



CRE 2020/2021 – University of
the Aegean, 9-16 May 2021

Archaeological-philological-ethno-historical study of fundamental aspects of the penis, its symbolism and meaning in Ancient Egypt

Research aim

Understanding the symbolism and meaning of the penis in Ancient Egypt.

Selected research questions

- What concepts of the penis is it possible to reconstruct?
- Was the penis a fundamental component in the Egyptian conception of the universe and religious beliefs?
- Were there different lexemes (including the use of metaphors/euphemisms) to describe the penis?

Research context

- Study of the penis not from its primary function as an anatomical organ but as a conceptualised element linked to diverse individual, cultural and social experiences → Previous works in Egyptology have generally only dealt with certain penile aspects, such as fertility or regenerative powers.
- Examining the penis as part of Egyptological research is crucial in order to include it as a theoretical reference within interdisciplinary and international research on masculinity or gender studies

Material & Methodology

Sources of evidences

Written sources

Different types of writing genres, e.g. funerary, literary, historical, medical, love songs

Material objects or artefacts

Different types of artefacts, e.g. statues, amulets, pottery, mummies or mummified penes, penis sheath, models

Iconographic sources

Tombs, temples, pottery, ostraca, stelae, palettes, papyri, scarabs

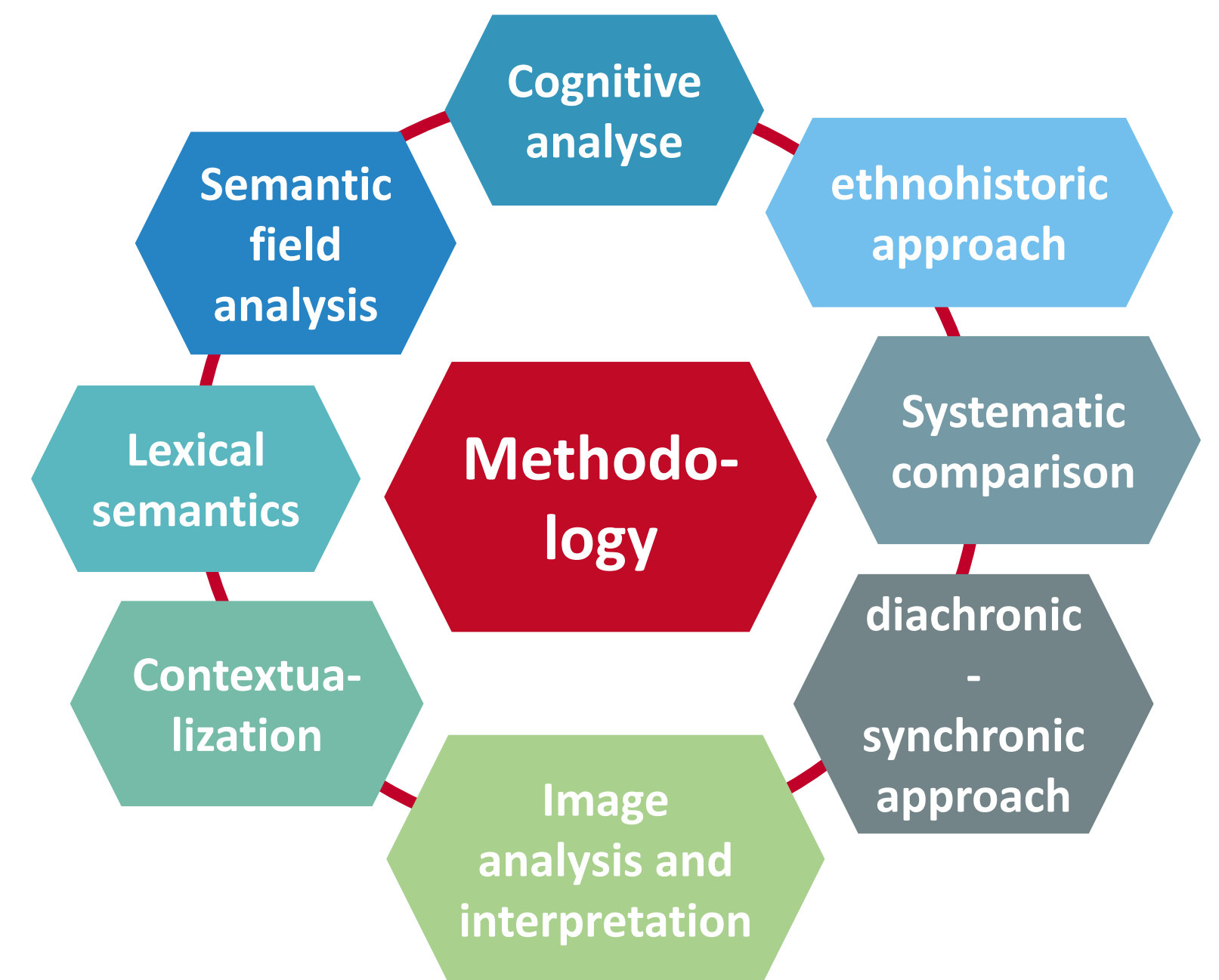
Historical Sources.



