INTRODUCTION: Finding the 'Extra' in the 'Ordinary'*

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1 Background and goals of "Excavating the Extra-Ordinary"

In times of post-processual archaeology and contextualizing from an emic point of view, the merits of working with even the tiniest archaeological evidence have come into the foreground in most Egyptological fieldwork undertakings.[1] Long gone are the times of disregarding fragmentary and unspectacular objects,[2] of burning undecorated coffin fragments[3] or disregarding non-pharaonic structures in favor of 'more interesting' artifacts and monuments[4]. By now, everyone working in an archaeological profession knows that astonishing conclusions can be drawn from analyzing seemingly 'ordinary' finds.

And yet, the challenges of working with ancient material still remain unchanged: Researchers

* We thank Eva Gervers and Nadine Gräßler for their constructive comments on our introduction and Jeff Simpson for correcting our English; all remaining mistakes are our own.

1 For an overview on recent trends in archaeological theory see, e.g., Johnson ²2010; Hodder ²2014.

2 The interest in publishing large amounts of seemingly 'ordinary' objects has sometimes been less than ideal, Rahmstorf (2015: 3), e.g., cites Woolley's stance on finds as "mundane" as spindle-whorls: "*If I devote a special section of my text to spindle-whorls I do so with apologies; my object is simply to clear the ground as expeditiously as possible of a mass of material of no great interest which would otherwise obtrude unduly. The scientific importance of spindle-whorls has been very much exaggerated.* […] *I suppose that it was Schliemann who first brought the spindle-whorl into prominence – a venial error in his case, but today there is no excuse for wasting space and money on this monotonous and profitless material.*" (Woolley 1955: 271).

3 See, e.g., Hogarth (1910: 157) describing his practice of living in the nomarchs' tombs at Asyut during the winter months: "*Warmth after the day's toil we never felt from December to February, even when sitting closest to the fire which we kindled nightly with unpainted slats of ancient coffins on a hearth of Old Empire bricks.*" Actual traces of the living arrangements of the early excavators were discovered time and again by the Asyut Project team during the work on the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi (cf. Kahl 2007: 30–33; Kahl et al. 2016: xx–xxii, 339–343).

4 Cf., e.g., Petrie, who worked ten weeks at the temple area in Athribis and destroyed layers of re-use (Müller 2015: 179). Petrie sometimes explicitly mentions monuments which he deemed not worth excavating, e.g. a decorated Roman chapel near the temple area of Athribis: "*Below that is a chapel of Roman age* […], *at the side of the approach to the gate of Physkon. It is covered with long scenes of gods, and the work is so rough that it was not worth copying. The interior was not cleared out.*" (Petrie 1908: 11).

Published in: Andrea Kilian & Monika Zöller-Engelhardt (eds), Excavating the Extra-Ordinary. Challenges & Merits of Working with Small Finds, Heidelberg, Propylaeum 2021, vii–xxi. DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeum.676

have to deal with huge amounts of pottery, sort heaps of fragmentary worked wood, work with an abundance of poorly preserved ropes, baskets and bandages or analyze infinitesimal traces of metal – often found in a disturbed or mixed context. This situation is a difficult setting to work with, since time and again researchers face situations in which the results remain inconclusive or the amount of seemingly 'ordinary' material is too much to include in conventional (print) publications.[5]

Against this background, the topic of "Excavating the Extra-Ordinary. Challenges and merits of working with small finds" is based on our own experience. We both have struggled with vast numbers of unidentifiable small fragments of pottery or wood from disturbed contexts, have heard fragmentary finds been termed 'uninteresting' and have seen large quantities of small finds[6] without provenance sitting unappreciated on magazine shelves or stacked in boxes. We both had to invest years of learning and training, of trial and error, to become somewhat acquainted with the broad spectrum of material and some of the best practices in our respective fields. In doing so, we observed that there is a need for deeper exchange and sustainable knowledge transfer on the complex and wide subject of working with small finds.

