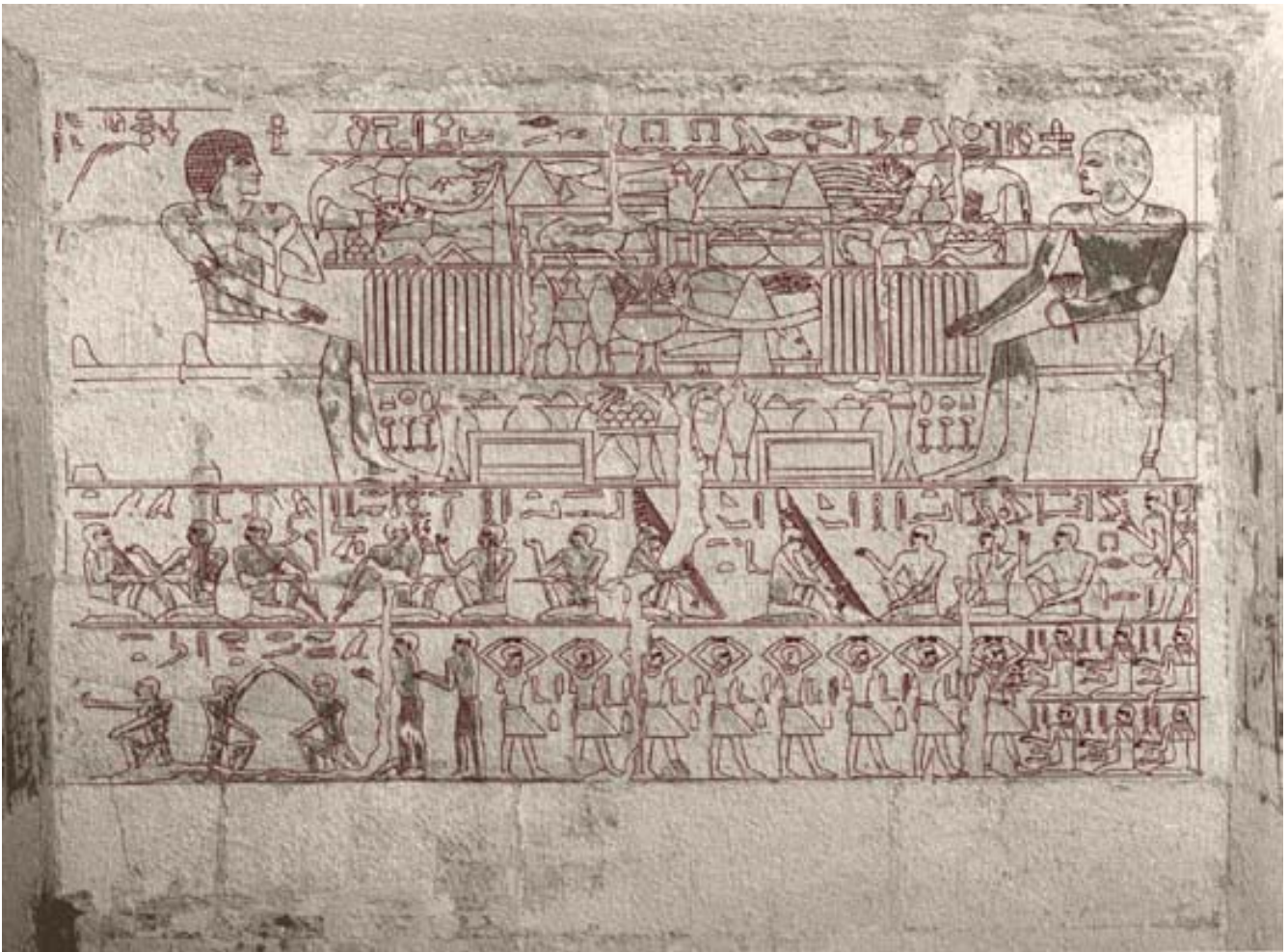


Fig. 9: The banquet scene. Niankhkhnum sits on the right with his erased wife, and Khnumhotep on the left with his lotus. The conductor is on the bottom right of the scene, leading the musicians.

Image courtesy of Greg Reeder

One then comes to the entrance to the offering chamber, where Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep embrace one another in a highly intimate manner (fig. 10). Their children are strewn about them although their wives are noticeably absent from the scene. Inside the offering chamber is where one can see the most intimate embrace. Niankhkhnum clasps Khnumhotep's forearm across his body, Khnumhotep grasps his partner's opposite shoulder behind his back. Their noses are almost touching, and the knots of their belts are touching and could even be tied together. It is here in the offering chamber – the most secret portion of the tomb – that the men share a final, eternal, and intimate embrace (fig. 11).⁹¹

⁹¹ Reeder, Accessed November 19, 2012. http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/eternal.html

During the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Dynasties in Egypt (2613-2181 BCE), the layout of tombs was highly fluid, and the design of the wall carvings was innovative. It was this experimental time for tomb construction that allowed Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep to have a tomb made honoring two men in precisely the way one for a husband and wife would have been built. Regardless of whether or not the men were biologically linked, the portrayals of their relationship on the tomb walls is indicative of a married couple.⁹² This tomb thereby indicates the potential of a consensual relationship between adult men to exist in Ancient Egypt, albeit in secret. This, coupled with the other physical evidence subverts the idea that the literary evidence provides that homosexuality in Ancient Egypt was widely condemned. Only through tombs and wall carvings can we see that such relationships had the potential to exist without the destruction of that evidence. So it can be seen that while homosexuality may not have been celebrated, it was not an unspeakable offense to all.