Image 1: Fragment of a Leather Hanging. 18th Dynasty.



Image 2: Book of the Earth, part A, scene 7. KV9, 20th Dynasty

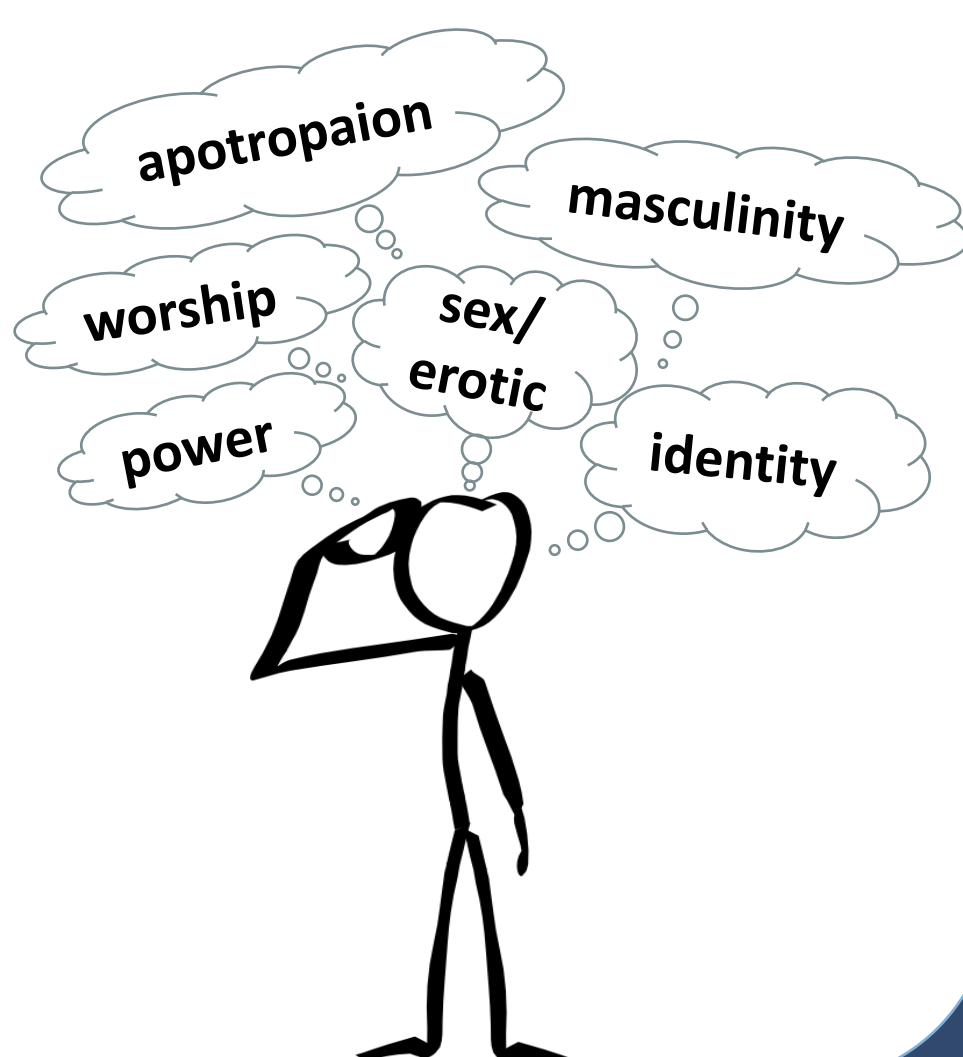


Methodology and approaches (selection).

The conceptual penis



Image 3: Wooden penis, New Kingdom.



Case study: Metaphor

Example: PT 313, §502b-503a



(...) (j.)[s]t₃ hnn B3by j.wn 3.wy p.t (...)

“(...) pull back the penis of Babi, open the doors of the sky (...)”

Meaning: Penis as door-bolt of the sky.

Image credits:

Image 1: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Accession Number: 31.3.98
(<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/547676?&searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=erotic&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=5>)

Image 2: © 1997-2006, 2020-2021 ARCE.

(<https://thebanmappingproject.com/index.php/images/10969jpg>)

Image 3: Royal Ontario Museum, Museum Number: 907.18.900

(<https://collections.rom.on.ca/objects/196411/figure-votive-phallus?ctx=3f107c77-9f54-47c4-a96a-c050918ed9cc&idx=0>)

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10/2019

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