Thus, the goal of the workshop "Excavating the Extra-Ordinary" was to provide a platform for extensive exchange on all aspects of working with small finds and to bring together specialists from all areas of expertise and all stages of the processing of archaeological finds. This included field directors and participants of excavations, specialists in material analyses, staff from museums and universities, as well as independent researchers. It is clear that most scientific personnel fulfill more than one of these positions and functions and are involved in most of the fields of tension concerned with the work on small finds: from the stages of excavation to the post-processing analysis, storage and publication, as well as their afterlife, or better 'new life', in museums and collections. Therefore, we suggested a broad bandwidth of topics for discussion, including:

- How do you deal with largely disturbed contexts?
- How do you manage a huge number of finds?
- How do you identify specific items among mixed groups?
- Which deeper insights do you gain by analyzing difficult objects and contexts?
- Which methods proved useful to you and which not?
- How do you cope with inconclusive results?

The large number of responses to our call for papers demonstrated the relevance and topicality of the subject. Ultimately, the workshop "Excavating the Extra-Ordinary" formed into a two-day event with over fifty international participants and sixteen speakers. The lively discussions mirrored many of our questions and challenges and provided new insights on methodological issues and various fields of research.

2 General questions, definitions and points of discussion

In order to introduce different methods, several *modi operandi* and tested best practices of dealing with small finds, it is necessary at first to

5 Of course, we recognize the value of concise scientific presentation and interpretation of facts; nevertheless, we would like to emphasize the importance of making large quantities of 'ordinary' material available for comparison, verifiability and not least the preservation of knowledge.

6 On the concept of 'small find' see below.

narrow down the understanding of 'small find'. This provides the first challenge: definitions on the concept of small finds are varied and often somewhat vague, especially in regard to the ancient Egyptian setting.

Sometimes, small finds are equated with small 'artifacts', which, for example, C. Renfrew and P. Bahn define as: "*Artifacts are humanly made or modified portable objects, such as stone tools, pottery, and metal weapons*".[7] The definition, however, does not necessarily account for heavy (but still portable) objects, as well as fragmentary items or elements that were originally part of a larger structure, which are usually treated as small finds. Likewise unclear is, for example, the status of small botanical or organic remnants.

In contrast, another definition of 'small finds' results in a description of what it is not, as Feugère has put it: "*Tous les essais de définition proposés ici et là finissent par se replier sur une définition négative: les objets, c'est tout ce qui reste généralement sur la table où on étale le mobilier d'une fouille, quand on a ôté la céramique et les monnaies, qui ont déjà leurs 'spécialistes'.*"[8]

While this holds true in terms of the practical handling of excavated items or museum objects, we think that it is disadvantageous to separate finds by their object classes, material or availability of specialists when trying to compare methods and practices in dealing with large groups of archaeological material, fragmentary finds or disturbed contexts in general. Thus, while we still subdivided (partly material-based) thematic sections for the presentations of our workshop, we wish to emphasize the point that methodological questions are best approached by considering the overall picture, especially including the study of pottery, since ceramologists are very experienced in dealing with large amounts of material and fragmentary items alike. The broad thematic range of the contributions and the informed discussions during the workshop confirmed our assumption that the boundary of the concept 'small find' should be expanded to *small* finds[9], thus including large find groups such as pottery, botanical remains, fragments of larger objects and methodological areas dealing with these fragments.[10]

The challenge of working with small finds is not a new one and certainly not unique to Egyptology, as is the need for a delimitation of the term. Willey, for example, states regarding the work with small finds from contexts in Guatemala: „*We must begin by saying that there are no formal and systematic procedures for Maya lowland classification as there are for Maya lowland pottery. Instead, these 'other artifacts' have been treated in an ad hoc descriptive fashion, in somewhat different ways, by the archaeologists who have addressed the problem.*"[11]

In Egyptology, the separation of object groups by material or (supposed) function has a long

7 Renfrew/Bahn [3]2015: 338. They add that "*some researchers broaden the meaning of the term 'artifact' to include all humanly modified components of a site or landscape, such as hearths, postholes, and storage pits – but these non-portable artifacts are more usefully described as* ***features***" (ibid., emphasis in the original).

8 Feugère 2018: 7.

9 That means, instead of '*Kleinfunde*' as a category, '*kleinformatige Funde*' as an overall term.

10 It is noteworthy that not every 'fragment' is formed unintentional. On fragmentation theories and the theoretical implications of including fragmentary items in archaeological analysis and discussion cf. Martin/Langin-Hooper 2018.