Conclusion

The paucity of evidence makes a full categorization of same-sex desire in Ancient Egypt an impossibility. However, scholars can glean a vague sense of the construct from the fragments which survive, or the omission of



Fig. 10: The men embrace intimately at the entrance to the offering chamber.

Image courtesy of Greg Reeder



Fig. 11: The Eternal Embrace

Image courtesy of Greg Reeder

⁹² Reeder, 207.

information altogether. A passive partner in a male-male relationship was seen as weak and highly asocial behavior, whereas an active role implied a relationship with Seth, the god who is most closely associated with alternate sexualities and evil.⁹³

The Tale of King Neferkare and General Saset shows us that same-sex relationships, even when consensual, were seen as objects of rumor and a deviation from the social norm. *The Teaching of Ptahhotep* details that young men could be substituted for women without threat to a man's family honor or masculinity so long as the desire for penetration was also omitted. Such desire was seen as morally unjust and cause to be rejected from the afterlife, as made clear by the *Book of the Dead*. Pederastic relationships existed but were not homosocial, as the Greeks made famous. Clearly these homosexual acts took place, and clearly they were acceptable enough to be written about, but only in the context of defiling or subjugating a subservient male. Thus it can be concluded that an active role in a same-sex relationship was not compromising to the Egyptian idea of the male gender role.⁹⁴ One can only hope that further information will appear in the future, because only through tangible evidence can scholars hope to draw any concrete conclusions.

There is a clear distinction, however, between the literary evidence and the physical. The Egyptian attitude in the elite and religious texts of the time was one of denouncement and official condemnation but in practice – as seen in the art of the Pharaoh or the tombs of Palace workers – the attitude seems to be much more accepting. While it is virtually impossible to ascertain the attitudes of the common man from this time, as most were illiterate, it is also not wholly improbable that homosexual relationships did happen in secret and were accepted, if reluctantly. The evidence found is crucial for a modern day understanding of the roots of our culture, and the knowledge that while societal convention may condemn same-sex relations, people were still capable of finding a way to express that desire. With queer history being a young field, the potential for more research to be done

⁹³ Parkinson, 74.

⁹⁴ Parkinson, 76.

into this area is only growing. Understanding that modern hetero-normative relationships are not necessarily the norm throughout history, and that in many cultures the family unit was not bound by modern day constructs is essential for queer youth and other members of the queer community.

Bibliography of Works Consulted

Titles of works are arranged alphabetically under authors' names

Budge, E.A. Wallis. *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*. New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967.

Deakin, T. "Evidence for Homosexuality in Ancient Egypt." *International Journal of Greek Love*. no. 1 (1965): 31-38.

Dollinger, André. Reshafim, "King Neferkare and General Saset. Last modified Oct. 2006. Accessed November 22, 2012. <http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/saset.htm>.

_____. "A Hymn to Osiris and the Legend of the origin of Horus." Last modified Oct. 2006. Accessed November 21, 2012. http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/osiris_hymn.htm

_____. "The Abydos Triad – Osiris, Isis, and Horus – and Seth." Last modified Oct. 2006. Accessed November 21, 2012. <http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/religion/osiris.htm>

_____. "The Contendings of Horus and Seth."
http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/texts/horus_and_seth.htm

Faulkner, Raymond O. *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*. Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962.

_____. *Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1973.

Goedicke, Hans. "Unrecognized Sportings." *Journal of American Research Center in Egypt*. no. 6 (1967): 97-102.

Griffith, Francis Ll. . *Hieratic papyri from Kahun and Gurob*. London, UK: Bernard Quaritch, 1898.

Griffiths, John Gwyn. "Love as a Disease." *Studies in Egyptology: as presented to Miriam Licheheim*. (1990).

_____. *The Conflict of Horus and Seth*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1960.

Harlan, Jack R. "Lettuce and Sycamore: Sex and Romance in Ancient Egypt." *Economic Botany*. 40. no. 1 (1986): 4-15.

Manniche, Lise. *Sexual Life in Ancient Egypt*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.

Newberry, Percy. "Akhenaten's Eldest Son-in-law 'Ankhheperure'." *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*. 14 no. ½ (1928), 3-9.

Parkinson, Richard. "Homosexual Desire and Middle Kingdom Literature." *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*. no. 18 (1995): 57-76.

Reeder, Greg. "Same Sex Desire, Conjugal Constructs, and the Tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep." *World Archaeology*. 32. no. 2 (2000): 193-208.

_____. An Illustration to the Entrance of the Tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep.

http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/entrance.html

_____. Overseeing the Offerings brought to their tomb.

http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/overseer.html

_____. The Two Companions walking on a tour of Inspection.

http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/handhold.html

_____. The Banquet of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep.

http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/banqueta.html

http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/wife.html

http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/lotus.html

_____. The Embrace at the Entrance to the Offering Chapel

http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/embrace.html

_____. The Embrace between the False Doors

http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/falsedoor.html

_____. The Eternal Embrace in the offering chamber.

http://www.egyptology.com/niankhkhnum_khnumhotep/eternal.html

Robins, G. "Ancient Egyptian Sexuality," *Discussions in Egyptology*, Vol. 1, no. 11 (1988), 61-72

Selden, Daniel L. *Hieroglyphic Egyptian*. Berkeley: UC Press, 2012.

Spiegelberg, Wilhelm. "Die Tefnachthosstele des Museums von Athen," *Recueil de Travaux Relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie Égyptiennes et Assyriennes*, no. 25 (1903):

<http://ia700509.us.archive.org/1/items/recueildetravaux25masp/recueildetravaux25masp.pdf>

Strassler, Robert B. *The Landmark Herodotus*. New York, Pantheon Books, 2007.

te Velde, Henk. *Seth, God of Confusion*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967.