11 Willey 1978: 1, cited after Voss 2004: vi. Compare also the title of Voß' publication explicitly naming "non-pottery small finds" ("*Die nichtkeramischen Kleinfunde aus Xpiché, Yucatán, Mexiko*").

tradition[12] and naturally specialists for these subject areas evolved. However, not only the division of find groups by material or function can cause an unidirectional point of view, but also the biased selection of material deemed worthy for publication by the early excavators. Already C. Kramer, in her seminal paper on interpreting ethnical implications based on variety in pottery findings of the so-called Ḫabur ware, explicitly mentions the danger of biased early publications: "*Ḫabur ware, having been considered diagnostic by its various excavators, has usually been described more fully than those ceramics stratigraphically associated with it.* […] *The absence of published references to specific plain wares resembling those found with Ḫabur ware at Chagar Bazar does not, for example, necessarily mean that such parallels do not exist at other sites, but may mean that for some reason the excavators of other sites considered them less worthy of published mention.*"[13]

The above-mentioned factors influenced our work, too. Our own archaeological specialties cover primarily the analysis of pottery and wooden objects. The challenges in working with these materials can be highlighted through the example of our work with finds from Asyut[14], Asyut being a prototypical example of a disturbed context with over 4000 years of continuous use and re-use and an exceptionally rich history of early excavations. A number of excavations took place during the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.[15] The most important longer-term missions were led by the French É. Chassinat and Ch. Palanque, the Italian E. Schiaparelli and the British E.G. Hogarth. As was usual at the time, missions subsequently provided museums with a large part of their numerous ancient finds made during their work. In the case of Asyut, these were the Louvre in Paris, the Museo Egizio in Turin and the British Museum in London.

Only the French team published their results,[16] whereas the reports, diaries and letters from Hogarth to his employer, the British Museum, were only published decades later by D.P. Ryan.[17] Schiaparelli did not publish anything at all,[18] but this gap is now being filled by the publication of his digging diaries by A.M. Sbriglio and the combined efforts of J. Kahl, P. Del Vesco and M. Trapani to correlate the knowledge about the activities of the early excavator with the recent field work at the site.[19]

Against the background of this complex excavation and publication history, the work on the pottery of Asyut provided a particular challenge, which may illustrate exemplarily some of the difficulties in working with small finds. Merely

12 W.M.F. Petrie is one of the most prominent examples of early researchers dividing finds according to raw material (cf. Bader, this volume: 14), e.g. in his overarching works on tools and weapons or objects of daily use (Petrie 1917 and Petrie 1924).

13 Kramer 1977: 94.

14 Our scientific work in Asyut was conducted as team members of the joint Egyptian-German project "The ancient Egyptian necropolis of Asyut: documentation and interpretation" (https://www.aegyptologie.uni-mainz.de/the-asyut-project-feldarbeiten-in-mittelaegypten fieldwork-in-middle-egypt/ [last accessed 11.12.2020]) of the universities of Sohag, Mainz and Berlin under the project direction of Jochem Kahl and Ursula Verhoeven-van Elsbergen.

15 Cf. Kahl 2007; 2012; Kahl et al. 2019: 10–21.

16 Chassinat/Palanque 1911.

17 Ryan 1988.

18 However, one anthropological report was published by G. Marro (1913), a member of Schiaparelli's team, on the skeletal human remains of the Asyut necropolis.

19 Kahl et al. 2019.

two of the publications mentioned above contain pictures of the pottery found by the early excavators: the excavation report of Chassinat and Palanque about their work in 1903 and the summary of Hogarth's work by Ryan.[20] The volume by Chassinat and Palanque offers, in total, three plates depicting pottery. The first shows a selection of the pottery retrieved from the tomb of Nakhti and a neighboring tomb.[21] The second depicts one clay vessel, which is lost today, originally found inside the coffin of Nakhti.[22] This lost vessel was the only one of its type known from Asyut. It is neither documented on another plate nor to be found in any of the museums into which the finds from Asyut were dispersed.

The third plate[23] is entitled "*Mobilier funéraire de Ouapouaïtoumhâït, tel qu'il était disposé au moment de l'ouverture du tombeau*" and shows the objects that accompanied Wepwawetemhat into the afterlife: a wooden statue, wooden models, a pottery offering tray and vessels. One of the three vessels can only be half seen; its other half was cut off by the photographer. The main focus of the early excavators is absolutely clear, as they devoted the neighboring plate to it: the wooden statue of the tomb owner.

Even the assessment of this photo, which is one out of only two pictures showing the find position of the objects mentioned in the excavation reports,[24] proved to be a misinterpretation. A first hint to this was provided by the photo itself, as it shows footprints below the objects. In the end, it turned out that the objects were not photographed *in situ* in the tomb of Wepwawetemhat, but instead, they were assembled in front of the north wall of Tomb Siut III (M12.1) (Fig. 1). So even the only photograph offering something like an *in situ* context is nothing more than a reinterpretation of the excavators, who arranged the finds either according to their memory or just in a way to be able to depict everything in one single plate, with only minor respect to the pottery.

However, the report itself mentions 302 vessels of pottery retrieved from the tomb of Nakhti alone: "*De nombreuses poteries en terre rouge très fine (il y en avait exactement trois cent deux),* […] *encombraient les abords de la niche autour des statues.*"[25] The Louvre Museum, where a part of the objects from Chassinat's and Palanque's work were delivered to, houses 34 vessels from Asyut. Only five of them can be linked with certainty to the vessels depicted on the first plate (pl. 15.1 cited above) that claims to show pottery from tombs no. 6 and 7, with no. 7 being the one of Nakhti.[26] So, the origin of the majority of the Louvre vessels remains uncertain. Additionally, their connection to the tomb of Nakhti and its neighbor is a matter of debate.[27] As all 34 of them make up only 10 % of the number of ves-

20 Chassinat/Palanque 1911 and Ryan 1988. There are some other publications which are, for the most part, more inventory-like descriptions of objects, but as neither drawings nor photographs were included with these, they are left aside here because they offer virtually no information on pottery at all, apart from the fact that it was found. Of course, nowadays, there are extensive publications available (e.g. Magee 1988, Zitman 2010), but here the focus is on the early excavators and their publications.

21 Chassinat/Palanque 1911: pl. 15.3.

22 Chassinat/Palanque 1911: pl. 23.1, between the wooden *ḥs.t*-vases and the metal washing basin and flask.

23 Chassinat/Palanque 1911: pl. 34.1.

24 The other one being a drawing of the burial chamber of Nakhti and the position of its inventory, Chassinat/Palanque 1911: 47, fig. 3.

25 Chassinat/Palanque 1911: 34.

26 Kilian 2019: 135, Abb. III.9.

27 Kilian 2019: 135–141.

Fig. 1: Combination of the photograph of the north wall of Tomb Siut III (M12.1) (© The Asyut Project) with Chassinat/Palanque 1911: pl. 15.3 (after Kilian 2019: 139, Abb. III.10).

sels found in the tomb of Nakhti alone, a huge amount of pottery must be deemed lost today.[28] Things are a little different when it comes to the publication of Ryan's summary of Hogarth's work in Asyut. Hogarth provided sketches of the pottery he found for every tomb according to "shapes". These "shapes" lack a description in textual form. Instead, Hogarth only provides depictions showing rough outlines of an abstracted vessel form. The trial to do a seriation failed, as the types are not differentiated enough and, as became obvious, different types or subtypes were sometimes attributed to the same "shape" which distorts the picture. It is, for example, not possible to distinguish accurately which vessels belong to Hogarth's "shape 1" or his "shape 13" and what the actual difference between the two shapes really is.

However, Hogarth was the first to provide sketches of about 50 tomb ground plans. Although they cannot be located today, ensembles can still be compiled according to tombs.[29] So, some of the vessels stored in the British Museum in London can still be assigned to certain tombs. However, in comparison with the inventories of the tombs as listed in Ryan's publication, it became quite clear that Hogarth almost never took the complete inventory/content

28 Chassinat and Palanque (1911: 34) mention that "*Tous les objets qui garnissaient la chapelle ayant été mis en lieu sûr,* […]", which has not been discovered yet.

29 E.g. Ryan 1988, Zitman 2010.

of one tomb, but made a very selective decision of which vessels to take and which not. So again, a seriation with the physical specimens stored in the British Museum failed, because there is almost no overlap between the single vessels, indicating that Hogarth aimed at presenting a broad and diverse spectrum more than a complete ensemble. This becomes especially obvious in his description of pottery tomb equipment and the comparison of the physical evidence in the British Museum.[30] Another clue in this direction is given by Hogarth himself: he gives counts of the vessel "shapes" he found in one tomb, but often these numbers are substituted by descriptions as "several",[31] "many",[32] "some",[33] "few",[34] or he gives descriptions like "[s]aucers, approximately 100 complete and fragmentary, plain",[35] or he only mentions "fragments"[36] of "shapes" or guesses[37] about the number.

This immensely distorts the overall picture and makes some important observations impossible. It is, for example, not possible to analyze if the number of vessels given to the dead increases over time (it does, judging by the descriptions, but how exactly and which kind of vessels is unclear). The function of the vessels cannot be analyzed either, because we do not know which kinds of vessels were found in which parts of the tomb and so on.

Although the situation regarding the attention of early excavators on the wooden (model) material from Asyut is somewhat better in comparison to the pottery, similar difficulties arise when consulting the few publications. Complete and aesthetically pleasing objects and object groups were described and sometimes photographed or drawn,[38] yet undecorated, fragmentary or simply 'uninteresting' objects of daily life were often summarily treated[39] or excluded from the descriptions altogether. Furthermore, fragmentary elements were often disposed of by early excavators, thrown away haphazardly or – as in the case of Asyut – shoveled from one tomb shaft into the other: "*A native guard informed Hogarth that this south side had not been excavated by Faraq so workmen were set to the task of clearing this area, Faraq's piled debris being thrown into one of the previously cleared shafts.*"[40]

This provides, for example, a specific challenge for the analysis of the fragmentary wooden material found during the re-excavation of the large nomarch's Tomb Siut III (M12.1). Although there is ample evidence that the tomb was used by the early French, Italian and English excavation missions as a base station and camp,[41]

30 See the compilation of the vessels and tombs with the description given by Ryan based on Hogarth's documents in Kilian 2019: 379–414, Dok. 1–Dok. 42.

31 Ryan 1988: 26 referring to "Shape 1" vessels, ib. 44, 57, 60.

32 Ryan 1988: 31 ("*many complete and fragmentary specimens*"), 36, 55, 32 ("*many plain complete and broken examples*"), 64.

33 Ryan 1988: 35, 61.

34 Ryan 1988: 65.

35 Ryan 1988: 19.

36 Ryan 1988: 28.

37 Ryan 1988: 79 referring to the number of vessels of "Shape 1": "[…] and about the same number broken".

38 Cf. e.g. the female offering bearers/estate figurines from the tomb of Nakhti in Chassinat/Palanque 1911: pls. 4. 9–10.

39 Compare, for example, Chassinat/Palanque's note on wooden handles of shields, after describing and displaying only one sample object: "*Cet objet, assez commun dans les musées, a été rencontré à plusieurs exemplaires au cours des fouilles.*" (Chassinat/Palanque 1911: 18).

40 Ryan 1988: 13.

41 Kahl 2007: 31–32; Kahl et al. 2016: 339–343; Zöller-Engelhardt 2016: 5; Kahl et al. 2019: 14, 78, 234, pl. 67a.

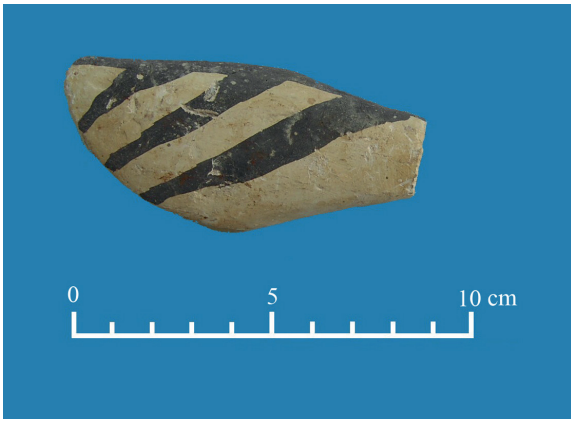

Fig. 2: Wings of model bird (photo: M. Zöller-Engelhardt, © The Asyut Project; cf. Zöller-Engelhardt 2016: 62, cat.no. M123.1; Zöller-Engelhardt 2012: pl. 6).

Fig. 3: Female offering bearer/estate figurine from the tomb of Nakhti at Asyut (Cairo, Egyptian Museum JE 36290; Chassinat/Palanque 1911: pl. 9).

we have no account of the actual field work conducted inside the tomb or the removal of objects. In addition, the quote above illustrates that fragmentary or 'ordinary' objects were removed from their findspot and disposed possibly within the context of another. The additional analytical dimensions of subsequent re-use in antiquity, tomb robbery and environmental influences create a multi-layered challenge for the researcher. Without sufficiently published comparison material or with only insufficient information on original contexts, it is difficult to identify small wooden fragments out of their original structure or context. Tomb Siut III (M12.1) offered various examples of such fragmentary wooden material – see, for example, the object M123.1 (Fig. 2), a small wooden item with a forked upper end, painted with a black stripe design on a yellow background. The identification as the wings of a bird, carried by a female offering bearer/estate figurine[42] (Fig. 3) is only possible on the basis of published comparison material or the comparison with the originals in the museum, respectively. Even more challenging are small wooden sticks: Sometimes, the decoration and specific design offer clues on their original position and function. An example are the small canopy posts (Figs. 4–5) found separately in the side chamber of the largest burial shaft in Tomb Siut III (M12.1). More difficult can be the interpretation of undecorated, plain fragmentary sticks, which may theoretically have been parts of the rigging of a model boat or upper ends of the handles of oars, as well as tips of model arrows or bows.[43]

42 On the discussion of "offering bearer" vs. "estate figurine" cf. Zöller-Engelhardt forthcoming.

43 Zöller-Engelhardt 2016: 26 with fn. 133. 164–168.

Fig. 4: Wooden model canopy post (photo: M. Zöller-Engelhardt, © The Asyut Project; cf. Zöller-Engelhardt 2016: 96–98, cat.no. M251–M255).

Fig. 5: Wooden Model Boat from the tomb of Nakhti at Asyut (Cairo, Egyptian Museum JE 36293; Chassinat/Palanque 1911: pl. 14.1).

These examples illustrate the every-day necessity of combining the work with the often insufficient publications of early excavators, which is also critically highlighted in-depth in the article by Henning Franzmeier in this volume. The research in museums and archives is demonstrated exemplarily by Cristina Ghiringhello and Marcella Trapani, too, as is the cautious reconstruction of disturbed find contexts on the basis of displaced, disturbed and fragmentary material, which Vera Müller clarifies comprehensively in her contribution on the situation of Abydos. In dealing with masses of sherds, Bettina Bader draws on a great deal of expertise from different sites in explaining how to deal with pottery stemming from utterly disturbed contexts. Fortunately, in the meantime, the methods of recording have changed and new technologies allow a handling of 'big data' as pointed out by Martin Odler. Methods have changed, too, and lead to more data gained by using new digital methods. Nevertheless, it is the specialist working with the respective material who has to analyze the data. Disturbed contexts and broken material still offer astonishing results, as is not only the case with pottery, but also with minuscule coffin ensemble fragments as shown by Charlotte Hunkeler or by 'valuing weights' as done by Silvia Prell and Lorenz Rahmstorf.

The examples described above clearly illustrate that the conceptualization of small finds naturally touches the area of archaeological classification, which has always been a focus of attention of advancing archaeological theory.[44] The underlying reason for any kind of archaeological classification – apart from practical, empirical and analytic purposes of the scientific process – is the wish of the researcher to better understand the ancient culture. Or, to be more precise, to further the insight into the interdependency of the material sphere with the way of life of the users and manufacturers of the classified items.[45] This process can be severely hindered by several factors as addressed above, like disturbed contexts, incomplete or biased publications by early excavators, the state of preservation of the finds and the accessibility of comparative material, objects without reliable provenance or too little resources (time, personnel, funding etc.). The contributions in the present publication address all of these factors and offer different solutions, suggestions and ideas for dealing with the challenges.

3 Topics of the volume

The present volume opens with an article on one of the largest and most challenging groups of finds, of which - despite its often fragmentary nature – a multitude of information can be gained: pottery. Bettina Bader's contribution provides an elaborate insight into the different aspects of her work in handling vast amounts of pottery. She comprehensively describes the necessary practical steps in analyzing ceramics and combines this example of her tested workflow with the theoretical background. Additionally, she emphasizes the crucial importance of documenting every step of the work process as accurately as possible and in a way that allows verifiability for fellow and following researchers.

44 Including typologies and taxonomies, cf. e.g. Rouse 1960; Adams 1988; Adams 1991; Read 2007; Read 2018. We thank Nadine Gräßler for literature references on archaeological typologies. On the challenges of taxonomies as subjective, modern 'Western' classification systems cf. for example Meskell 2004: 39–58.

45 Read 2018: 1.

She closes with a strong appeal on the importance of taking into account even the tiniest body sherd of a context which can influence the entire interpretation.

The topic of publishing highly accessible data is described by Martin Odler in his contribution on the need of an Egyptological data turn. He discusses digital solutions for dealing with (big) data gained through the analysis of larger groups of finds and emphasizes the necessity to not only publish the results of these examinations, but also the obtained data, preferably in a machine-readable format. This procedure should enable other scholars to approach the material under different research questions without having to carry out the analysis of the objects in question anew.

Naturally, early excavation reports may not provide the datasets we are used to nowadays, but nevertheless they contain invaluable information, especially since most of the sources of the data are no longer available. This information has to be considered by everyone working at a modern excavation site, but critically reviewed, too. This is especially stressed by Vera Müller, Henning Franzmeier and Marcella Trapani together with Cristina Ghiringhello.

Vera Müller underlines different factors when "re-excavating re-excavated material": She combines the information of the latest fieldwork results with that of earlier excavations, thus gaining additional and new insights on the historical sequence of events. Furthermore, she highlights the various influences tombs and objects are exposed to from the time of their deposition or manufacture until the moment of discovery or excavation. Hereby, she is able to demonstrate how even small burnt fragments give clues on the former use-life of tombs and their equipment.

Henning Franzmeier analyzes early excavations and early publications, stressing the need of a critical reading of these accounts. Focusing on the work of W.M.F. Petrie, he demonstrates the profits and limitations that arise by critically assessing publications from the early stages of archaeological work. Through his meticulous review, he raises awareness for the importance of further background knowledge on the restrictive and often biased decisions of former scholars to include or exclude objects or features in a publication. This can result in a distorted picture of the history of a site as further exemplified in his case study on Sedment.

Marcella Trapani and Cristina Ghiringhello demonstrate another challenge of working with small finds: the examination of unpublished objects with ambiguous provenance, in their case bone and ivory objects stored in the Museo Egizio in Turin. Their approach combines archival work with the study of early excavation reports and the analysis of objects from the related field work. By their interdisciplinary approach, they are able to point out the benefits of combining the results from material analysis and archival work to achieve a better understanding of the original context and function of the items. This leads to a deeper insight into the conceptual sphere of their usage and the way of life of their users and producers.

This crucial aspect is also central in the contributions by Silvia Prell and Lorenz Rahmstorf and by Charlotte Hunkeler. Silvia Prell's and Lorenz Rahmstorf's interdisciplinary approach shows the depth of insight that can be gained from investigating weights, a category that has not gained much scholarly attention so far. By precisely analyzing the distribution of shapes and the metrological system inherent in the weights, they are able to prove an Eastern Mediterranean influence on the Egyptian weighing system. Against the background of this adoption of a foreign metrological system, they are able to extract further information on trade relations and contacts between different powers.

Likewise illuminating are the results presented by Charlotte Hunkeler on her work on mi-

nuscule wooden fragments of coffins, mummy masks and mummy boards. Earlier excavations often deemed such fragments as not worth mentioning. However, the analysis of the sometimes tiny fragments allowed her to gain not only insight into the different phases of the use-life of the related tomb, but also resulted in the detection of an as yet undocumented manufacturing technique used in the production of parts of these objects.

All of these contributions demonstrate that methods and attitudes have come a long way since the early days of Egyptology. Moving forward from too restricting processual theories into fields of post-processual, ethno-archaeological and cognitive archaeology, researchers find themselves faced with the challenge of extrapolating broader explanations from the examination of material cultures. New approaches, new emic viewpoints and new technologies have paved the way for new reflections on the past. Yet, science always strives for further development and the present publication aims to provide useful information for like-minded professionals in the fields of Egyptology and Archaeology. It allows to see exemplarily how fellow researchers cope with difficult contexts and material to improve our understanding of the past, as well as help students in accessing challenging archaeological material. Thus, we hope to provide a small step into the work on the rich, but often challenging material of the culture of ancient Egypt and beyond.

Acknowledgements: We are grateful for the financial support of the workshop by the Department of Research and Technology Transfer of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. Furthermore, we thank the Institute of Ancient Studies, Department of Egyptology at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, especially Univ.-Prof. Dr. Ursula Verhoeven-van Elsbergen for her support and valuable advice.

The workshop, as well as the proceedings, would not have been possible without the help and support of colleagues and friends. We thank Univ.-Prof. Dr. Tanja Pommerening for fruitful discussions and advice. Our colleagues from the Institute of Ancient Studies at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz openly shared their thoughts on methodological procedures, as well as their experiences on best practices in open access publications, for which we are very grateful.

Finally, we also thank the participants of the workshop, first of all the speakers for their engaging presentations, the poster presenter, our chairs of the individual thematic sections and the audience for the lively discussions. Our special thanks go to Univ.-Prof. Dr. Willeke Wendrich for her inspiring keynote lecture. She emphasized not only the importance of working with small 'ordinary' finds, but also reflected on the constant flux in archaeological methods, techniques and theory, also addressing the colonial past of the discipline and the emergence of community archaeology.

In 2020, SARS-CoV-2 and the pandemic evolving from it hit the world and affected the lives of millions of people. One of the side-effects were several temporary lockdowns which impeded research considerably. We are grateful that despite all of the hindrances this publication could be finished. We thank all contributors for their persistent efforts in the publication process during these very difficult circumstances.

Papers presented at the workshop „Excavating the Extra-Ordinary. Challenges & Merits of Working with small finds", Mainz, 8–9 April 2019

Bettina Bader:
From knobbly bits to complete vessels – information contained in finds made of clay

Paolo Del Vesco:
Excavating and curating "disturbed" contexts

Henning Franzmeier:
"...half a loaf is better than no bread". On the fragmentary nature of early archaeological publications and their utilisation in the 21st century

Cristina Ghiringhello & Marcella Trapani:
Bone and ivory carvings preserved in the Museo Egizio in Turin – Interdisciplinary approach

Charlotte Hunkeler:
A Ramesside coffin ensemble: what information can be gained from fragmented and incomplete material?

Chiori Kitagawa & Silvia Prell:
The bone workshop of the armoury of the chariotry of Ramesses II in Qantir-Piramesse

Clara Jeuthe:
Objects in space – spatial analyses at Elephantine and Ayn Asil

Manuela Lehmann:
Amara West: ancient fragments from a modern perspective: an ethno-archaeological approach

Vera Müller:
Re-excavating re-excavated materials – A case study from the royal necropolis of the Early Dynastic Period at Umm el-Qaab/Abydos

Martin Odler:
On computers, typewriters and small metal finds

Silvia Prell & Lorenz Rahmstorf:
The value of weights – what they can tell us about economic changes and changes of power

Johanna Sigl:
Dem bones, dem beads, dem botany ... Dealing with mass finds from the settlement excavations on Elephantine, Aswan

Leslie Anne Warden:
But it's just another body sherd... Thoughts on ceramic processing from two Middle Kingdom settlement sites

Katharina Zinn:
Narrating the Extra the Ordinary has: "Re-excavating" objects in storage rooms of local museums as part of an archaeology of unloved object

Keynote Lecture: Willeke Wendrich
The Ties that Bind: Excavating the Extraordinary

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